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COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Communication Sciences & Disorders

## **Graduate Handbook**

**Doctor of Philosophy in Communication  
Sciences and Disorders**

**Master of Arts in Communication Sciences and  
Disorders**

**2026-2027**

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders  
Melcher Life Sciences  
3871 Holman St., Room M156, Houston, TX 77204-6018  
713-743-2897

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# Introduction and Overview of the COMD Graduate Program

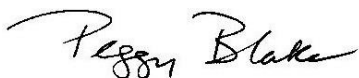
## Letter from the Department Chair

Welcome to graduate school in UH COMD! Each of you was admitted to the MA or PhD program not only for your academic preparation and strong potential to succeed, but also for what you will bring to the program. The collective diversity of your backgrounds, ideas, experiences, skills, and goals contributes to our academic and clinical missions. Acceptance into our well-established SLP MA program or our growing PhD program is a challenge in itself; now that you are here, your job is to learn as much as you can from the people (faculty, clinical educators (CE), clients, peers, etc) and opportunities provided in the program. You are not competing against your classmates; you are all here to increase your knowledge and develop your clinical, critical thinking, and research skills to be the best possible clinician/researcher/educator that you can be.

Graduate school is not for the faint of heart. It takes a lot of time and energy; some weeks will be a breeze, and others may feel like you've reached your breaking point. Each experience will provide you with different knowledge or skills, most of which you will use at one point or another in your career (even if it doesn't feel like it at the time). Some of the experiences will teach you how to work with people that don't think the way that you do, or whose personality clashes with yours. Finding ways to work with and learn from these individuals may be some of the most important lessons you learn in graduate school.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the department and the requirements for your program. It includes essential information that you will need during your course of study, and it is important that you review these materials carefully. This handbook will be augmented by other information from the UH graduate catalog [<http://publications.uh.edu/>]. It is your responsibility to know the relevant department and university policies/procedures, and to ask for help and guidance as needed.

I am looking forward to getting to know you and watching you grow in knowledge and wisdom over the next few years and then watching you head out to do good and improve the world in ways only you can.



Margaret (Peggy) Blake, PhD CCC-SLP  
Professor & Chair  
[mtblake@uh.edu](mailto:mtblake@uh.edu)  
713-743-2894

## Letter from the PhD Program Director

Dear UH COMD PhD Student,

Congratulations and welcome! We are excited that you have chosen to join our doctoral program and look forward to supporting you as you begin this next chapter of your education. A doctoral program is unlike any other educational experience. It will challenge you intellectually, professionally, and personally, but it will also provide opportunities to discover your strengths, develop your own voice, and make meaningful contributions to our field.

This handbook outlines the policies, procedures, and requirements that will guide your progress through the program. While it is your responsibility to become familiar with these expectations, please remember that you are not expected to navigate this journey alone. Your advisor and the Program Director, and the Program Manager are here to help you succeed.

One of the most important factors in your success will be the relationship you build with your advisor. Communicate openly and often. Meet regularly, ask questions, and discuss expectations regarding research, writing, conference participation, authorship, timelines, and professional development. Your advisor can provide guidance only if they know both your progress and the challenges you are facing. Don't wait until small problems become large ones.

As you begin your doctoral studies, recognize that a PhD is not just an extension of coursework; it is an apprenticeship in becoming an independent researcher. Over the next several years, you will not only learn what is already known but also how new knowledge is created. Develop strong habits of reading, writing, and critical thinking. Build research skills that will serve you throughout your career. Write regularly, and remember that first drafts are just that, first drafts. Writing is a process of getting ideas onto the page, revising them, and refining them over time. Don't wait for perfection to begin; progress comes from writing, not from thinking about writing.

Research itself is rarely a straight path. Studies encounter unexpected obstacles. Manuscripts are rejected. Grant proposals are not always funded on the first submission. Reviewer comments can be difficult to receive. These experiences are not signs that you are failing, they are part of the research process and are shared by every scholar. The goal is not to avoid setbacks, but to learn from them and continue moving forward.

You may also find that your progress feels uneven. Some weeks everything comes together, while other weeks it may seem that little is accomplished. This is normal. A PhD is a marathon, not a sprint. Consistent effort over time matters far more than occasional bursts of productivity. Protect time for focused work, develop organizational systems that fit your style, seek feedback often, and remember that your dissertation is meant to demonstrate that you can conduct independent research; it is not expected to be the defining achievement of your career.

Throughout your time here, invest in the people around you. Build strong relationships with your advisor, other faculty mentors, lab members, and fellow students. Attend conferences,

introduce yourself to researchers whose work interests you (even if your inner voice is telling you to walk away), and seek opportunities to collaborate across disciplines. The professional network you begin building now will become one of your greatest assets throughout your career.

Finally, remember that every doctoral student experiences moments of self-doubt. Feeling challenged does not mean you do not belong; it usually means you are growing. Do not compare your journey to someone else's. Every student enters with different strengths and follows a unique path. Success in a PhD program is not determined by being the smartest person in the room, but by cultivating curiosity and resilience.

Everyone in the UH COMD community is invested in your success. Take advantage of the opportunities before you, seek support when you need it, and remember to care for your well-being along the way. We are excited to watch you grow into a scholar, an independent researcher, and a future leader in the field.

Welcome to the program. We are honored to be part of your journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'AT' or 'Amber Thiessen'.

Amber Thiessen, PhD, CCC-CLP

Associate Professor

PhD Program Director

[althiess@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:althiess@Central.UH.EDU)

713-743-5990

## Letter from the Master's Program Director

Dear UH COMD Master's Student,

Welcome to the University of Houston's COMD Master's Program!

We are delighted that you have chosen to join our community. It is a privilege to be part of your journey toward becoming a speech-language pathologist, and I am honored to serve as your program director.

Our faculty, staff, and clinical educators are committed to supporting your academic success, professional growth, and well-being. Graduate school is both rewarding and challenging, and you are not expected to navigate it alone. Lean on your professors, clinical educators, advisors, peers, and university resources when you need support. Likewise, when you are thriving, look for opportunities to support those around you.

As you begin the program, I encourage you to remember four things:

1. You belong here. We value your perspectives, experiences, and contributions.
2. Graduate study requires deeper learning. Success is not just about mastering information but applying knowledge and developing strong clinical judgment.
3. Pursue your interests. Our faculty are eager to help you explore areas of passion through mentorship, research, and specialty experiences.
4. Take care of yourself. Build connections, use available resources, and make time to enjoy life beyond the classroom and clinic.

We are excited to welcome you to the UH COMD team and look forward to supporting you throughout your graduate education.



Laura Cizek, EdD, CCC-SLP  
Clinical Professor and Master's Program Director

[lcizek@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:lcizek@Central.UH.EDU)

713-743-2683

## Letter from Clinic Director

Dear Student,

Welcome to the University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (USLHC) at the University of Houston. As a COMD alumna and fellow Cougar, I am delighted that you have chosen the University of Houston to pursue your graduate studies in speech-language pathology. The Clinical Educators and I are committed to providing you with an exceptional clinical education experience in a supportive, collaborative, and encouraging environment.

During your first three semesters, you will likely be assigned clients within the USLHC and/or at one of our outstanding community partner sites. Clinical services may be provided in person or through telepractice, depending on client needs. Our clinic serves a diverse population across the lifespan, providing opportunities to work with a wide range of communication, cognitive, and swallowing disorders in both pediatric and adult settings. These experiences are intentionally designed to help you build a strong clinical foundation and prepare you for the advanced responsibilities of your final externship placements.

Graduate school is both rewarding and demanding. Balancing academic coursework with clinical responsibilities can be particularly challenging, especially during your first semester. Developing effective time management, organizational, and self-care strategies will be essential to your success. As your coursework gradually decreases throughout the program, your clinical responsibilities will increase, preparing you for the pace and expectations of full-time clinical practice during externships and beyond.

At the USLHC, we embrace a growth mindset. Clinical competency develops through experience, reflection, feedback, and perseverance. You will inevitably encounter challenges and make mistakes along the way—and that is an expected and valuable part of the learning process. Our Clinical Educators are here to guide, support, and challenge you as you develop the knowledge, skills, and professional judgment necessary to become an effective clinician. Through your work with our clients and their families, you will discover your strengths, refine your clinical interests, and begin to shape your unique professional identity.

Our goal is not only to help you meet the requirements of the program, but also to help you become the clinician you were meant to be—one who is compassionate, evidence-based, reflective, and committed to lifelong learning.

I encourage you to become familiar with the Clinic Handbook, as it contains important information regarding clinic policies, procedures, and the roles and responsibilities of graduate clinicians and Clinical Educators. This handbook will serve as a valuable resource throughout your graduate training. Please refer to it regularly for guidance related to the clinic, the program, the profession, and the department.

We are excited to be part of your professional journey and look forward to getting to know you, celebrating your growth, and supporting your success.

**Go Coogs!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Andrus".

Clinic Director, University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic

University of Houston

[mlnorton@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:mlnorton@Central.UH.EDU)

713-743-9307

## Letter from Clinic Externship Coordinator

Dear UH COMD Student,

Welcome to your externship journey! I'm so pleased to officially welcome you to this exciting and transformative phase of your clinical education.

My name is Angelle Pate, and I have the great privilege of serving as the Externship Program Coordinator for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. My role is to support you throughout the externship placement process and to help match you with sites that will challenge, inspire, and prepare you for the professional world ahead.

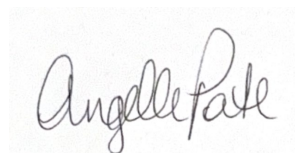
While I do not come from a speech-language pathology background, I hold a Master of Education and bring a unique perspective to the department. My experience in higher education and program administration allows me to advocate for students in intentional and student-centered ways, contributing meaningfully to both individual growth and departmental decisions.

