CMSD Master’s Program
Student Handbook

Policies and Procedures for Students Seeking the Master of Education or the Master of Arts in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Georgia

Revised 2019
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1. CONTEXT AND COMMUNITY

1.a. Introduction
The University of Georgia Communication Sciences and Disorders (CMSD) Program is housed in the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education (CSSE), within the College of Education (COE). The CMSD Program offers undergraduate, master’s, educational specialist, and doctoral degree programs. The policies and procedures in this Master’s Degree Program Student Handbook apply to all students seeking any master's degree in speech-language pathology (SLP) in the CMSD Program, whether or not the student is completing clinical practicum as part of the degree.

The SLP master’s program in CMSD adheres to all relevant policies and procedures established by the CMSD Program as a whole, the department, the college, and the University of Georgia, including but not limited to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Instruction, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Graduate School. The program also adheres to all relevant policies and procedures established for students and for training programs by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), its associated Council on Academic Accreditation, the Georgia State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Students in clinical practicum are also bound by the Speech and Hearing Clinic policies and procedures located in the current Clinical Practicum Handbook.

The policies and procedures provided in this master’s program handbook are intended to supplement, not replace, existing university policies or policies from other controlling units; thus, this handbook is not intended to be comprehensive. Students with any questions of policy or procedure are responsible for familiarizing themselves with all relevant University, ASHA, and other policies, which are available on those organizations’ websites or from the relevant offices. If two existing policies are found to be in conflict, the CMSD Program will abide by the stricter of the two.

1.b. Mission of the Program
The mission of the complete CMSD Program, including its master’s degree programs in SLP, is to:

- Develop, promote, advance, and apply knowledge in hearing, speech, language, and swallowing through innovative research, scholarship, and clinical service.
- Prepare students to be leaders in prevention, evaluation, and treatment of human communication disorders through excellence in education, research, and clinical experiences with persons of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures.
- Serve the university, surrounding community, and state by providing quality, state-of-the-art services to prevent, evaluate, and treat communication and swallowing disorders for persons of all ages, backgrounds and cultures.
- Achieve excellence through the continuous review and refinement of our program and services while meeting or exceeding the expectations of our students, clients, and other customers and integrating current research and technology into all program aspects.
1.c. Vision
The University of Georgia’s Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders aspires to achieve state, national, and international eminence for excellence in education, research, and service in the nature, prevention, evaluation, and treatment of human communication disorders.

1.d. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
The University of Georgia, the College of Education, the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education, and the CMSD Program seek to create a culture for teaching, learning, research, service, and employment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for all persons. Cultural and individual diversity are respected and sought. All persons are treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities. All programs are designed and managed so as to be actively inclusive of a range of persons, abilities, backgrounds, and points of view. The master’s degree program’s policies and procedures reflect these institutional priorities in many ways, including through the following:

- a complete graduate-level course related to diversity and multicultural issues in speech-language pathology is required for all master’s students;
- topics and issues related to cultural and individual are infused throughout all academic coursework and clinical practicum experiences;
- as part of the graduate admissions process, the department seeks to identify students who may qualify for diversity-based assistantships administered by the college or the university, and recommends applicants or enrolled students to those programs;
- student-clinicians’ work with clients from different backgrounds is tracked, and the program actively seeks clients and external clinical placements to increase the diversity of the clients and families with whom students work; and
- policies for student clinicians emphasize that native proficiency in English is not a prerequisite for clinical practicum.

Applicants, students, faculty, staff, and persons served in the program’s clinic are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, or status as a covered veteran. The institution, its units, and the CMSD program comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and executive orders pertaining thereto.

All master’s students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities as members of a diverse and inclusive university community, including as explained at the website of the UGA Equal Opportunity Office. That office’s list of campus and community resources is also an important source of options and information, as are the many units and departments in UGA’s Office of Student Affairs.

1.e. Student Demeanor and Dress
As part of the need to encourage a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, the CMSD faculty is also committed to instilling a professional attitude and demeanor in their students. An atmosphere of equitable and inclusive professionalism is intended to allow and facilitate individual growth and the development of clinical and academic skills in all students; ensure quality service to all people with communicative disorders or related needs; and provide for the future of the program, the Clinic, the department, and the University by promoting positive impressions in the Athens area and in the extended academic and professional community. Student clinicians are expected to adhere to the dress code and other requirements
provided in the Clinical Practicum Handbook. More generally, for all CMSD students, behavior or dress will not be tolerated if it reflects poorly on the professionalism of the program or the department or in any way detracts from the clinical and academic missions of the program, the Clinic, the department, and the University of Georgia.

1.f. Faculty Contact

Full-time or regular faculty, part-time or temporary faculty, and support staff in the department and in the college are available to assist students by phone, by email, or in person. Contact information for all instructors, whether full-time or part-time, is provided in the syllabus for each class. Contact information is also available in the online College of Education faculty directory, posted signs in departmental areas, and in the main departmental office (570 Aderhold Hall).

2. SAFETY PROCEDURES

The University of Georgia, the college, the department, and the program seek to provide a physically safe environment for all persons using campus facilities, but emergency situations can arise. All master's students should familiarize themselves with campus and building-specific policies, procedures, and resources related to physical and personal safety while on campus. General information and links to many resources are provided at the campus Safe & Secure website.

2.a. Physical Safety and Emergency Preparedness

The university’s Office of Emergency Preparedness website includes a brief interactive guide that addresses severe weather, fire and other reasons for evacuation, active shooter situations, medical emergencies, and chemical spills. Master's students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the information in that guide. Brief information is also available at the page titled Emergency – What to do.

All students should register for the UGA Alert System. Emergency information will be communicated when necessary through the UGA Alert System, through local radio or television stations, by building safety personnel, or by professional emergency personnel. Students who may need specific or additional assistance in the event of any emergency should consider revealing their needs to program faculty, staff, or other students and should consider completing the voluntary Self-Identification and Personal Emergency Plan process administered by the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

All students should be familiar with the building-specific emergency plans for campus buildings that they use. For Aderhold Hall, basic information for the most common emergency situations includes the following.

**Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** When this has been issued for your area, there are currently no severe thunderstorms. The thunderstorm watch means that the conditions of the atmosphere are suitable for the formation of thunderstorms containing strong winds, dangerous lightning, and possibly hail. Be alert to the need to take possible action if severe thunderstorms do develop.
**Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** When this has been issued for your area, stay indoors and away from any windows. **In Aderhold Hall, stay inside and move to internal spaces without windows.** There is heavy wind, lightning, and hail that may cause injury or property damage.

**Tornado Watch:** A tornado watch is issued to alert the public to the possibility of a tornado. This means tornados have not been sighted but conditions are favorable for spawning tornados. Normal activities will not be interrupted during a watch unless threatening skies are observed. No action is necessary except to be prepared to act appropriately if the weather status is upgraded by appropriate authorities.

**Tornado Warning:** A tornado warning is issued by the local weather office when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. When a tornado warning is issued, all persons in Aderhold Hall must walk down the stairs to the internal windowless areas on the ground, first, and second floors. Remain in internal areas or in the stairwell, and as close as possible to the ground floor, until directed to return to your floor or department. Do not exit the building during a tornado warning.

**Fire:** Fire alarms in Aderhold Hall combine both audible (alarms) and visible (flashing lights) signals. **If you hear or see the fire alarm, walk down the stairs.** Exit the building at the second, first, or ground floors and keep walking until you have crossed the street. Fire evacuation assembly sites for Aderhold Hall are in the Vet School Parking Lot (across Carlton Street from the ground-floor exit) and in front of the Life Sciences building (across Green Street from the first-floor exit). Do not use the elevators during a fire alarm. Do not return to the building until official personnel have informed you that the situation has resolved, and it is safe to return.

Student clinicians also share in the responsibility to ensure the safety of clients and family members in the clinic, as is described in further detail in the Clinical Practicum Handbook.

2.b. **Personal Safety**

The University of Georgia Police Department provides General Safety Tips and Crime Prevention information. Master’s students are encouraged to be familiar with these recommendations, which address alertness and awareness (knowing the facts about crimes such as rape and other assaults), prevention and precaution (choices and activities that can make you less likely to be targeted by a potential attacker), and preparation (awareness of what to do should you ever become the victim of a crime). Students with specific personal safety concerns related to program facilities or personnel on campus, in Aderhold Hall, or at any other clinical practicum site should raise those concerns with any faculty member. The faculty member will help you to make necessary changes when that is possible or will contact University Police or other resources for other assistance.

3. **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

3.a. **Applications and Admissions**

Information for potential applicants is available on the departmental website. Admission to the program is competitive. Applicants may wish to familiarize themselves with the policies and
procedures in this Handbook as part of their search for a master’s program that will meet their needs and expectations.

3.b. Master's Degree Programs
The master’s degree program encompasses two different degree programs (the Master of Education, M.Ed. and the Master of Arts, M.A.). Both programs typically include clinical practicum and preparation for clinical licensure and certification.

Master of Education (M.Ed.). Most students in the CMSD master’s program select and complete the M.Ed. program with clinical practicum experiences. Requirements for the M.Ed. include coursework and comprehensive examinations, as described throughout this handbook and in other materials.

Master of Arts (M.A.). The M.A. degree requires essentially the same coursework as the M.Ed., and most M.A. students also complete clinical practicum experiences. The distinction between the two degrees lies primarily in the M.A. program’s requirement that the student complete a master’s thesis, rather than taking comprehensive examinations. The CMSD faculty encourages students to consider the thesis option and will work with the student to identify an appropriate thesis advisor, topic, and specific project. This process should start as early in the graduate program as possible. Thesis students complete all of the coursework and clinical practicum on the same schedule that students taking comprehensive examinations complete, with the exception that appropriate programmatic changes may be available to accommodate the research and writing needs of thesis students. Academic advisors and thesis advisors will assist individual students in determining their programs.

Thesis students will develop a written proposal that should include a comprehensive review of the literature, specific research questions, and a complete description of the methods proposed to answer those questions. Unless other arrangements are unanimously accepted by the committee for specific and exceptional circumstances, the written proposal must be approved by the student’s thesis committee prior to data collection. Development of the proposal, data collection, analysis, and writing are conducted by the student with the active supervision and guidance of the advisor, and students should expect to work on several drafts of each piece of the thesis with corrections and suggestions from the advisor. A complete thesis that has been tentatively approved by the thesis advisor must be provided to the entire committee at least two weeks prior to the final defense. After the defense, the committee may recommend changes or additional analyses. A final document is then required to be submitted to the Graduate School prior to graduation. To graduate with an M.A., the student must pass the written and oral defense of the thesis as specified by the Graduate School and meet all other requirements specified by the Graduate School.

Students Opting for an Academic-Only or Nonclinical Master's Degree. The initial assumption within the CMSD graduate program is that master’s degree students desire to complete both the academic coursework and the clinical practicum portions of the program. Students seeking to complete only the academic coursework, without completing the clinical practicum, may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. Students earning this academic-only or nonclinical master’s degree, whether as an M.Ed.
or as an M.A., will not be prepared or eligible to practice speech-language pathology in any setting and will not be eligible for any certification, credentialing, licensure, or clinical employment. The UGA CMSD program does not train SLP aides or any other assistant-level practitioners.

3.c. **Required Program of Coursework**

The CMSD master’s program uses a cohort model. Each required academic course is offered once per year on a schedule that starts in a summer semester and proceeds for six consecutive semesters. All master’s students are required to complete the same courses, in the same sequence, with limited room for elective course work (with the exception of thesis research and comprehensive examinations, or changes made to accommodate individual student’s personal needs or requests).

The program of study is available on the [program’s website](#), is provided in writing to all enrolled students, and is available to all enrolled students in their advisement folders. This design ensures that all students are completing a program of courses that is structured to result in their earning the master’s degree and satisfying ASHA certification, Georgia licensure, and Georgia educator certification requirements.

