

## Section 2: Technical Standards

### Essential Functions for Admission and Matriculation of an SHLS Graduate Program

The essential Functions for admission to and continued enrollment in a Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (SLHS) graduate program reflect the qualities and abilities that are deemed critical for success as an independent clinician upon graduation. Students must agree that they exhibit these standards for admission and matriculation through the program. If a student is unable to demonstrate these standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, then the student will be dismissed from the program.

Auburn University and the SLHS graduate programs adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. We are committed to assisting students with identified disabilities who are able to complete a graduate program with reasonable accommodations. However, the SLHS faculty reserve the right to not admit applicants or discontinue enrollment of students in cases where reasonable accommodations are not available to allow successful completion of program requirements. Reasonable accommodations are those deemed to not alter the fundamental nature of an SLHS graduate program.

Upon admission to a SLHS graduate program, all students must sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the essential Functions listed below:

#### Communication Skills

A student must demonstrate adequate communication skills to communicate proficiently with faculty, staff, peers, client, caregivers, and other healthcare professionals in both verbal and written English language.

#### Verbal Communication:

The student must be able to:

- Model English phonemes, grammatical features, or other aspect of speech and language for a client or caregiver
- Use appropriate volume, rate, and prosody when speaking
- Explain all aspects of clinical evaluation, treatment, and recommendations
- Answer questions or clarify the information when needed

#### Written Communication:

The student must be able to:

- Possess reading skills sufficient to meet academic and clinical responsibilities
- Prepare grammatically correct assignments and reports
- Present content in organized manner with professional writing style
- Proofread and edit written work

#### Non-verbal Communication:

The student must be able to:

- Use the appropriate amount of eye contact and facial expression for the communication intent
- Detect and process non-verbal communication from clients, caregivers, supervisors, and other professionals



## Physical Abilities/Motor Skills

Students must be physically able to:

- Manipulate technology, equipment, tests, materials, and toys in a timely and effective manner
- Demonstrate the fine and gross motor skills necessary to execute evaluation and treatment for all disorders within our scope of practice
- Meet the physical demands across clinical settings (i.e. sitting on the floor, standing for long periods of time, holding infants, picking up and/or carrying small children, assisting ambulatory patients in walking, pushing a wheelchair and assistance/transfer, etc).
- Manage behavior of non-compliant client
- Respond quickly to facilitate a safe environment in emergency situations
- Perform CPR (if the setting allows it and the student is certified)
- Consistently attend and engage in class, clinical sessions, and meetings
- Care for their own personal hygiene
- Access reliable transportation to and from all academic and clinical settings.

## Sensory/Observational Abilities

Students must have sufficient visual and auditory skills to participate effectively in academic and clinical settings.

Students must have adequate **vision** (aided or unaided) to:

- Evaluate non-verbal communication
- Complete physical examinations (i.e. otoscopy, oral-peripheral exam, swallowing evaluation)
- Analyze speech production errors
- Process written or visual materials
- Visualize and identify anatomic structures
- Identify and discriminate findings on imaging studies
- Discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests
- Read text, diagnostic tests, equipment, and documentation
- Complete documentation on a computer (Electronic Medical Record).

Students must have adequate **hearing** (aided or unaided) in order to:

- Accurately administer and score diagnostic tests
- Discern subtle phonemic differences
- Hear an emergency alert to safely assist the clients

## Emotional/Mental Health:

Students must have the emotional health to interact with faculty and staff members, fellow students, other health professionals, as well as patients and their caregivers. Thus, students must be able to:

- Maintain composure, emotional stability, and a mature, positive attitude in intense and stressful situations
- Make timely and appropriate decisions
- Recognize personal values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and/or experiences affect perceptions and relationships with others and prevent these from interfering academic or clinical work
- Respond with empathy and put clients at ease when they are experiencing or report stressful situations
- Remain free from substance abuse that could interfere with academic or clinical work

## Intellectual/Cognitive Abilities:

Students must be able to:

- Process auditory and written information in academic and clinical courses at a level deemed



appropriate by faculty and professional staff.