What drives me most in this role is you—the student! I am passionate about educational development and take pride in supporting students both professionally and personally. I strive to get to know each of you individually, considering your goals, strengths, and areas of growth when identifying externship placements that are the best fit. It is my goal to make this process supportive, thoughtful, and reflective of who you are.

Externship is a valuable opportunity to expand your clinical skills, gain real-world experience, and begin shaping your identity as a professional. I am here to be a resource, a guide, and a partner along the way. I look forward to working closely with you and our outstanding externship sites to ensure a meaningful and successful experience.

Please feel free to reach out at any point if you have questions or need support. I'm excited to walk alongside you in this important chapter of your journey.

Best!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angelle Pate". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Angelle Pate, M.Ed.  
Externship Program Coordinator  
[ampate@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:ampate@Central.UH.EDU)  
713-743-8210

## COMD Mission Statement

The mission of the Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Houston is to advance the understanding of typical and disordered speech, language, swallowing, and hearing and increase access to efficient communication through excellence in teaching, scholarship and service to the community.

### Department Goals:

1. **Student Success.** UH COMD will provide a top tier, inclusive, and supportive educational experience to all
2. **Nationally and internationally competitive research:** UH COMD will build a nationally and internationally competitive research powerhouse through an immersive culture of research and innovation.
3. **Social Responsibility:** UH COMD will provide high-quality education and clinical services to increase access to effective communication for the Houston community
4. **Culture of Excellence and Belonging:** UH COMD will foster a culture of responsibility, respect, kindness, curiosity, collaboration, and innovation.

### Program Goals:

**Master's Program:** To provide the highest quality instruction, clinical practica, and research opportunities to prepare students to function competently as speech-language pathologists in all professional settings and to pursue a terminal degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders or related fields.

**Doctoral Program:** To provide the highest quality instruction, research experience, and relevant clinical mentoring to prepare students for research, academic, and non-academic positions.

### Accreditation

The University of Houston is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). The Master of Arts (M.A.) education program in Speech-Language Pathology (residential) at the University of Houston is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](https://www.aslha.org/), 2200 Research Boulevard #310, Rockville, MD 20850, 800-498-2071 or 301-296-5700.

### COMD Faculty, Staff, and CEs

Please view the COMD webpage for information about the departmental faculty, emeritus faculty, departmental staff, and CEs. <https://www.uh.edu/class/comd/people/faculty/index>

## Prohibitions on Discrimination

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is committed to the promotion and affirmation of diversity and respects the dignity and worth of individuals regardless of their gender expression and identity, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. We follow the University of Houston's Anti-discrimination policy: <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/anti-discrimination/policies/>.

## FERPA

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, commonly known as FERPA, is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Students have specific, protected rights regarding the release of such records, and FERPA requires that institutions adhere strictly to these guidelines. FERPA restricts faculty and staff from releasing student information to parents. This information often surprises parents since they frequently pay college tuition. Any student wishing to allow parents access to records should refer to the following link: <http://www.uh.edu/legal-affairs/general-counsel/ferpa/index.php>.

## Contact Information

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and the University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic are in the Melcher Life Sciences Building on the University of Houston Main Campus.

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders  
Melcher Life Sciences  
3871 Holman St., Room M242, Houston, TX 77204-6018  
713-743-2897  
Fax: 713.743.2926  
E-mail: [comd@central.uh.edu](mailto:comd@central.uh.edu)

University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic  
Melcher Life Sciences  
3871 Holman St., Room M156, Houston, TX 77204-6018  
713-743-0915  
Fax: 713.743.2926  
E-mail: [USLHC@uh.edu](mailto:USLHC@uh.edu)

Parking permits are required for parking in the lot directly in front of Melcher Life Sciences (Lot 15C). Visitor parking is available in the Stadium Garage across the street.

Emergency procedures for the department and clinic are described in [Appendix D](#).

# Student Supports

## Accessibility

Any student with a disability and who needs accommodations to perform successfully in the program, is required to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Ability Center, (713) 743-5400; 713-749-1527 (TDD); 713-743-5396 (Fax); or [JDcenter@central.uh.edu](mailto:JDcenter@central.uh.edu) (email). The center will evaluate each student and identify their needs. Appropriate documentation related to accommodations must be given to each instructor at the beginning of each term for which accommodations are requested. Accommodations are negotiated between the person making the request, the instructor, and the Dart Center. [Student Accessibility Center - University of Houston \(uh.edu\)](http://www.uh.edu/csac). Accommodations will not be provided to students by instructors without documentation from the Dart Center.

## Cougar Cupboard

The Cougar Cupboard is available for any student facing food insecurity. For more information follow this link: <https://www.uh.edu/csac/cougar-cupboard/>.

## Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to the demands of a professional graduate program, or feeling sad and hopeless. Students can reach CAPS (<http://www.uh.edu/caps/>) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let's Talk” program, a drop-in, confidential consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus: <https://uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets-talk/>.

## Equal Opportunity Services

The University of Houston offers many campus resources for other individual needs and/or personal interests. Information on Equal Opportunity Services, including Title IX, can be found at <http://www.uh.edu/equal-opportunity/>.

## Library Printing Information

UH Main Campus students, faculty, and staff receive a printing credit on their Cougar Card FLEX account at the start of every term. Here is more information about library printing, including printing from your own device: [Print & Scan | University of Houston Libraries \(uh.edu\)](http://www.uh.edu/libraries/printing).

## Ombuds Services

The Ombudsperson provides a safe setting for graduate and professional students to confidentially raise and discuss their concerns about workplace and academic issues, interpersonal difficulties and to receive assistance in identifying options for resolving the conflicts and concerns. The Ombudsperson operates independently, listens without judgement, remains neutral, provides an impartial perspective, and holds all conversations and information confidential except when there is imminent risk of serious harm. The Ombudsperson serves as a thinking partner and a bridge between problems and options for the resolution of concerns and conflicts. The graduate/professional student is the ultimate decision-maker for the path of resolution. More details can be found on this webpage: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/ombuds-services/index.php>

## Wellness

UH Wellness is here to support you in all your health and well-being needs. They promote and enrich the health and well-being of students to become successful scholars and engaged global citizens. More information can be found at <https://uh.edu/wellness/>.

## Other Student Resources

Please visit: Division of Student Affairs (<https://uh.edu/dsaes/resources/students/index.php>), The Graduate School (<https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/>) and University Services (<https://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=61&navoid=23719>) for a detailed list of several other student resources. Feminine products are available free to students in the Grad Student workroom.

## Policies

### Applying for Graduation

Per University policy, all students must apply to graduate. Graduation applications should be filed early in the term in which the student plans to graduate. Applications are completed via myUH on <https://accessuh.uh.edu/login.php>. Deadlines for filing the application for graduation are listed in the academic calendar which can be accessed at <http://www.uh.edu/calendar/specialty-calendars/>. Any student who does not apply for graduation will not be allowed to graduate, even if all degree requirements have been met.

Candidates for graduation who have previously applied, but not finished in the anticipated term, must reapply for graduation, and may be charged an additional fee.

Any student who expects to graduate in a given term must be enrolled for that term. This regulation applies to students who have not submitted a thesis or dissertation by the deadline of the previous term. Students will work with their advisors in these situations.

Certification for graduation is performed by the Dean's office in the college of the student's major. Diplomas usually are mailed about one month after graduation. However, students may indicate on the graduation application form that they will pick up their diplomas in the Office of Registration and Academic Records.

## Attendance Policy

Timeliness in arrival to class and class attendance are expected to facilitate learning and a demonstration of professionalism. As such, faculty may take attendance and note late arrivals. Point deductions for unexcused absences and/or late arrivals may occur. Details are specified in the class syllabi.

Please see the [Graduate Excused Absence Policy](#) for information about excused absences.

Please see the Clinic Attendance Policy in the clinic section of this handbook regarding student and client absences.

## Complaint Policy

Complainants are expected to file complaints at the appropriate level so that all due process procedures may be followed. It is important to begin with the source of the complaint so that they can have the opportunity to rectify the situation or to provide an explanation or rationale.

Students should take issues regarding grades and class policies/procedures to the course instructor. For clinical placements, the supervisor or Clinical Educator(CE) is considered the instructor. If the student is not satisfied after talking with the source, the student may schedule a meeting with the next higher level within the administrative structure as described here:

Graduate MA/PhD program: Instructor ----> Program Director ----> Department Chair.  
Students may use their advisor to help navigate the process.

On-campus Clinic: CE ---->Clinic Director ----> Department Chair

Externship: Supervisor----> Externship Coordinator----> Clinic Director ----> Department Chair

Complaints or concerns about a program or curriculum should be directed to the Director of that program. If the student is not satisfied after talking to a Director, they should schedule a meeting with the Department Chair.

Concerns or complaints about a department employee or student should be directed to the Department Chair. Concerns or issues related to discrimination must be reported to the UH office of Equal Opportunity Services (see details below).

Complaints about the MA program related to the Standards of Accreditation should be made in writing to the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

Such complaints must meet the following criteria:

- be against an accredited graduate education program or program in candidacy status in audiology and/or speech language pathology,
- relate to the Standards for Accreditation of Entry-Level Graduate Education Programs in Audiology and Speech Language Pathology,
- clearly describe the specific nature of the conduct being complained about, which must have occurred at least in part within 5 years of the date the complaint is filed, the relationship of the complaint to the accreditation standards and provide supporting data for the charge.