If for any reason a student does not complete the typical courses in the typical schedule, records are kept both in the advisement file and as the student’s official university transcript, to allow the student and the advisor to assure that the student ultimately does complete all the courses and other experiences required for the degree and for certification and licensure. All alterations to a student’s program require approval from the student’s academic advisor, who will ensure that all program faculty are aware of the implications of any such changes. Alternations may require decisions or approval from a panel of faculty members that will include the Program Director, the Clinic Director, the student’s academic advisor, any involved academic or clinical faculty, and any other faculty as appropriate for the situation. While advisors and other faculty members provide as much information as possible, the ultimate responsibility for being informed about and meeting university, state, and national requirements rests with the student.

3.d. **Advising**

Each enrolled graduate student is assigned at admission to a single member of the academic faculty, who serves as that student’s academic advisor throughout the graduate program. Students meet with their advisors every semester to review academic progress (using the advisement folder and up-to-date transcripts) and to register for the next semester’s courses. Students have access to their advisement folders through their advisor at any time and are provided with written plans of the program courses. The standardized content and structure of advisement folders also allows any advisor to assist a student if necessary.

3.e. **Registration and Course Loads**

Students are required to register for courses and must pay all tuition and fees according to the university’s published schedule every semester to be allowed to participate in courses or clinical practicum assignments. The department adheres to university regulations regarding minimum and maximum course loads for students, with the exception that credit-hour overloads are necessary some semesters to accommodate all necessary clinical practicum hours.
3.f. **Transfer of Credits and Course Equivalency**

All courses in the master's degree program of study are required and must be taken as scheduled, at the graduate level, while the student is enrolled in the master’s degree program. Exceptions to this policy may be made in the form of transfer credit or in the form of a decision of course equivalency, as explained immediately below.

Transfer credit for graduate-level courses taken at other institutions will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the student's advisor, the course instructor, and the CMSD Program Director. Review of course syllabi and materials will be necessary before transfer credit is granted. Transfer credit for courses required for ASHA certification or for any state credential or licensure will not be granted unless the course was completed at a CAA-accredited institution. Students who are allowed not to enroll in a required course on the basis of a transfer-credit decision may be required to complete written, oral, or practicum activities to assure the UGA CMSD faculty that their knowledge, skills, and abilities are complete and appropriate for recommendation for licensure or certification.

Decisions of course equivalency are also made only under exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the student's advisor, the course instructor, and the CMSD Program Director. Review of course syllabi and materials will be necessary before course equivalency is determined. Equivalency will not be granted for courses that provide information necessary for ASHA certification or for any state credential or licensure, unless the course was completed at a CAA-accredited institution. Students who are allowed not to enroll in a required course on the basis of a course-equivalency decision may be required to complete written, oral, or practicum activities to assure the UGA CMSD faculty that their knowledge, skills, and abilities are complete and appropriate for recommendation for licensure or certification.

3.g. **Accommodations**

The University of Georgia seeks to provide all students, with a wide range of abilities, the opportunity to participate fully in its educational programs and services. In keeping with this philosophy, it is University policy that students with documented disabilities are to receive reasonable accommodations both in access to course information and in assessment of their knowledge. The CMSD Program complies in full with this policy and makes every effort to work with students who have specific needs in academic coursework, clinical practicum assignments, or both. Students who have questions about what accommodations they might need or deserve can address such questions to any faculty member or to their assigned academic advisor, who may also refer the student to the university’s Disability Resource Center, Division of Student Affairs, for assistance or information.

3.h. **Access to Academic Records**

All students have access to their educational records and have the right to determine what information should be confidential, in accordance with university procedure regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as described by the Office of the Registrar.

3.i. **Grade Point Average and Course Grade Requirements**

All graduate students at the University of Georgia must satisfy all of the following three requirements for grade point averages and individual course grades, as required by the Graduate School:
1. The cumulative graduate average (GPA) must remain at or above 3.00 at all times. This requirement refers throughout the program to all graduate-level courses (course numbers 6000 and above) that have been completed and had a grade assigned, whether or not all courses become part of the student's proposed or approved Program of Study for the degree. The University of Georgia will not grant a graduate degree to a student who does not have a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.00 or higher.

2. The GPA for all courses on the student's Program of Study must be at or above 3.00 for the student to be eligible for graduation. The University of Georgia will not grant a graduate degree if the GPA for the courses on the Program of Study is below 3.00.

3. No grade below “C” (2.00) will be accepted as part of a Program of Study for a graduate degree. Grades of “C-” do not meet this requirement.

A graduate student whose cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.00 for one semester will receive an official warning from the Graduate School. If the cumulative graduate GPA remains below 3.00 after the next semester in which the student is enrolled, the student will be placed on formal academic probation by the Graduate School until the cumulative GPA is above 3.00. Students on academic probation who earn below 3.00 as a semester GPA in any single semester will be dismissed from the university by the Graduate School. Neither the program nor the department has the authority to alter these university-level GPA and course-grade requirements.

In addition to the requirements imposed by the Graduate School, the CMSD program further requires that all graduate students must earn no more than two grades lower than a “B-” (B minus) in required courses, including clinical practicum courses. Students who have earned one or two grades lower than a “B-” will be reminded of this requirement in writing as part of the routine Faculty Review of Student Progress (see Section 6) and offered options to re-take courses or otherwise adapt their programs. A third grade below “B-” in any required course will result in immediate dismissal from the program. Note that any changes to the student’s program, or any grade below “C” in any required course, will delay the completion of the student's program for at least one full year, because of the program’s cohort model and course-scheduling constraints as combined with the Graduate School’s requirement that all courses on the Program of Study must be completed with a grade of “C” or better.

GPA and individual course grades are also directly relevant for the scheduling of students’ Comprehensive Examinations and Clinical Internships, as further explained in those sections of this handbook and in the Clinical Practicum Handbook. Students seeking to raise their GPA will usually do so by repeating required CMSD courses in which a grade lower than “A” was earned. In some cases, the student may seek and be granted the faculty’s permission to raise the GPA by taking additional graduate-level courses that are approved by the student’s advisor and by the faculty as having direct relevance to the student’s program of study.