- Comprehend, memorize, integrate, analyze, synthesize, retain and apply material in academic and clinical settings.
- Exhibit the reasoning and decision-making skills needed for problem solving appropriate to the field.
- Identify, understand, integrate, and synthesize a large body of information and knowledge to analyze complex client problems.
- Maintain attention and concentration for sufficient time to complete academic and clinical tasks (e.g., up to 4-hour blocks of time in clinical practice with one or two breaks.)
- Critically evaluate information, solve problems, reason, and make clinical judgments in assessment and treatment plans.
- Use logic and reasoning to identify strengths and weaknesses of possible courses of actions.
- Self-assess clinical and academic performance and reflect on performance accurately
- Solicit and respond appropriately to feedback
- Recognize the changing levels/roles of supervision as competence grows or settings change

### Professional Skills

To succeed in the program, the student must be able to:

- Demonstrate flexibility in new and stressful environments
- Comply with the AL and ASHA Code of Ethics
- Comply with the university's academic integrity policy
- Accept feedback and respond by modification of behavior
- Dress appropriately and professionally (dependent on the setting)
- Respect faculty, staff, and peers
- Maintain confidentiality of client/patient information and follow HIPAA guidelines
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and professionalism, regardless of the situation
- Demonstrate appreciation and respect for individual, social, and cultural differences in clients, fellow students, colleagues, and staff
- Prioritize academic and clinical responsibilities and activities
- Arrive on time and prepared to classes and clinic
- Provide documentation in a timely manner

## Essential Functions Administrative Processes

As a condition of accepting an offer of admission, all entering students are required to review, and must agree to adhere to all SLHS Standards, Policies and Codes of Conduct, which includes these Essential Functions. If a student cannot adhere to these Essential Functions, he/she should contact the Clinic Coordinator to initiate the accommodations process as soon as possible. If the student's abilities change during the program, they should contact the Clinic Coordinator in writing as soon as possible to begin the process.

The Clinic Coordinator will refer all individuals requesting accommodations to the Office of Accessibility (OA), which will evaluate and make a decision on each request. If accommodations are recommended by OA, a SHLS faculty panel will review the requests and provide recommendations to the OA regarding the feasibility of specific student requests for accommodations. The faculty panel will include the following individuals:

- AUSHC Clinic Director
- Clinic Coordinator for the student's discipline
- Graduate Program Officer for the student's discipline
- One additional clinical faculty member (annually appointed faculty member)

The faculty panel will evaluate specific accommodation requests and provide recommendations to the OA regarding the feasibility and reasonableness of requested accommodations. A specific focus in the evaluation of accommodation requests will be whether or not the requested accommodation will fundamentally alter the nature of the student's SHLS graduate program and the student's ability to succeed in an SHLS career.

At any point during the program, the SHLS faculty panel can reconvene to review the use of accommodations, if it is affecting the student's performance or progress at on- or off-campus clinical practicums. The clinical grading form and CAA/CFCC standards are the guiding tools to determine the demonstration of a student's Essential Functions. Evaluation of non-academic traits do involve some degree of subjectivity.

Other situations regarding the Essential Functions may include the following:

- Prospective students inquiring about admission to the SLHS graduate programs and noting that they need an accommodation to meet the standards.
- Applicants who have been admitted and subsequently request an accommodation.
- Enrolled students who become unable to meet the Essential Functions (based on student or faculty concerns) Changes in abilities could be due to an accident, illness, or newly diagnosed medical condition.

The OA will communicate to the student decisions regarding accommodation requests. In cases where a request is approved, SHLS will work with the OA to implement the approved accommodation. In cases where accommodation requests are denied, a decision will be made by the Faculty Panel regarding whether the student is dismissed from the SHLS for not being able to meet the Essential Functions or is allowed to continue in the Program without the denied accommodation. This decision will be communicated by the Clinical Director.

\*Students will not be given a clinical placement or receive clinical hours until the accommodations process is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date