Procedures for filing a complaint with the CAA can be found at:

<https://caa.asha.org/programs/complaints/>

Questions and/or requests for information about accreditation or the CAA can be directed to:

The Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology American

Speech-Language-Hearing Association 2200 Research Boulevard, #310

Rockville, MD 20850

[accreditation@asha.org](mailto:accreditation@asha.org)

800-498-2071

The Office of Equal Opportunity Services is charged with the processing of all inquiries and complaints concerning discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, genetic information, and/or veteran status. Concerns or complaints involving any of these will be forwarded to EOS. Any ongoing department procedures will be put on hold until a report from EOS has been received.

A student, staff, or faculty may inquire with Equal Opportunity Services to ask for advice, seek counseling, and/or file a formal complaint.

No person inquiring/filing a complaint will be subject to retaliation.

A full description of the complaint procedure can be found at the EOS website:

<https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/about-eos/index.php>

If any issue continues to be unresolved after meeting with the appropriate levels, including the Department Chair, the student may file a formal grievance with the department.

COMD uses the CLASS definition for grievances: An academic grievance refers to an action taken against a student by a member of the faculty (including part-time instructors and teaching assistants), staff, or administration that either violates a university, college, or department academic policy or procedure or prejudicially treats the student based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, handicap, veteran status, or any other nonacademic status. Because assigning a grade or evaluating a student's work performance involves the faculty's professional judgment and is an integral part of the faculty's teaching responsibilities, disagreement with an instructor concerning a grade or evaluation *per se* is not a justifiable grievance to be considered under this policy unless factors such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph can be shown to have affected that grade or evaluation.

The details of the formal grievance process for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders are in [Appendix A](#) of this handbook.

A record of complaints will be maintained by the appropriate supervisor (i.e., the clinic director for issues involving clinic, the externship coordinator for issues with externship, and the department chair for all other issues).

## English Proficiency Policy

It is the policy of UH COMD to follow the ASHA guidelines (see below) with respect to English proficiency for provision of clinical services.

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, a high level of language proficiency is critical for clinical work as a certified speech-language pathologist. The primary language of instruction at UH and the primary language of ASHA, our certifying body, is English. Thus, students are expected to have a high level of English proficiency. Satisfactory performance on the TOEFL does not, in and of itself, imply that one can meet this minimum standard.

ASHA 2020 Standards and implementation procedures for the Certificate of Clinical Competence Standard V-A:

The applicant must have demonstrated skills in oral and written or other forms of communication sufficient for entry into professional practice.

Implementation: Applicants are eligible to apply for certification once they have completed all graduate-level academic coursework and clinical practicum and have been judged by the graduate program as having acquired all the knowledge and skills mandated by the current standards.

The applicant must have demonstrated sufficient communication skills to achieve effective clinical and professional interaction with persons receiving services and 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](#).

## Grievance Policy

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders uses the definition provided by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) Grievance policy

<http://www.uh.edu/class/students/graduate/academics-planning/policies-procedures/>: An academic grievance refers to an action taken against a student by a member of the faculty (including part-time instructors and teaching assistants), staff, or administration that either violates a university, college, or department academic policy or procedure or prejudicially treats the student on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, handicap, veteran status, or any other nonacademic status. Cases involving prejudicial treatment of any of the categories listed above will be referred to the UH Office of Equal Opportunity Services [<https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/about-eos/index.php>]. The full COMD policy & procedures are in [Appendix A](#).

## Petitioning for Reinstatement

If a student is dismissed from the graduate program, they have the right to petition the faculty to reconsider the decision. A written petition must be submitted by the deadline specified in the dismissal letter, typically within three weeks of the initial notification. This timeline allows faculty to make a decision before the start of the subsequent term.

The petition should include (1) the student's perspective on factors that contributed to their poor performance, (2) a request for readmission to the program, (3) a plan describing the changes the student will make to improve future performance.

The petition will be discussed and voted on by a group of at least 5 faculty actively involved in the relevant program. Each petition is considered individually. Conditions for reinstatement, if approved by the faculty, will also be determined on an individual basis. The student will be informed of the faculty's decision in a written letter.

Disagreement or dissatisfaction with the faculty's decision is not a justifiable grievance unless, as stated in the CLASS grievance policy, there was an action taken against a student by a member of the faculty (including part-time instructors and teaching assistants), staff, or administration that either violates a university, college, or department academic policy or procedure or prejudicially treats the student on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, handicap, veteran status, or any other nonacademic status. Procedures for filing a formal grievance are in [Appendix A](#).

## Social Media Policy

Social media is an umbrella term that encompasses the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media includes technology (computers, phones, tablets) and is used in various forms (blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking, mashups, virtual worlds, etc.). Means of accessing social media may include applications (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Skype, Snap Chat, YouTube, etc.).

These devices and applications are subject to having content transmitted to others, with or without consent from the original author.

All students in COMD are expected to follow the University of Houston Social Media Policy, <https://uh.edu/marcom/guidelines-policies/social-media/>, especially sections 3 and 4 which were specifically designed for students. Additionally, per the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) regulations <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/special-topics/de-identification/index.html>, no information, pictures, videos or descriptions of clients/families can be posted on social media sites. Please see the full COMD HIPAA policy in the Clinic section of this handbook. Violation of HIPAA regulations may result in disciplinary action being taken by the University against the student. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders takes all violations of HIPAA regulations and the Social Media Policy seriously. Sanctions imposed on violators vary with the seriousness of the violation, ranging from a written reprimand to dismissal from the graduate program. As required by federal law, violations of HIPAA regulations will be documented permanently in the COMD HIPAA Violations Record Book.

UH is committed to fostering a learning environment that allows for freedoms of speech and expression in accordance with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (See MAPP 13.01.01 - Freedom of Expression at <https://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=47&navoid=17724>). Please be aware, however, that UH will not tolerate any activity or posting that loses First Amendment protection such as any unlawful, defamatory, or obscene activity or posting. UH reserves the right to remove any such posting without notice. Students should use caution and good judgment when posting information to electronic communications and social networking sites, both personal and those that are related to the University of Houston and/or the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

Therefore, it is the policy that the use of social media, in any type or form as described above, by UH COMD students follow the criteria below:

No postings, photos, or recordings are allowed during class or clinical experiences except when approved by the faculty member or CE responsible for the learning experience. Under no circumstances will a client be photographed without a signed photo release from that individual. Students and faculty should obtain verbal permission from friends or colleagues before posting on social media.

Using social media for sharing class material with anyone not enrolled in the course and sharing academic assessment material (e.g., tests, quizzes) without express permission from the instructor is explicitly prohibited. In addition to a violation of the Social Media Policy, this is also a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. <http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=9055>

Careful consideration should be given to any posting on social networks. Students create personal public images with these posts. However, they also represent the COMD department,

the University of Houston, and the field of speech language pathology. Employers commonly review social media sites when considering new hires; thus, students should carefully consider what they contribute to their on-line profile, and that they may be held accountable for anything they post that reflects poorly on COMD or the University. The ASHA Code of Ethics Principle IV, Rule D states: Individuals shall not engage in any form of conduct that adversely reflects on the professions or on the individual's fitness to serve persons professionally. <https://www.asha.org/code-of-ethics/>

Students should carefully consider the way they describe the program, academic/clinical assignments, and professional experiences. Future or current instructors, clinical educators, peers, and co-workers may be reading posts. Respectfulness and professionalism are expected. Use of social media that results or could result in individual or group harm, physical or emotional (e.g., damage to an individual's personal or public reputation or harassment resulting in personal or public humiliation of others), will not be tolerated.

Violations of these professional behavior standards will result in the following tiered consequences:

First occurrence: Student receives a verbal and written warning which is placed in the student's file. There is a required meeting with the graduate program director.

Second occurrence: Student is placed on a professional behavior probation. This includes formulating and implementing an improvement plan, which will be interactive, include documentation of progress, and placed in the student's permanent file.

Third occurrence: Student is dismissed from the COMD MA/PhD program.

Students should use social media responsibly, remembering there is no such thing as a "private" social media site. A good rule of thumb is to assume that anyone, anywhere, can get access to anything posted on the internet at any time, no matter what privacy settings are used; this includes fellow students, UH faculty and staff, externship supervisors, and prospective employers. A good practice is to make sure that the persona reflected in social media is the best possible representation for professionals and faculty to encounter online.

## Professional Organizations

### American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the professional organization for speech-language pathologists and audiologists. The American Academy of Audiology also serves audiologists. ASHA maintains high standards for the fields requiring both academic programs as well as members to reflect these on a daily basis. <http://www.asha.org/members/>

One function of ASHA is to offer an accreditation program for academic and clinical institutions. The academic accreditation agency is called the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology

and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). It examines academic programs and determines their eligibility for accreditation. The Communication Sciences and Disorders Program of the University of Houston is accredited by CAA. This means that the program must adhere to guidelines in administering the academic and clinical programs. The CAA can be contacted at: 2200 Research Boulevard #310, Rockville, MD 20850-3289, (800) 638-8255.

For members, there are certain academic and clinical requirements that are mandatory as part of ASHA certification. These have been enumerated throughout this handbook. ASHA also has a public Code of Ethics. It is the responsibility of every student and professional to follow this Code. It is available at <http://www.asha.org/Code-of-Ethics/>. It will be discussed in several of the classes. Please read it.

Finally, ASHA offers members many perk-type benefits. These can be reviewed at: <http://www.asha.org/members/benefits/>.

### COMD Alumni Association

The Communication Sciences and Disorders Alumni Association was created to fund scholarships; promote networking among alumni; provide continuing education opportunities; and to support the program, its faculty, and students. All graduates, former students, and friends of the COMD Program are eligible for membership. For more information, contact the Houston Alumni Organization at (713) 743-9550 or <https://houstonalumni.com/alumni-associates/interest-and-affinity/COMDaa/>. We encourage all our graduate students to join once they finish the program.