4. CLINICAL PRACTICUM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Complete clinical practicum policies are provided in the Clinical Practicum Handbook, which is available through eLC and will be discussed and used throughout students’ master’s degree programs. Selected clinical practicum policies are highlighted below because of their importance
to students’ overall progress through the master’s degree program, but students must refer to and abide by the complete Clinical Practicum Handbook.

4.a. Observation Hours
The UGA SLP master’s program requires that all graduate student clinicians must complete 25 hours of appropriately documented guided observation prior to beginning their own clinical practicum assignments. Guided observations include activities such as debriefing/discussions with the supervisor about the sessions or written reports submitted to the supervisor. As required by ASHA 2020 SLP Certification Standards, hours must be within the ASHA Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology and must be under the supervision of a professional who holds ASHA certification in the appropriate area of practice. Students will be dropped from the first clinic practicum course in their first fall semester if this and all other pre-practicum requirements are not met by the end of the drop/add period.

4.b. Clock Hours
Students are expected to be aware of their own clinical clock hour needs for graduation and certification. The clinical faculty, advisors, and academic preparation will guide clock hour accumulation, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to account for clock hour needs in requesting specific internships and other experiences.

An unsatisfactory grade in clinic will prevent the accumulation of clinic hours with the clients involved. Clinical faculty will not approve clock hours if the clinician’s performance is not satisfactory.

4.c. Transition from On-campus Practicum to Internships
The master’s program for students seeking clinical licensure or certification includes two extended internships, one that is typically scheduled for approximately the final 12 weeks of the second fall semester and another that is typically scheduled for the majority of the second spring semester. Students are approved to begin or to continue in their internships by the entire faculty, based on an array of factors including clinical competencies, professional behavior and judgment, academic performance, and other extenuating circumstances (e.g., program slowed down for personal reasons).

At a minimum, students must meet the following criteria to be allowed to begin the first of the two required internships:
1. Completed all required coursework for the degree from previous and completed semesters (i.e., through the second summer semester of the program, for students on the typical schedule) with a 3.00 cumulative graduate GPA, with no grade below a “C” in any required course, and with no more than two grades lower than a “B-” in required courses;
2. Completed the instructor’s initial satisfaction all portions of any course scheduled for the early weeks of the final fall semester;
3. Achieved an overall grade of B- or better in clinic practicum in the most recent completed semester;
4. Met requirements for no current clinical competency plan; and
5. Received clinic faculty recommendation to proceed for an internship assignment.

To be allowed to begin the second of the two required internships, students must meet at least the following criteria:
1. Completed all required coursework for the degree with a 3.00 cumulative graduate GPA, with no grade below a “C” in any required course, and with no more than two grades lower than a “B-” in required courses;
2. Completed successfully the first internship; and
3. Completed the written stage of comprehensive examinations with answers judged by the comprehensive examinations committees to represent good-faith efforts or reasonable attempts, or completed enough work on a master’s thesis proposal or a master’s thesis that the master’s thesis committee judges the student to be making adequate progress toward degree completion. This criterion does not require students to have passed their comprehensive examinations or to have defended the master’s thesis.

In addition, all second-internship placements are initially provisional, and being allowed to remain in the second internship depends on the outcome of the comprehensive examinations or progress toward completing the master’s thesis.

1. After the written and oral phases of comprehensive examinations have been scored and graded, students who have earned the grade of “Pass” for the comprehensive examinations will be allowed to remain in the second internship unless that internship must be terminated for any other reason.
2. After the written and oral phases of comprehensive examinations have been scored and graded, students who have been rated as “Remediation Required” as a result of those examinations and for whom a Comprehensive Remediation Plan has been developed will be removed immediately from their internship placements unless the committee and all relevant clinical supervisors agree to the continuation of that internship. Students in this situation who are removed from an internship may have an individualized clinical practicum or internship plan developed, which may require the successful completion of the Comprehensive Remediation Plan before internships will be rescheduled.
3. After the written and oral phases of comprehensive examinations have been scored and graded, students who have continued in their internships and have been rated as “Final Failure,” and for whom that designation is upheld by the faculty (as explained in the Comprehensive Examination procedures), will be removed immediately from the second internship and dismissed from the program.
4. Students completing a master’s thesis for an M.A. degree will be allowed to remain in and complete their second internship, unless at any time the master’s thesis advisory committee recommends to the program faculty that the student be removed from the internship and the program faculty accepts that recommendation by majority vote. Students in this situation who are removed from an internship may have a Competency Plan developed, which may require the successful completion of a master’s thesis or of Comprehensive Examinations before internships will be rescheduled.

If the faculty judges that the student is not ready to begin or remain in the first or second clinical internship for reasons of clinical knowledge, skills, or abilities, the student will stay on campus or be re-assigned to on-campus clinical practicum for an extra time period to be determined by the faculty, during which the student must meet specific requirements and/or develop specific competencies that will be described in writing and discussed with the student. Substantial additional information about clinical competencies and internships is provided in the Clinic Practicum Handbook.
5. **FINANCIAL AID**

Financial information for students is available from the Bursar’s Office, the university’s Office of Student Financial Aid, and the financial aid resources webpage maintained by the College of Education’s Office of Student Services.

Depending on their individual circumstances, students in the CMSD master’s program may qualify for some of the following.

**Graduate Assistantships.** An assistantship combines tuition reduction with a part-time work assignment. A limited number of graduate assistantships may be funded each year by the College, the Graduate School, or faculty members’ external grants or contracts. These assistantships require high grades; high Graduate Record Examination scores; and an outstanding record in academic, research, and/or clinical areas. The program faculty consider all students for assistantships as part of the program admissions process and as funding becomes available.