### National Black Association for Speech, Language and Hearing (NBASLH)

The Houston Affiliate of the National Black Association for Speech, Language, and Hearing is a local organization closely associated with the National Association. The broad objectives of the affiliate and the Association are to 1. PROMOTE an increase in the number of certified black speech-language and hearing professionals, 2. PROMOTE improvement in the quality of speech, language, and hearing services to black individuals with communication disorders, 3. PROMOTE the research and development of a body of knowledge of the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of communication disorders in black individuals, 4. SOLICIT and provide financial support for the training of black students in the fields of speech-language and hearing, 5. ADVOCATE for black individuals with communication disorders at the local, state, and national levels, and 6. DISSEMINATE information among the professions and to the public on communication differences and disorders among black individuals. <http://www.nbaslh.org/>.

## National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA)

The National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association is affiliated with ASHA. There is a National NSSLHA chapter, as well as local, university-based chapters. At the University of Houston, there is a local chapter which is very active. It is an excellent way to learn about professional issues and have fun. Students are encouraged to participate in this association. Activities that UH NSSLHA has sponsored include providing opportunities to visit professional work settings, presenting lectures from professionals in the community, and raising funds for tests for the clinic and scholarships for clients in the clinic and the students.

One advantage to membership in the national NSSLHA program is reduced ASHA certification fees for students who have been a national NSSLHA member for 2 consecutive years prior to applying for ASHA certification. Additionally, national NSSLHA members can access all member-only areas of the ASHA website, which includes on-line access to all ASHA journals. To get the most out of these benefits, students are strongly encouraged to join the national chapter early in their program, as there can be some delays in account activation. <https://www.nsslha.org>

## Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA)

The Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the state professional organization. Students are encouraged to join at a reduced student rate. TSHA offers excellent educational and professional opportunities for students at its annual convention. Annual conventions are held in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin on a rotating basis. TSHA offers financial support to students for research and education. <http://www.txsha.org/>

# DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY (PH.D.)

## About the Program

The primary educational objective of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program in COMD is to prepare students for academic careers in the field of speech-language pathology/communication disorders by providing the highest quality instruction and research experience. Graduates of this program will comprise the next generation of leading researchers and scholars in the field of communication sciences and disorders.

This program is mentor-based, with the student and the mentor designing a program of study that meets the student's goals within the general guidelines of the program as outlined in this handbook (e.g., number of credits, initial research project).

Applicants must first identify an area of study and the potential professor(s) with whom they share common scientific interests, given the broad range of research areas by our faculty. A UH COMD faculty member must accept the responsibility of being the student's primary mentor before the applicant is considered for admission to the PhD program. The PhD program in COMD constitutes a combination of formal coursework within UH COMD and in related departments, an independent initial research project, a qualifying research experience, and a final aggregation of scholarly work.

## Admission to the PhD Program

Applicants must meet or exceed the minimum acceptance requirements of the University of Houston Graduate School. Acceptance of a student into the COMD PhD program is determined on an individual basis by factors including but not limited to previous grade point average(s) (GPA), letters of recommendation, and identification of an area of study and an agreement by a COMD faculty member to provide mentoring. The documentation required to be considered for admission is detailed below. All application materials must be submitted by the application deadline, which is posted on the UH COMD website (<https://www.uh.edu/class/COMD/programs/phd/>). Please visit: <http://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/admissions/how-to-apply/> for more information on how to apply. Students may be admitted into the PhD program with or without funding.

## Requirements

To be given full consideration for admission to the COMD PhD Program, all application materials must be completed and received by the deadline posted on the Program website (<https://www.uh.edu/class/COMD/programs/phd/>). Prospective students must complete the application on CollegeNet, have an interview with the prospective mentor, and obtain a tentative agreement by a COMD faculty member to provide the applicant's initial mentoring before the application deadline.

The following are required to apply:

- Applicant interview with prospective mentor and commitment from the mentor
- Documentation of previous education (transcripts)
- Three (3) letters of recommendation
- Curriculum vitae or resume
- Statement of interest
- Materials required of international applicants (if applicable)
- Application fees

### Applicant Interview

As part of the application process, applicants must complete an interview with a potential mentor either in person or online before the application deadline. A tentative agreement by a COMD faculty member to provide the applicant's initial mentoring is required for acceptance into the program as part of the application process before the application deadline. This interview will be used to assess the candidate's readiness and preparation for doctoral studies, suitability of their academic and research goals for this program, and positive indications that the applicant will be successful in our research-based graduate program.

### Documentation of Previous Education

Prospective students must submit official transcripts from each college or university previously attended, including the degree(s) earned and date(s) awarded. Students must meet or exceed the minimum acceptance requirements of the [University of Houston Graduate School](#). UH requires that doctoral applicants have earned at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution in the United States (US) or at an institution at which English is the medium of instruction in the following countries: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Bahamas, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Jamaica, Liberia, Trinidad and Tobago, the Virgin Islands, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Grenada, Turks and Caicos, and English-speaking Canadian provinces. Please see the section on "[International Applicants](#)" to see the requirements for applicants with degrees from institutions in other regions of the world.

### Curriculum Vitae or Resume

An academic curriculum vitae or a resume illustrating the applicant's relevant background and experience should be included with the application.

### Statement of Interest

A personal statement of interest explaining they are applying to our program must be included with the application. While there is not one specific way to compose such a statement, the typical document includes information about why the applicant is a good fit for our program,

their research interests, career objectives and plans, and the proposed mentor. The personal statement of interest should not exceed 2 pages (double-spaced).

## International Applicants

Applicants must fulfill the requirements for international students as described by the Graduate School : <https://uh.edu/graduate-school/international-students/>.

## Application Fees

A \$50.00 non-refundable application fee is charged to domestic applicants. An \$80 non-refundable application fee is charged to international applicants.

## Program Description

The curriculum of the doctoral program is designed to provide students with the necessary foundational courses and research experiences to support a productive academic career. Students will work with advisors to select members for two committees as they matriculate through the doctoral program: curriculum planning committee and dissertation committee. Members of these committees may remain the same throughout the program or may be adjusted as the student progresses. Changes to any of the student's committees must be approved by the Committee Chair, the Program Director, and the Department Chair. Every student will have a curriculum uniquely designed by members of the Curriculum Planning Committee. This individual program of study is intended to ensure academic rigor, quality instruction, and future marketability of program graduates. Students must complete all required course work, research experiences and additional program requirements. The Sample Curriculum presents an outline for the completion of all requirements in a 4-year period.

## Full-Time versus Part-Time Enrollment

Students have the option of full-time or part-time enrollment in the UH COMD PhD program. Full-time enrollment requires a minimum of 9 credit hours for each Fall and Spring semester. Students are required to be enrolled in consecutive Fall and Spring semesters to be considered full-time. Students failing to meet the full-time enrollment requirements may forfeit financial assistance and other privileges.

Part-time enrollment comprises up to 6 credit hours per semester. The curriculum plan for students choosing part-time enrollment must still be completed within the 10-year time frame as stipulated by the University of Houston (see also Time Limits and 99-Hour Doctoral Cap below). Some types of funding may not be available to part-time students.

## Curriculum Planning and Dissertation Committees

### Curriculum Planning Committee

This committee is formed at the beginning of the student's program (no later than the beginning of registration for the following Spring semester; typically, mid-October) and is led by the student's primary mentor to guide the student at least through the Comprehensive Examination of their program. The committee must contain at least three members led by the primary mentor who will also serve as the committee chair and who must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in UH COMD. The second committee member must also be from UH COMD. The third committee member may be from UH COMD, another department at the University of Houston, or an outside expert with sufficient expertise and credentials to help guide the student through the program.

The student will meet with their Curriculum Planning Committee before the beginning of the Spring semester of the student's first year in the program to discuss the student's progress towards the Initial Research Project, outline a plan for successful completion of the Initial Research Project, and discuss the student's program of study. Committee membership, including establishing a new committee and changes to an existing committee, must be approved as stipulated above under Program Description.

### Dissertation Committee

The student's dissertation committee is formed after the successful passing of the Comprehensive Examination (both the written and oral portions) to help lead the student through candidacy, dissertation, and the successful completion of the program. The Dissertation Committee must be comprised of a minimum of four members, including three faculty members from UH COMD and one approved member external to the department, who is acceptable to the department and the college. After these minimum requirements for committee members are satisfied, additional committee members may be approved. Members of the Curriculum Planning Committee may also serve on the Dissertation Committee.

## Coursework and Credits

Coursework in the COMD PhD program requires a minimum of 54 credit hours of graduate coursework beyond a master's degree. These 54 credit hours will be obtained by completing coursework and credit in the following areas: Advanced Statistics (9 credit hours), COMD Advanced Research Methods (3 credit hours), Special Problems or Selected Topics in COMD (9 credit hours), Grant Writing (3 credit hours), Science of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (3 credit hours), electives outside the major (6 credit hours), COMD Proseminar (4 credit hours), Research (5 credit hours, petition required if more than 15 credit hours are required), and Dissertation (12 credit hours), as outlined in Table 1. A sample of potential elective courses are listed in Table 2.

For students applying to the PhD program with a bachelor's degree but without a master's degree, completion of an additional 30 credit hours at the graduate level in COMD and related fields will be expected as part of the PhD curriculum plan for a minimum of 84 total credit hours. These include 54 credits described above (see also Table 1) and an additional 30 graduate-level credit hours in COMD and related fields (Table 2).

Table 1: Semester Credit Hour (SCH) Requirements by Category

| Category                                              | SCH Entering with a Bachelor's | SCH Entering with a Master's |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Advanced Statistics                                   | 9                              | 9                            |
| COMD Advanced Research Methods                        | 3                              | 3                            |
| Grant Writing                                         | 3                              | 3                            |
| Teaching Methods                                      | 3                              | 3                            |
| COMD Proseminar                                       | 4                              | 4                            |
| Special Problems or Selected Topics in COMD           | 9                              | 9                            |
| Electives Outside the Major                           | 6                              | 6                            |
| COMD Research                                         | 5                              | 5                            |
| Dissertation                                          | 12                             | 12                           |
| Graduate level credits                                | 30                             | 0                            |
| Other (e.g., internships, clinical work, residencies) | 0                              | 0                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                          | <b>84</b>                      | <b>54</b>                    |

Table 2. List of Potential Electives\* and Courses to Fulfill Program Requirements (SCH= Semester Credit Hours)

| Prefix and Number | Elective Course* Title                                 | SCH |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CUIN 8377         | Qualitative Inquiry in Educ I                          | 3   |
| ELET 6354         | Biomedical Image Analysis                              | 3   |
| PEP 7397          | Adv Selec Topic Human Performance                      | 3   |
| PEP 8306          | Principles of Scientific Inquiry                       | 3   |
| PEP 8334          | Applied Statistical Modeling in Health Research        | 3   |
| PHCA 7308         | Biostatistics and Experimental Design                  | 3   |
| PHLS 8302         | Research Methods in Psy/Educ Research                  | 3   |
| PHLS 8319         | Inferential Statistics in Psy/Educ Research            | 3   |
| PHLS 8322         | Intermediate Statistical Analysis in Psy/Educ Research | 3   |
| PHLS 8326         | Nonparametric Stats in Ed Research                     | 3   |
| PHLS 8327         | Longitudinal Data Analysis Psy/Educ Research           | 3   |
| PHLS 8328         | Hierarchical Linear Modeling in Psych/Educ Research    | 3   |

|           |                                          |   |
|-----------|------------------------------------------|---|
| PSYC 6300 | Stats for Psychology                     | 3 |
| PSYC 6302 | Experimental Design                      | 3 |
| PSYC 6304 | Social Development                       | 3 |
| PSYC 6344 | Functional Neuroanatomy                  | 3 |
| PSYC 6391 | Seminar in Teaching of Psychology        | 3 |
| PSYC 6392 | Selected Topics in Psychology            | 3 |
| PSYC 7306 | Advanced Statistics: Multilevel Modeling | 3 |
| PSYC 7333 | Experimental Neuropsychology             | 3 |
| PSYC 7334 | Dementia                                 | 3 |
| PSYC 8322 | Psychometrics                            | 3 |
| PSYC 8330 | Cognitive Neuroscience                   | 3 |
| SPAN 6390 | Research Heritage Language Educ Seminar  | 3 |
| SPAN 6394 | Topics- Language and Linguistics         | 3 |

\*Elective courses must be approved by the student's Curriculum Planning Committee and may need instructor approval. Not all courses are offered each semester or every year.

## Proseminars

Proseminar topics are planned based on student needs. Students are required to complete Proseminar 4 credit hours ; 3 distributed throughout the first 2-3 years and 1 in the last year of their program. During this final year, students will register for a proseminar credit hour in the semester they present their dissertation at the departmental research seminar. Topics for the initial 3 credit hours have included:

- Critical review of research through the lens of performing a systematic review of literature; organizing systems for literature databases
- Exploring and practicing the role of manuscript reviewer
- Preparing for an academic job search and career

## Transfer Credits & Clinical Hours

In accordance with UH policies, up to 9 credits of graduate coursework may be transferred from other accredited institutions and counted towards the minimum hours required to complete the program, subject to the approval of the student's primary mentor, PhD Program Director, Department Chair, Associate/Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, and the Vice Provost/Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate and Professional Student Petition is accessible via the Graduate School's website (<https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/forms-procedures/files/gpsp-updated-petition-102020.pdf>)

Students who have clinical hours from other universities can request to transfer in up to 50 hours. Students are responsible for submitting a record of those hours to the Clinic Director prior to their first graduate practicum experience. The Clock Hours record must be signed by the CE with CCC-SLP or CCC-AUD and ASHA certification number specified. In addition, the supervisor must have completed nine months of practice experience post-certification before serving as a supervisor and two hours of professional development in the area of supervision post-certification before serving as a clinical supervisor or CF mentor.

## Research Activity Requirements

Successful completion of the following research activities is required as part of the COMD PhD program:

- Initial Research Project
- Comprehensive Examination
- Doctoral Candidacy and Prospectus
- Doctoral Dissertation

### Initial Research Project

Students will complete an Initial Research Project (IRP) under the direction of their primary mentor. For the IRP, students will pose a novel research question, analyze data, and interpret findings. The project shall consist of a research project that is developed either from previously collected research data (i.e., no data collection required) or from pilot data collected by the student. Products include (1) a complete manuscript and (2) an oral presentation to be defended before their Curriculum Planning Committee. The Curriculum Planning Committee will assign one of the following: pass, pass with revision, or fail. Decisions of fail will result in the student's dismissal from the program.

The project, including the oral defense and the final draft with revisions, must be completed by the official close of the Fall semester of Year 2 of the program. An extension may be granted only for extenuating circumstances in agreement with the primary mentor and PhD Program Director. Failure to complete the extension will result in a decision of fail for the IRP.

### Comprehensive Examination

Nearing the completion of the coursework (typically after 4 full semesters or approximately 40 credit hours), students must pass a comprehensive examination. The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to demonstrate proficiency in a body of knowledge in the chosen area of study. The comprehensive examination will include (1) a written component and (2) an oral defense.

Written component

- The written component of the Comprehensive Exams will include a grant proposal and 2 additional questions posed by the committee.

- Students will enroll in a doctoral level Grant Writing course after successfully completing their initial research project and prior to receiving the additional 2 exam questions.
- The student has 3 months after receiving the 2 questions from their committee/mentor to complete both the grant proposal and 2 research questions.
- There is no minimum/maximum time required between completion of the Grant Writing course and receiving the 2 questions.

#### Grant proposal

- The grant proposal must include a research strategy section. The mentor will decide which additional components of the grant proposal, if any, should be included beyond the research strategy.
- The student should develop the specific aims of their grant proposal independently and have them approved by the mentor prior to progressing on the grant (typically during the Grant Writing course). The committee may provide feedback as appropriate.
- The student must independently revise the Specific Aims based on feedback and prepare Research Strategy sections of the grant.
- After a student has successfully completed their comprehensive exam the Curriculum Planning Committee and/or mentor may provide feedback on the grant to the student before submission to the funding agency (e.g., NIH, ASHFoundation).
- Questions
- To assess a student's broad knowledge and ability to integrate and apply their field's foundational concepts, students will be given 2 additional questions to answer. The questions may be essay-style or problem-based and will require critical thinking and analysis. Mentors may choose to provide a page-limit for each question. Here are some examples of types of questions:

**Theory-based Questions:** These questions test your understanding of important theories in your field, asking you to explain, compare, or critique them.

**Example:** "Explain the key principles of X theory and critically analyze its application in contemporary research."

**Literature Review Questions:** These questions require you to demonstrate your knowledge of the major works in your field and their contributions to the ongoing research dialogue.

**Example:** "Summarize the main findings of recent research on topic Y. How do these findings contribute to the development of the field?"

**Methodology-based Questions:** These questions assess your understanding of research methodologies, including their applications, limitations, and ethical considerations.

**Example:** "What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research methods in studying X? Provide examples from existing studies."

**Historical Questions:** These questions ask you to trace the historical development of a concept, theory, or phenomenon and its current state in the field.

**Example:** "How has the concept of Z evolved since the initiation of our field, and what are the current debates regarding its interpretation?"

**Comparative or Integrative Questions** These questions require you to synthesize multiple perspectives on a topic, showing how they relate to each other and what implications arise from the different approaches.

**Example:** "Compare and contrast the approaches of authors A, B, and C in addressing the issue of X. What are the clinical implications of their differing perspectives?"

**Critical Thinking/Argumentative Questions:** These questions test your ability to construct a well-supported argument, often with evidence drawn from literature, to justify your stance on a contentious issue.

**Example:** "Do you agree with the assertion that 'X' is the most effective solution to problem Y? Justify your position with evidence and reasoning."

**Application-based Questions:** These questions ask you to apply your knowledge to real-world scenarios or to propose new research ideas based on current trends.

**Example:** "Given the current trends in your field, how would you design a research study to investigate a key issue in Z? What methods and approaches would you use, and why?"

**Ethical and Societal Impact Questions:** These questions examine your ability to think about the broader implications of research, especially regarding ethics, societal impact, and policy.

**Example:** "What are the ethical challenges associated with X (research, assessment, treatment), and how can these challenges be addressed?"

**Interdisciplinary Questions:** These require you to draw on knowledge from other fields to synthesize ideas, showing the interdisciplinary connections and how they might solve complex problems.

**Example:** "How can insights from X and Y professions/disciplines be integrated to better understand patient behavior in X?"

**Advanced Technical or Problem-Solving Questions:** These questions are highly specialized and often require you to demonstrate advanced technical expertise, including mathematical or computational methods.

**Example:** "Explain the computational model for X and discuss its applications in real-world scenarios."

**Current Trends or Emerging Topics:** These assess your awareness of current research trends or developments in your field and ask for analysis or speculation on the future direction of the field.