**Out-of-State Tuition Waivers.** A very limited number of out-of-state tuition waivers are awarded by the university to students who are not legal residents of the state of Georgia. The Graduate Coordinator of the full Communication Sciences and Special Education Department must nominate students for out-of-state tuition waivers, and the number of nominees is limited by the Graduate School.

**Scholarships.** The College of Education offers several competitive scholarships that are appropriate for CMSD students, including scholarships for the student teaching (school-based internship) semester. Information is available in the Clinic Handbook and through the COE Student Services Office.

**Internship Funding.** During the graduate hospital or medical internship experience, a few students may occasionally be funded by the facility where the student is working. Graduate advisors and intern supervisors have information on such funding.

**Service-Cancelable Loans.** Some student loans may be “service-cancelable” for some speech-language pathologists. Students should speak with a financial aid counselor for up-to-date information about this possibility in the context of their own specific financial and personal situations.

**Graduate School Travel Funding.** The Graduate School may have competitive funding available to help support graduate students who travel for the purpose of presenting a paper at regional or national meetings. Guidelines used in considering all requests for graduate student travel are available to interested students.

6. **OVERALL PROGRESS, REVIEWS, AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.a. **Faculty Review of Student Progress**

The faculty is required by the University of Georgia and by the American Speech-Language-
Hearing Association to monitor students’ overall progress toward their intended degrees. The intent of the Student Review is to make sure that students clearly understand any academic, clinical, or professional concerns the faculty might have as early as possible, so that they know what skills and professional behaviors they need to improve. Therefore, the entire program faculty reviews all graduate students two times each year, addressing academic, clinical, and professional development. If a student shows problems calling for special attention, the student is informed of the problems in writing by the assigned academic advisor. The letter will address the specific areas of concern, the expected changes, and the timeline to implement the changes. The letter will delineate the consequences if the expected changes are not achieved and will be signed by the student’s advisor and the Program Director.

Students who perform well in the academic program, but who have difficulty with the clinical program or are failing in clinical practica, may be advised to discontinue the clinical component of the program. That student may finish the academic Master’s degree but will not be eligible for licensure, credentialing, or certification as a speech-language pathologist. Students who have clinical competency problems but whom the faculty believe can successfully move to internships after completing remediation activities, may be required to complete additional clinical practicum and other remediation activities to achieve specific clinical competencies before beginning an internship (see the policies regarding remediation plans and internships in the Clinic Handbook).

The intent of student reviews is to assist students to complete their degrees, but the faculty reserves the right to dismiss any graduate student from the program who is not meeting clinical or academic standards or who exhibits unprofessional behavior that is inconsistent with the Code of Ethics of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, with the academic honesty policies of The University of Georgia, or with other relevant codes or policies.

6.b. Graduation Requirements
Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves early in their degree program with the Graduate School’s deadlines for the semester in which they would like to graduate and for determining what procedures and documentation are needed for each deadline. Failure to do so can result in delaying graduation.

6.c. Recommendation for Licensure, Georgia Educator Certification, or ASHA Certification
A student is considered to have the requisite knowledge and skills to be eligible for ASHA certification, if he or she has: (1) maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better, (2) earned no more than two grades lower than a “B-”, “S”, or better in all required coursework (academic and clinical), (3) successfully completed two required (full) internships, and (4) passed comprehensive examinations or successfully completed and defended a Master’s thesis. ASHA certification also requires satisfactory completion of the standards for clinical certification in speech-language pathology which are currently in effect. Note that graduates must also meet the standards that are in effect at the time the application is received by ASHA, not the standards in effect at the time of their graduation.

Additionally, graduates meeting academic and clinical requirements are eligible for Georgia licensure in speech-language pathology and Georgia educator certification (Service Field,
Standard Professional Certificate). Credentialing agencies in other states may have additional requirements.

6.d. Evaluations of Courses and Programs by Students
The program benefits greatly from student feedback. To continuously assess our program and provide the students the best education we can offer, we request that students provide written reviews of each course or clinical experience and each instructor every semester. All students completing the master’s degree are also asked to provide a written program evaluation that addresses the program’s strengths and weaknesses in programmatic, academic, and clinical areas. This evaluation is submitted online anonymously before the final clinic check-out.

Graduates will also be asked to complete the Master's Degree Graduate One-Year Follow-Up survey one year after graduation to give us additional feedback for continuous program improvement. Additionally, with your knowledge and permission, the College of Education will send a brief survey to your employer.

7. PROBLEM-SOLVING, PETITIONS, APPEALS, AND FORMAL COMPLAINTS
Students are encouraged to attempt to solve any problem that does arise during their master’s degree program by first discussing their concerns with faculty or other persons who are directly involved. If the problem cannot be solved in discussion with the faculty or other persons involved, then master’s students are to address the concern to their assigned academic advisor, who will provide guidance or suggestions. If necessary, the academic advisor will assist the student in bringing the concern to the Program Director, if it relates to academic issues, or to the SLP or Audiology Clinic Coordinator and then the Clinic Director, if it relates to clinical issues. If the problem cannot be solved satisfactorily by those persons, then it should be addressed to the Graduate Coordinator or to the Department Head.

In the event that the concerns are not solved satisfactorily through this sequence, clinic and/or program policies, decisions, or requirements may be challenged by student petition for concession on a particular point. Written petitions should be used only in extreme or unusual circumstances by the student. All petitions should be in writing, addressed to the Department Head, and contain the following information: (1) name of petitioner; (2) the specific rule, policy, or decision being challenged; (3) a summary of the attempts made thus far to solve the problem; and (4) a clear statement of the specific request, outcome, or remedy being sought, with specific reasons or support as to why the student believes that outcome to be fair or reasonable.

Petitions concerning clinical policy or procedure will be referred by the Department Head to the Clinic Director who will convene a Clinical Committee to discuss the petition. The Clinic Director will then forward the vote of the Clinical Committee to the Department Head. The Clinic Director may also file a minority opinion if she or he is so disposed. The Department Head will consider the recommendations of the Clinical Committee and report the decision in writing to the student.