**Example:** "How has the rise of X influenced research in your field?"

## Oral defense

- Students will complete an oral defense within three weeks of submission of the written component. The content of the oral defense will be determined by the Curriculum Planning Committee. This may include a defense of the submitted written component alone or in addition to other content-related questions.
- The oral defense will occur for a maximum duration of 1.5 hours.
- Students are not required to but can prepare a short 10–15-minute presentation on their written components.
- The Curriculum Planning Committee will evaluate the comprehensive exam products (written and oral). The committee will assign one of the following after the completion of the oral defense: pass, pass with revision, or fail.
- A student passing with revision will receive one attempt to revise or redo (1) all or part of the written component, (2) the oral exam, or (3) both (as specified by the committee), within 2 months of the first oral defense. The committee will evaluate this attempt and assign either a pass or fail grade.

- Decisions of “fail” for the initial attempt or after revision will result in dismissal from the program.
- All timelines must be met unless an extension has been approved by the Curriculum Planning Committee and the PhD Program Committee for extenuating circumstances. Failure to meet the set timelines can result in a decision of “fail” by the aforementioned committees. All work must be performed independently without consultation with other students or faculty at UH or other institutions and without the use of professional writing services. Generative AI tools may be used for mechanics and structure of written work generated by the student but should not be used for any scientific content. Essentially, you can use AI to finesse what you’ve generated/written, but not to create ideas/material.

#### **Permitted Uses:**

- Grammar, spelling, and punctuation checks
- Sentence structure improvements for clarity and readability
- Formatting assistance (e.g., reference lists, headings, and subheadings)

#### **Prohibited Uses:**

- Generating or summarizing scientific content, including theoretical discussions, literature reviews, data interpretations, course notes/materials
- Formulating arguments, hypotheses, or conclusions
- Paraphrasing or rewording AI-generated content to appear as original thought
- Using AI to analyze or interpret research findings
- Using AI to generate written content from student-generated notes

Students are responsible for ensuring that all content reflects their own critical thinking and understanding. Any use of AI to generate substantive content may be considered academic misconduct.

### **Doctoral Candidacy and Prospectus**

Prior to being considered a doctoral candidate, students must: 1) have successfully completed the initial research project, 2) passed the written and oral portions of the comprehensive examination, and 3) have completed or be nearing completion of their course work (approximately 40 credit hours beyond the master’s degree or 70 hours beyond the bachelor’s degree) and 4) successfully complete and pass a prospectus of their dissertation. After a student has met these requirements, they will be considered a doctoral candidate and be permitted to begin their dissertation.

The purpose of the prospectus is to ensure that the student’s dissertation project is both sound and feasible. The prospectus will include: 1) A written component comprised of a review of the literature, purpose, hypotheses/research questions, and method sections of the dissertation and 2) An oral presentation of the written document. The dissertation committee will determine whether a prospectus is successful or requires revision. An approved prospectus is required prior to beginning data collection for the dissertation.

## Doctoral Dissertation

A student must complete and successfully defend a dissertation based on original research to complete the doctoral degree. Full-time students are expected to complete 3 dissertation hours per semester for 4 semesters. All students must enroll in a minimum of 1 hour of dissertation credit for consecutive semesters until the dissertation is completed or until the 10-year time frame for completion is met. If a student has not completed their program within the 10-year university time limit, they will be dismissed from the program. [Please visit the section on Time Limits for more information.](#)

Students should follow the current dissertation/thesis guidelines set forth by the UH Graduate School (<https://uh.edu/graduate-school/academics/thesis/>). Specific formatting may vary by the student's specific area, but any variations must accommodate the general formatting guidelines. The most typical format of a dissertation in Communication Sciences and Disorders follows the structure of a long research report within one's own area of study.

Students can submit a dissertation in one of two formats, in alignment with guidelines from The Graduate School (<https://uh.edu/graduate-school/academics/thesis/uhrs-template-front-matter-082019.docx>):

With three major sections:

- Introductory chapters
- Middle chapters written in journal article format, with each reflecting material sufficient for a published paper/chapter
- Final chapters integrating the results of all the middle chapters.

In traditional format:

- Introductory chapters
- Methods chapter
- Results chapter
- Discussion chapter

## Other Research and Professional Development Opportunities

Students are strongly encouraged to attend scientific lectures and working groups in preparation for academic careers in the field of speech-language pathology/ communication disorders. The purpose is for students to develop practices that will aid in their development of scientific thinking and writing. Such activities may include attending invited research talks, presenting at research proseminars, and participating in research reading groups of interest. In their yearly evaluation, the primary mentor may provide an assessment of these activities and offer recommendations for the student. Students can request or apply for funding for travel/attendance from various sources: the mentor or committee member's research grants, UH doctoral funding sources, or from the department.

## Additional Program Requirements

### Teaching Experience

All PhD students must complete a teaching experience. This experience can be completed at UH or at another university. The purpose of the teaching requirement is to prepare students for an academic career that includes classroom instruction. Teaching will give students practice in distilling complex information for a novice learner as opposed to disseminating information to expert learners. Teaching experiences generally take 2 forms: serving as the instructor of record for a course or co-teaching with a faculty mentor in a one-time teaching experience.

Students who receive teaching assistantships must take COMD 8397- Selected Topics-Science of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at the earliest opportunity in their funding. As part of their funding package some students may be assigned as a Clinical Educator (CE). A CE assignment will not be accepted as a substitute for the required classroom teaching experience.

If a student is conducting a one-time teaching experience, they will be co-teaching with a faculty mentor. The co-instructor should be involved in mentoring the teaching experience as necessary. However, students are expected to be involved or responsible in all components of developing a course: course design; creation of a syllabus, teaching materials, assignments, and exams; grading etc. Individual faculty mentors should work with the student to create an experience that is appropriate and adequate.

A faculty member (typically the instructor for COMD 8397-SoTL) will complete an observation for each student during their teaching experience and provide feedback. If necessary, the student will be observed a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. If the student is a TA and skills are still not at expectation after the 2<sup>nd</sup> observation, a change in their TA role will be considered.

UH has a wealth of resources for teaching, including faculty mentorship and other sources listed in [Appendix B](#).

### Progress Evaluations

A satisfactory rate of progress toward completion of degree requirements is expected throughout the student's enrollment, which includes meeting all departmental and institutional standards, satisfactory yearly evaluations and meeting other benchmarks (such as passing the Initial Research Project, Comprehensive Examination, etc.). At or near the end of each spring semester, no later than 5 business days after final grades are due, each student will meet with their primary mentor to discuss the student's yearly and overall progress towards the degree (including grades, status of on-going or completed projects, etc.) and to plan ahead. Within 7 business days after the meeting with the student, the primary mentor should complete the COMD PhD annual progress evaluation regarding the particular student's progress towards the degree supported by data (such as courses completed, GPA, status of projects, benchmarks

met), an assessment of whether or not the progress has been satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and an assessment of whether or not the student's program is on track as planned.

The mentor's written evaluation will be submitted to the COMD PhD Committee for evaluation no later than 12 business days after the due date for grades for the regular Spring semester. The student and mentor will maintain a signed copy of the completed evaluation, and a copy will be placed in the student's file.

The COMD PhD Committee will meet no later than 25 business days after the close of the regular Spring semester to review the evaluation and other evidence and discuss the progress of each doctoral student. Determination of continuation vs. dismissal will be based on whether a student meets the UH/Graduate School as well as the COMD PhD minimum criteria as detailed below. The committee will vote on a decision by a majority vote.

In case of a recommendation of dismissal from the program, the student may petition for reinstatement (see [Petitioning for Reinstatement](#)).

### Time Limits and 99-Hour Doctoral Cap

The State of Texas Legislature limits the length of time a doctoral student can receive a subsidized education. All doctoral students who accumulate more than ninety-nine doctoral semester credit hours at any Texas public institution of higher education will be charged the non-resident tuition rates irrespective of student residency status or any appointment, fellowship, or other circumstance that would normally entitle them to resident tuition rates. Please see the graduate catalog entry on the [99-Hour Doctoral Cap](#) for full details.

Students who enroll as doctoral candidates must complete their degree requirements within 10 years of the date of first enrollment with a doctoral degree objective. Failure to comply will result in the candidate being ineligible for that doctoral degree.

Doctoral students who fail to complete their dissertation within five years after completion of the comprehensive examination must retake the examination. For more information on the time limits, please consult the [current UH Graduate Catalog](#).

### Dismissal from the Program

We fully expect that all students admitted to the program will successfully complete all requirements and the degree within the established time frames. However, there will be instances in which a student must be dismissed. The following are conditions in which students may be dismissed from the COMD PhD program:

- a. Failure to achieve or maintain the minimum academic requirements for doctoral students at the University of Houston, as described in the Graduate and

Professional Studies Catalog (available online at <http://www.uh.edu/graduate-catalog>). Some examples of the University requirement are:

- i. Students who fail to maintain a minimum graduate grade point average of 3.0 will be put on probation or be suspended from the University; and/or,
  - ii. According to University policy, students who receive 4 or more grades of “C” or lower in their programs of study will be terminated from the University. However, to help ensure the integrity and high standards of the COMD PhD program, the program faculty has adopted a “Two C” rule. Thus, program students who obtain two grades of C or lower will be dismissed from the COMD PhD program. Such students may explore other options for continued graduate study within the university.
- b. Violation of the ethical principles of speech-language pathologists or researchers in their professional and academic work (e.g., coursework, research).
  - c. Failure to meet one or more academic requirements (e.g., course work, initial research project, comprehensive exams, prospectus and dissertation). In these cases, remedial actions will be identified to help the student. If remedial actions fail to correct the deficiencies, the student may be dismissed from the Program.
  - d. Failure to make sufficient progress in one’s program of study, including missing timelines without an approved petition for an extension. Students not making sufficient progress are asked to meet with their mentors to identify remedial steps to assist them. Students who continue to lag after remediation may be terminated from the Program.