Petitions concerning academic policy or procedure will be referred by the Department Head to a faculty committee to consider the petition. The Department Head will consider the recommendations of the faculty committee and report the decision in writing to the student.
Graduate students have the right to appeal departmental decisions to the Dean of the College of Education, to the Graduate School, and then to the University Educational Affairs Committee, as explained in greater detail in the College of Education’s material about appeals.

Students who wish to register a formal complaint to ASHA should do so by submitting a complaint in writing to the Chair, Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard, #310, Rockville, MD 20850.


8. SPEECH-LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS

The procedures described in this section were adopted by the faculty to help assure that students exhibit speech-language skills adequate for satisfactory performance as professionals working with individuals who have communication or swallowing disorders.

Graduate students enrolled in the Program of Communication Sciences and Disorders will be screened for speech, language, and hearing difficulties. Students identified by this screening or by individual faculty members as having difficulties in any of these areas will be referred to the department's Speech and Hearing Clinic for a full speech-language or hearing evaluation and, if recommended, subsequent intervention. Students with recognizable disorders of speech, language, or hearing are not necessarily excluded from clinical practice because of that disorder. Students with disabilities or who have been enrolled in therapy as a result of the foregoing process must be approved by a Clinical Review Committee of three CMSD faculty members for admission into course work involving clinical practice. Should a student be admitted by the committee to practicum course work prior to full completion of his or her own therapy, committee approval must be obtained until completion of therapy for each subsequent enrollment in a clinical practicum course.

For students who speak with an accent or dialect that is noticeable to clients living in the Athens, Georgia, area, and who wish to complete clinical practicum experiences, CMSD faculty will follow guidelines and procedures as stated in Clinic Policy 23.1, Speech, Voice, and Expressive Language Expectations for Student Clinicians:

I. Introduction and Background

Policy statements and other materials provided by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) have defined “accent” and “dialect” as follows:

- “Accents are defined as English pronunciation that is not the result of pathology and is perceived to be different from the listener’s, whether the English was learned as a first, second, or other language” (ASHA, 2011).
- “Accents include aspects of speech sound production, prosody, rate, and fluency (Celedón-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996), all of which have been shown to affect intelligibility” (ASHA, 2011).
- “Dialect describes "a rule-governed, systematic variation of a language" (Goldstein, 2000, p.9; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1998) and includes accent as well as grammatical structures and semantics” (ASHA, 2015).
• All individuals speak with an accent and/or dialect (ASHA, 1998a; ASHA, 1998b).
• “No dialectal variety of English is a disorder” (ASHA, 1983).

In accordance with these principles and others, the UGA Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education attempts to be inclusive of students who use any dialect of native or non-native English, as well as students whose spoken English may be perceived by faculty members or other students as accented.

For the speech-language pathology master’s program in particular, issues related to students’ accents and dialects are also related to their ability as student-clinicians to provide effective and high-quality clinical services in the area of speech-language pathology. Relevant policy statements and other materials from ASHA include the following:

• Student-clinicians should generally be able to “model the target phoneme, grammatical feature, or other aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client’s particular problem” (ASHA, 1998a). “Computer applications, software, recordings” or other means may be used to provide models or present stimuli to clients (ASHA, 2011), but effective engagement with clients requires “much more than a clinician simply providing a model.” Thus, the student’s accent may interfere with effective clinical service provision even if the student can arrange to provide the client with a recorded or other model.
• “Speaking with an accent is often related to hearing with an accent (Flege, 1995); thus, it is likely that a clinician's ability to model particular speech sounds may well be influenced by his or her ability to perceive the client's speech accuracy and to internalize features of target productions” (ASHA, 2011).
• The student-clinician’s accent or dialect may be especially relevant for clinical practice because “accented speech may be particularly difficult to decode for individuals with communication disorders” (ASHA, 2011).

In recognition of these two sets of issues (namely, the acceptability of all accents and dialects, and also the need to provide effective clinical services), ASHA expects each clinical program to establish policies and procedures related to the clinical education of students whose accent or dialect might be recognized as “different” in ways that might interfere with clinical service delivery. Such policies and procedures are expected to adhere to the general policy that “members of ASHA must not discriminate against persons who speak with an accent and/or dialect in educational programs, employment, or service delivery, and should encourage an understanding of linguistic differences among consumers and the general population” (ASHA, 1998a, p. 1). At the same time, all policies for clinical service delivery and for clinical education are expected to adhere to viola principles that require holding the client’s welfare “paramount” and seeking and maintaining only the “highest level of professional competence and performance” (ASHA, 2010r).

II. Program Policies and Procedures

In accordance with the basic principles outlined in the previous section, and as recommended by ASHA (2011), the speech-language pathology master’s program at the University of Georgia “expects that students’ accents may have no effect” on their ability to be successful as students and as future professionals. The program allows and expects students to use a range of dialects. The program also allows and expects that student-clinicians will use speech patterns perceived by faculty, other students, and clients as accented.
At the same time, the program is also required to ensure that student-clinicians’ own speech, voice, and expressive language patterns do not interfere with their ability to be effective clinicians. When a student’s accent or dialect is perceived as potentially affecting his or her current clinical effectiveness or future professional clinical effectiveness (ASHA, 2011), the UGA SLP program will follow these procedures to maximize the student’s successful completion of program requirements.

The goal is that students should demonstrate communication skills necessary for effective clinical and professional interactions with clients and their relevant others. For oral communication, the applicant must have demonstrated speech and language skills in English, which, at a minimum, are consistent with ASHA's current position statement on students and professionals who speak English with accents and nonstandard dialects. (ASHA 2020 CCC-SLP Standards, V-A).

1. In accordance with ASHA’s position (1998a) and professional issues statements (2011), the focus will be on the student’s intelligibility; ability to provide clients with models of the target phoneme, grammatical feature, or other aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client’s problem; ability to provide accurate feedback about the client’s productions; and ability through multiple means including spoken language to develop an effective and therapeutic relationship with the client and relevant others.