## Policy Waivers

If a student, faculty advisor, or advisory committee member deems that any COMD policy stated in this handbook should be waived, a formal request, signed by both the student and faculty advisor, may be submitted for consideration to the Program Director. The request must fully justify the waiver. The waiver must be approved by the Department Chair.

A general petition may also need to be filed (for example, for degree requirement exception or approved course substitution, transfer credit, etc.) with the Graduate School using a [Graduate and Professional Student Petition form](#).

## Financial Assistance for Doctoral Studies

Students may be accepted to the PhD program with or without funding. Funded students may receive a stipend (usually in the form of a Graduate Assistantship) and/or a Graduate Tuition Fellowship (GTF). The GTF covers tuition and course fees for 9 hours of credit per semester. A

Graduate Assistant stipend may be provided by a mentor’s research grant funds or by the department/college. A Graduate Assistantship requires students to work as a research

assistant, teaching assistant, or clinical assistant. Assignments are made by the Department Chair. The offer of admission letter includes details regarding the specific funding package. Students are encouraged to reach out to their mentor and/or the Program Director for information about funding. All students are encouraged to complete a FAFSA application and seek out other sources of funding (such as external scholarships). Some funding is accessible only after completion of the FAFSA.

The Graduate School provides information regarding eligibility requirements and how to fund your education. Each student is responsible for being familiar with the eligibility criteria for their respective award(s). Please visit the graduate funding web page of the Graduate School for additional information (<https://uh.edu/graduate-school/graduate-funding/>).

Full-time students are expected to work no more than 20 hours per week (50% FTE) in order to reserve enough time to focus on their program of study. Students who receive stipends are expected not to take outside employment during the regular Fall and Spring semesters as the stipend already covers 20 hours of employment per week. Students considering pursuing outside employment should consult with their primary mentor and the PhD Program Director about options such as the part-time program.

### Sample Full-Time Curriculum in Communication Sciences and Disorders

| YEAR        | SEMESTER | Course                                                                                   | SCH |
|-------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| YEAR 1      | FALL     | COMD 8193 Proseminar                                                                     | 1   |
|             |          | COMD 8291 Research                                                                       | 2   |
|             |          | PHLS 8319 Infer Stats in Psych/Educ Res OR<br>PSYC 6300 Statistics for Psychology        | 3   |
|             |          | Elective                                                                                 | 3   |
|             | SPRING   | COMD 8392 Advanced Research Methods                                                      | 3   |
|             |          | COMD 8391 Research/ COMD 8397 SoTL                                                       | 3   |
|             |          | PHLS 8322 Intermediate Statistics in Psy/Ed Research OR<br>PSYC 6302 Experimental Design | 3   |
| YEAR 2      | FALL     | COMD 8193 Proseminar                                                                     | 1   |
|             |          | COMD 8298 Special Problems-Independent Study                                             | 2   |
|             |          | COMD 8391 Research/ Elective                                                             | 3   |
|             |          | Advanced Statistics                                                                      | 3   |
|             | SPRING   | COMD 8398 Special Problems                                                               | 3   |
|             |          | PSYC 6337 Grant Writing                                                                  | 3   |
|             |          | COMD 8391 SoTL/ Elective                                                                 | 3   |
| YEAR 3      | FALL     | COMD 8993 Dissertation                                                                   | 9   |
|             |          | OR COMD 8699 Dissertation                                                                | 6   |
|             |          | COMD 8398 Special Problems/Elective                                                      | 3   |
|             | SPRING   | COMD 8899 Dissertation                                                                   | 6-8 |
|             |          | COMD 8193 Proseminar                                                                     | 1   |
|             |          | OR ONLY COMD 8999 Dissertation                                                           | 9   |
| YEAR 4 OR 5 | FALL     | COMD 8999 - Dissertation                                                                 | 9   |
|             | SPRING   | COMD 8193 - Proseminar                                                                   | 1   |
|             |          | COMD 8899 - Dissertation                                                                 | 8   |

*\*The course sequence for the program of study and the electives must be carefully designed in consultation with the mentor and approved by the student's committee.*

## Sample Part-Time Curriculum in Communication Sciences and Disorders

| Year   | Semester | Course                                  | SCH |
|--------|----------|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| Year 1 | Fall     | COMD 8193 Proseminar                    | 1   |
|        |          | PHLS 8319 Infer Stats in Psych/Educ Res | 3   |
|        |          | COMD 8291 Research                      | 2   |
|        | Spring   | COMD 8392 Advanced Research Methods     | 3   |
|        |          | COMD 8391 Research                      | 3   |
| Year 2 | Fall     | COMD 8291 Research                      | 2   |
|        |          | COMD 8193 Proseminar                    | 1   |
|        |          | COMD 8298 Special problems              | 2   |
|        | Spring   | PHLS 8322 Intermediate Statistitcs      | 3   |
|        |          | COMD 8398 Special Problems              | 3   |
| Year 3 | Fall     | Advanced Stats                          | 3   |
|        |          | elective                                | 3   |
|        | Spring   | PSYC 6337 Grant Writing                 | 3   |
|        |          | COMD 8391 SoTL/ Elective                | 3   |
| Year 4 | Fall     | COMD 8193 Proseminar                    | 1   |
|        |          | COMD 8398 Special Problems/Elective     | 3   |
|        |          | COMD 8299 Dissertation                  | 2   |
|        | Spring   | COMD 8193 - Proseminar                  | 1   |
|        |          | COMD 8x99 Dissertation                  |     |
| Year 5 | Fall     | COMD 8x99 Dissertation                  | 1-6 |
|        |          |                                         |     |
|        | Spring   | COMD 8x99 Dissertation                  | 1-6 |
|        |          |                                         |     |
| Year 6 | Fall     | COMD 8x99 Dissertation                  | 1-6 |
|        |          |                                         |     |
|        | Spring   | COMD 8x99 Dissertation                  | 1-6 |
|        |          |                                         |     |

# FORM: PhD Curriculum Planning Committee Form

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

PSID: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair/Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

## Committee Members

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

Department/Institution (if outside UH COMD)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Dept. Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## FORM: Curriculum Planning Committee Change Form

*(Attach the previously completed form along with the change form when requesting signatures)*

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

PSID: \_\_\_\_\_

It is requested that the following changes be made to the curriculum planning committee of the student named above:

| Committee Member | Added | Removed |
|------------------|-------|---------|
|                  |       |         |
|                  |       |         |
|                  |       |         |
|                  |       |         |

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Department Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# FORM: Initial Research Project Defense Form

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year in Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Initial Research Project \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation (CIRCLE ONE): PASS      PASS WITH REVISION      FAIL

Comments:

**SIGNED (CURRICULUM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS)**

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| Chair | Date  |

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| _____            | _____ |
| Committee Member | Date  |

|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| _____            | _____ |
| Committee Member | Date  |

## FORM: PhD Comprehensive Examination Plan

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to demonstrate mastery of a body of knowledge base in the chosen area of study. The comprehensive examination will include

- (1) a written component as determined by the student's curriculum planning committee and
- (2) an oral defense following the written portion.

The written portion of the examination must be completed before the oral portion may be scheduled. The student has 3 months after receiving the 2 questions from their committee/ mentor to complete both the grant proposal and 2 research questions. Students must submit these documents 3 weeks prior to the scheduled oral exam. The oral defense will be a maximum of 1.5 hours.

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Members:**

**Date proposed to begin written portion:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date proposed to end written portion:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tentative time of oral exam: (e.g. Fall 2022)** \_\_\_\_\_

The signature below indicates that this plan has been submitted to, and approved by, the COMD PhD Program Director.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PhD Program Director Signature**

**Date**

# FORM: Comprehensive Examination Defense Form

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Year in Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Examination Dates (MM/DD/YYYY)

Revision: Y    N

Written Examination: \_\_\_\_\_ Oral Examination: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation:

|                            |      |                    |      |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Written Examination</b> | PASS | PASS WITH REVISION | FAIL |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------|------|

|                         |      |                    |      |
|-------------------------|------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Oral Examination</b> | PASS | PASS WITH REVISION | FAIL |
|-------------------------|------|--------------------|------|

Comments (Include date for submission of revision if indicated):

## SIGNED (CURRICULUM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS)

\_\_\_\_\_

Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# FORM: Dissertation Committee Appointment Form

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

PSID: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair/Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

## Committee Members

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Member

Department/Institution (if outside UH COMD)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_

Dept. Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# FORM: Dissertation Prospectus Form

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ Year in Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Prospectus \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation (CIRCLE ONE):      PASS              PASS WITH REVISION              FAIL

Comments:

## SIGNED (DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS)

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Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

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Committee Member

Date

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Committee Member

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Committee Member

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# MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS (MA in COMD)

## Program Requirements

### Prerequisite Courses and Requirements for the Master's Program

Successful completion of the graduate program requires satisfactory acquisition of the knowledge and skills set forth by the Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) <https://www.asha.org/Certification/2020-SLP-Certification-Standards/>. To meet these standards necessitates the acquisition of knowledge in basic communication science and processes typically achieved in an undergraduate program in communication sciences and disorders. The following classes or their equivalent must be completed prior to the beginning of the graduate program:

COMD 2338 Phonetics

COMD 2339 Language Development

COMD 2376 Anatomy & Physiology for Communication

COMD 3381 Fundamentals of Audiology

COMD 3383 Language Disorders in Children -or- COMD 3371 Speech Dev. & Disorders

COMD 4385 Speech Science

COMD 4382 Aural Rehabilitation

COMD 4489 Clinical Procedures

Transfer credits from other Universities

As part of the standards for certification, ASHA also requires coursework in statistics, biological science, physical science (either chemistry or physics), and behavioral science.

Prior to beginning clinical assignments, incoming graduate students must obtain 25 hours of guided observation under the direction of an ASHA certified speech-language pathologist. All guided observations after January 1, 2020, must be with a clinician who has completed the requisite training in supervision.