2. Concerns about a student's communication skills may be addressed by an individual clinical faculty member, if the problems emerge or exist in the context of the student working with one client or family under that faculty member’s direction. If the concerns involve more than one faculty member or more than one client, concerns may be addressed by a panel of faculty members. Such a panel may include the Program Director, the Clinic Director, the student's academic advisor, any involved academic or clinical faculty, and any other faculty as appropriate for the situation.

3. Students who require additional support for their development of clinical skills because of their accent or dialect will be provided with the following resources or strategies, as appropriate:

   a. Identification of areas of concern and strengths as early as possible in the program.

   b. When indicated, development of an accent modification plan or intelligibility enhancement plan, in conjunction with the student and faculty. This plan will include: (1) specific sounds and linguistic behaviors required for effective service delivery, (2) objectives and criteria for accomplishment, (3) plan review dates, and (4) timeline for completion of the plan. The long-term outcome to be achieved is enhanced intelligibility (as needed), self-awareness of accent and its clinical impact with a variety of clients, and development of resources for various clinical situations. It may be necessary to discuss that additional time may be needed to complete the graduate program, if accent modification/intelligibility enhancement services are necessary.

   c. Accent modification services at no cost through the UGA Speech and Hearing Clinic. When possible, students will be given the option to receive services by student clinicians who are not in the student’s cohort and sessions that are not observable by other students.

   d. University and community resources for accent modification services, if preferred by the student.
c. Recommendations for additional university services, as needed (e.g., additional writing assistance).

4. As the ASHA (2011) statement describes, both the program and the student have responsibilities with respect to appropriate education of all students and appropriate clinical service provision for all clients, as these relate to faculty members’, students’, and clients’ accents and dialects. Students in UGA’s SLP program are encouraged to be familiar with ASHA’s (2011) statement and will be expected to work cooperatively with the faculty if concerns about their accent or dialect are raised.

Adapted from:


Additional references:


9. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE, FOR STUDENTS SEEKING THE M.ED. DEGREE WITH AN EMPHASIS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY**


I. **Prerequisites:** Students seeking the M.Ed. must complete written comprehensive examinations near the end of their graduate program. Comprehensive examinations in CMSD are intended to be integrative across all coursework, providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to combine and apply their knowledge at a professional level. Comprehensive examinations are offered once per year, usually immediately before the beginning of the spring semester in early January.

Comprehensive examinations are open only to students who have completed all academic coursework required for the master’s degree, with no more than two grades lower than a “B-” in required courses officially recorded on the UGA transcript by the registrar’s office and with a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 showing on the official UGA transcript as of the date of the examination. All other variations are unacceptable and do not constitute satisfaction of this requirement (i.e., grades of “Incomplete” are unacceptable, grades of “C-” or below are unacceptable, and it is the cumulative graduate GPA as officially calculated by the university that must be at least 3.0).

Students who do not meet these criteria may be allowed, in exceptional cases and at the faculty’s discretion, to take the comprehensive exams. Students seeking such special consideration must provide a written petition to the Graduate Coordinator no later than the midpoint of the semester prior to that in which exams would be taken (i.e., during the Fall semester of the second year, for students following the typical course sequence). The petition must include (a) the student’s proposed plan for meeting all of these criteria, and (b) the student’s explanation as to why previous performance should be overridden in the faculty’s consideration of future performance. The faculty’s decision and plan may or may not accept the student’s plan or explanation, and may or may not use the student’s proposed plan. Students are also referred to relevant policies on “Course Grades and Grade Point Averages” and on internship requirements and procedures elsewhere in this document and in the Clinical Practicum Handbook.

II. **Nature of comprehensive examinations:**
   A. Comprehensive exams will typically include two integrative, essay-type, questions. No prior content areas will be formed; regardless of the particular format in a given year, integration across all SLP coursework and experiences will be required.

   B. Comprehensive examinations are administered as a sequence of two examination dates, one initial written examination and one follow-up oral examination. Both the initial written comprehensive examination and the follow-up oral comprehensive examination are completed by the student in person at UGA.

   C. The initial comprehensive written examinations are administered in one full day, usually administered in a UGA computer lab so that students may type their answers. If
a computer lab is not available in a given year, the department faculty will make every
effort to make sufficient computers available. If sufficient computers are not
available, comprehensive examinations will be written in blue books provided by the
department.

D. For in-house written comprehensive examinations, students are provided with all
necessary questions at the beginning of the day and may pace themselves as they choose
during the day. No assistive resources or materials of any kind are allowed during in-
house comprehensive examinations; students should plan to bring nothing to the
examinations.

E. Information about possible question types and some sample questions will be provided
to students by a faculty member designated as the Coordinator for Comprehensive
Exams during the semester before comprehensive exams (i.e., usually during fall
semester). Questions provided to students as sample questions will not be used in the
actual comprehensive exams.

F. Each written question will be developed and graded by a team of two or more
program faculty, with no program faculty member serving on more than one team in a
given year. In the case of two-member teams, a third faculty member (who is not serving
on the team for any another question) will serve as a deciding vote in case of
disagreement between the first two team members regarding question development or
scoring (see below re: scoring).

III. Exam dates and time allotted
Exam dates will be determined annually. Written examinations are held immediately before the
beginning of students’ final spring semester, in very early January, between the first and second
internships. Oral examinations will occur during that semester. Students need to plan to be
available from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on all examination dates. The department will inform
internship supervisors of this date ahead of time (students who do not need to complete the
oral examination will attend their internship that day as regularly scheduled). Dates will be
selected that do not conflict with known religious observances.

IV. Special Circumstances
A. Documented physical, learning, or other disabilities will be appropriately accommodated
by the department for comprehensive exams as for any other course or activity. Affected
students should speak with the Graduate Coordinator, their assigned advisor, or the
Comprehensive Examinations Coordinator at least one full semester before they intend
to take comprehensive examinations.

B. Academic honesty regulations apply to comprehensive examinations as to any other
course or activity. Students should be aware that the department faculty will take academic
honesty extremely seriously for comprehensive examinations. If academic dishonesty is
suspected in connection with comprehensive exams, the penalty that the department will
suggest in facilitated discussions and in formal hearings (see the UGA Academic Honesty
Policies) will be failure of the comprehensive exams and immediate expulsion from the
program without an earned degree. In such a situation, the department would be
unable to recommend a student for any clinical certification, credential, or licensure.
V. Grading of Initial Written Examinations
   A. Each written answer will be read by at least two faculty team members, at least one
      of whom will have specific expertise or specialty knowledge in relevant areas, blind as to
      the other's rating.

      In the case of disagreement concerning "pass" or "fail," a qualified faculty member not
      on any other team (see above) will be called upon to serve as the third reader and
      cast the deciding vote.

   B. Each written answer will be graded as either "Pass" or "Fail."

   C. Passing or failure is determined first for each question individually. A "Pass" for a given
      question results from two positive votes (either 2/2 on initial vote or 2/3 if 3rd
      reader required). All questions must be passed to pass comprehensive exams. A failure
      on any one or more questions constitutes failure of the exam as a whole.

   D. Given the integrative nature of the questions, the grade of "Fail" for a written question
      will often arise from any of three causes:

      1. A severe (defined as a definite and unacceptably strong) weakness in content of
         one specific curricular area that formed part of the integrative question, despite
         acceptable knowledge of other aspects of the question.

      2. Moderate to severe weakness in content from more than one curricular area contained
         in the question (thus preventing meaningful integration).

      3. Presentation of a series of accurate but disconnected facts without appropriate
         integration.

   E. Students who fail one or more of the initial written questions will be required to meet for
      a follow-up oral examination for each question failed with a committee of at least
      three faculty members. At least one member of the oral examinations committee for
      each question will have served as a reader for the relevant written question, but all
      members of the oral examination committee will not necessarily be the same as the faculty
      members who served as readers for the initial question. Students who fail only one
      question will meet with one faculty team for one oral examination based on that question.
      Students who fail two or more questions will meet with two or more faculty teams for
      separate oral examinations based on each question that was not passed. No follow-up
      oral examination is required for any written question that was graded as “Pass” by at least
      2/3 readers.

   F. The nature of the oral examination will be dictated by the nature of the "Fail" and will
      be determined for each student individually by the faculty team. The following general
      guidelines will be used to develop questions for the oral examination:

      1. If part of the problem was a focal content weakness, the defense will usually address
         that specific content area in depth.
2. If part of the problem was weak content across more than one content area, or lack of integration of generally accurate content, the defense will usually cover those content areas and focus on their integration and will address different aspects of those same content areas.

3. Defense questions may also expand on the initial questions or ask about related or complementary areas.

G. At the completion of the Oral Examination, the student will leave the room and the committee will, within 5 minutes, make a determination of either “Immediate Pass” or “Discussion Required.” This decision will be communicated orally to the student immediately.

H. In the event that the committee’s decision is “Discussion Required,” the following steps will be completed.

1. The faculty committee that conducted each oral examination will discuss the student’s answers for that question and any other relevant information and will then grade each student as “Pass,” “Remediation Required,” or “Final Failure” for each question. This decision will be communicated to the Comprehensive Examinations Coordinator within 24 hours.

2. If the decision for the single question addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Pass,” or if the decision for all of the two or more questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Pass,” then the student has passed comprehensive examinations.

3. If the decision for any one or more of the questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Final Failure,” whether that failure is for the single question that was addressed or for as few as one of the two or more questions that were addressed, the Comprehensive Examinations Coordinator will convene a meeting of the program faculty within one week to discuss the case. Unless the faculty by a majority vote of those present finds compelling reasons to overturn the finding of “Final Failure,” the decision will stand, and the student will be reported to the graduate school as having failed to complete requirements for the graduate degree. This outcome can occur for any one question and, therefore, for the comprehensive examinations as a whole regardless of the outcome of any other question. The student will be removed immediately from any clinical internship placement and dismissed from the program. No degree will be earned, and the department will be unable to recommend that student for any certification or licensure.

4. If the decision for one or more questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations by any one student is “Remediation Required,” and if the student received no grades of “Final Fail” for any answer at the stage of Oral Examinations, the student will be required to complete a Comprehensive Remediation Plan of at least one full semester’s duration. One team of at least three program faculty members will develop one Comprehensive Remediation Plan for the student. If the student is judged to require remediation based on the oral examinations associated with two or more initial written questions, the team to develop the remediation plan will include at least one faculty member from each initial written question.
The Plan will specify (a) those activities that the faculty will require the student to complete to be able to earn a "Pass" for comprehensive examinations and (b) a timeline within which those activities must be completed. Remediation activities may include retaking for a grade or auditing one or more courses when those courses are regularly scheduled; completing one or more specific reading, writing, or clinical assignments in a manner that meets the standards set by the faculty committee; retaking comprehensive examinations at their next regularly scheduled administration a year later; and/or other activities that will delay the student's graduation by at least one semester. In addition, students with Comprehensive Remediation Plans in place will be removed immediately from their internship placements unless the committee and all relevant clinical supervisors agree to the continuation of that internship. **Comprehensive Remediation Plans cannot be reconfigured or continued; failure to complete all activities on the Comprehensive Remediation Plan by the date specified will result in failure to pass graduate comprehensive examinations, and, therefore, failure to obtain a Master's degree in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program.**

VI. Feedback to students following each examination stage:

A. At each stage, students will be informed in writing of all decisions. Written feedback about the reasons for all decisions other than “Pass” will also be provided. No results will be given over the phone or by email.

B. In the event of a "Fail" on any one or more questions from the initial written examination, the SLP Comprehensives Coordinator (one of the team members) or another faculty team member will assign an oral defense exam date. Students will also be provided with written feedback from at least two readers about the reasons for the “Fail” decision at this stage.

C. In the event that the decision of “Final Fail” is let stand by the program faculty after the oral examination, the letter to the student will also include a brief narrative (written by the SLP Comprehensives Coordinator and approved by all SLP academic faculty), summarizing the reasons for the committee's decision.

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