## Petitioning for Graduate Credit and Transferring Clinical Hours

### Transfer Credits from Other Universities

Six credits of graduate course work that has been taken while in post-baccalaureate or undergraduate program can be petitioned for graduate credit. Written approval must be obtained by the master's program director and chair of the department. By the midterm of their first term a student must submit a written petition to have an extra three credits transferred. Requests for transfer credit will be reviewed by the faculty members responsible for the relevant content area. Their decision regarding the transfer credit request is final. The petition can be obtained on the graduate school webpage <http://www.uh.edu/graduate->

[school/forms/](#). Any incoming student wishing to transfer graduate credit must follow the procedure outlined by the Graduate School in the [Transfer Credit policy](#).

#### Clinical Hours from Other Universities

Students who have clinical hours from other accredited universities must submit an official record of those hours to the Clinic Director before their first graduate practicum experience.

- Maximum transfer: Up to 50 clinical practicum hours from another accredited institution may be applied toward the required 375 clinical hours.
- Documentation: The clock hours record must be signed by the supervising CE, include their ASHA certification number, and indicate CCC-SLP or CCC-A credentials.
- Supervisor qualifications: Supervisors must have met supervision standards as verified on ASHA (<https://apps.asha.org/eweb/ashadynamicpage.aspx?webcode=ccchome>)

### Core Functions

Incoming students must also review the core functions form. To acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology, to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must have skills and attributes in these areas: communication, motor, sensory, intellectual-cognitive, interpersonal, and cultural responsiveness. Many of these skills can be learned and developed during the master's program through coursework and clinical experience; however, there are skills that are more inherent and should be present when a student begins the program. Our program relies on the guide created by the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences & Disorders (CAPCSD).



#### A Guide for Future Practitioners in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology: Core Functions

This document is intended as a guide for educational programs in speech-language pathology or audiology and individuals seeking a career in these professions. It identifies the core functions that individuals of such programs typically are expected to employ in didactic and clinical experiences to acquire the knowledge and demonstrate the competencies that will lead to graduation and successful entry into professional practice. This document replaces the Essential Functions document created by the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD) in 2008. The document was updated to differentiate core functions from individual program requirements and to be inclusive of differences in behavioral and learning preferences associated with race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, and sensory, physical, or neurological status.

## Instructions for Appropriate Use of this Document

This document may be used when:

- informing individuals about the core functions associated with the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology
- initiating discussions between students and programs regarding student success
- empowering students to make informed choices regarding their pursuit of professions in audiology and speech-language pathology
- facilitating strategies to achieve student success
- assisting programs and students in identifying and advocating for appropriate resources and accommodations
- advancing the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology through the lens of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This document must not be used:

- to discriminate against individuals for any reason
- as a measure of acceptance or denial into an educational program
- as a tool to presumptively judge individuals' potential for success
- as a stand-alone student assessment or intervention plan
- to dismiss students from a program

Use of this document is not required by CAPCSD or any accrediting or credentialing body, including the Council on Academic Accreditation or the Council for Clinical Certification of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

For the sake of this document, the term “core functions” refers to behavioral or cognitive functions that an individual must be able to perform with or without accommodations necessary to ensure equitable access. The document intentionally does not address how stated core functions are demonstrated, recognizing that there are multiple ways an individual can successfully meet the demands of clinical education and practice. The determination of possible accommodations exemplified in this document varies from institution to institution based on numerous factors not covered in the scope of this document. The degree to which accommodations are determined is under the governance of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is the responsibility of the institution and the individual to work together to identify possible services and accommodations.

To ensure the integrity of the messaging in this document, a glossary of terms is included at the end of the document.

## **Communication**

Statements in this section acknowledge that audiologists and speech-language pathologists must communicate in a way that is understood by their clients/patients and others. It is recognized that linguistic, paralinguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic variations are part of every culture, and accent, dialects, idiolects, and communication styles can differ from general American English expectations. Communication may occur in different modalities depending on the joint needs of involved parties and may be supported through various accommodations as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs. Some examples of these accommodations include augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, written displays, voice amplification, attendant-supported communication, oral translators, assistive listening devices, sign interpreters, and other non-verbal communication modes.

- Employ oral, written, auditory, and non-verbal communication at a level sufficient to meet academic and clinical competencies.
- Adapt communication style to effectively interact with colleagues, clients, patients, caregivers, and invested parties of diverse backgrounds in various modes such as in person, over the phone, and in electronic format.

## **Motor**

Statements in this section acknowledge that clinical practice by audiologists and speech-language pathologists involves a variety of tasks that require manipulation of items and environments. It is recognized that this may be accomplished through a variety of means, including, but not limited to, independent motor movement, assistive technology, attendant support, or other accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable to offer and appropriate to client/patient needs.

- Engage in physical activities at a level required to accurately implement classroom and clinical responsibilities (e.g., manipulating testing and therapeutic equipment and technology, client/patient equipment, and practice management technology) while retaining the integrity of the process.
- Respond in a manner that ensures the safety of clients and others.

## **Sensory**

Statements in this section acknowledge that audiologists and speech-language pathologists use auditory, visual, tactile, and olfactory information to guide clinical practice. It is recognized that such information may be accessed through a variety of means, including direct sensory perception and /or adaptive strategies. Some examples of these strategies include visual translation displays, text readers, assistive listening devices, and perceptual descriptions by clinical assistants.

- Access sensory information to differentiate functional and disordered auditory, oral, written, and visual communication.

- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate anatomical structures and diagnostic imaging findings.
- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate and discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.

### **Intellectual/Cognitive**

Statements in this section acknowledge that audiologists and speech-language pathologists must engage in critical thinking, reasoning, and comprehension and retention of information required in clinical practice. It is recognized that such skills may be fostered through a variety of

means, including assistive technology and /or accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs.

- Retain, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply auditory, written, and oral information at a level sufficient to meet curricular and clinical competencies.
- Employ informed critical thinking and ethical reasoning to formulate a differential diagnosis and create, implement, and adjust evaluation and treatment plans as appropriate for the client/patient's needs.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection and evaluation of one's existing knowledge and skills.
- Critically examine and apply evidence-based judgment in keeping with best practices for client/patient care.

### **Interpersonal**

Statements in this section acknowledge that audiologists and speech-language pathologists must interact with a diverse community of individuals in a manner that is safe, ethical, and supportive. It is recognized that personal interaction styles may vary by individuals and cultures and that good clinical practice honors such diversity while meeting this obligation.

- Display compassion, respect, and concern for others during all academic and clinical interactions.
- Adhere to all aspects of relevant professional codes of ethics, privacy, and information management policies.
- Take personal responsibility for maintaining physical and mental health at a level that ensures safe, respectful, and successful participation in didactic and clinical activities.

### **Cultural Responsiveness**

Statements in this section acknowledge that audiologists and speech-language pathologists have an obligation to practice in a manner responsive to individuals from different cultures,

linguistic communities, social identities, beliefs, values, and worldviews. This includes people representing a variety of abilities, ages, cultures, dialects, disabilities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities or expressions, languages, national/regional origins, races, religions, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and lived experiences.

- Engage in ongoing learning about cultures and belief systems different from one's own and the impacts of these on healthcare and educational disparities to foster effective provision of services.
- Demonstrate the application of culturally responsive evidence-based decisions to guide clinical practice.

This document should be considered a living document and therefore reviewed by CAPCSD at regular intervals to ensure that current terminology, practice, and ideas are reflected.

## **Glossary**

Cultural responsiveness involves “understanding and respecting the unique cultural and linguistic differences that clients bring to the clinical interaction” (ASHA, 2017) and includes “incorporating knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic differences into clinical and educational practices”.

Evidence-based practice involves “integrating the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture, and preferences” (Evidence- Based Practice in Psychology, n.d.).

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Cultural responsiveness [Practice Portal <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Cultural-Responsiveness/>] \_

Evidence-Based Practice in Psychology. (n.d.). <https://www.apa.org>. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.apa.org/practice/resources/evidence>

This Document should be cited as: Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (2023). A guide for future practitioners in audiology and speech-language pathology: Core functions. <https://www.capcsd.org/academic-and-clinical-resources/>

Approved by the CAPCSD Board of Directors  
April 3, 2023 *Reference update April 25, 2023*

## FORM: Core Functions Acknowledgement

The following will be reviewed during orientation, signed, and retained for the duration of the program.

### Acknowledgement of Core Functions

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name printed), acknowledge that I have been informed of the core functions associated with the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology.

I understand that I may discuss student success with faculty of the Master's Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Houston.

Furthermore, I understand that I may request accessibility or disability related accommodations that may facilitate success in the COMD Master's Program by contacting the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center.

Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center 4369  
Cougar Village Dr., Room 100  
Houston, TX 77204-3022  
Phone: (713) 743-5400  
TDD: (713) 749-1527  
Fax: (713) 743-5396  
[JDCenter@central.uh.edu](mailto:JDCenter@central.uh.edu)

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Signature

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Date

## Academic Advising

All graduate students will participate in ongoing group and individual academic and clinic advising throughout the program. Students will be assigned to an advisor prior to orientation.

At the beginning of their first term, graduate students are required to attend a small group advising meeting with their advisor to obtain initial information regarding the COMD program. This usually occurs during orientation. After that, mandatory individual and/or group advising meetings will occur regularly, usually once each term. It is the obligation of every graduate student to attend advising meetings. Advising not only assists students in keeping on track and having a contact person for questions and issues but is required of CAA-accredited programs.

In addition to required meetings, graduate students can, and should, make appointments to meet with their advisor if they have questions or concerns which impact their performance in the program.

Documentation of advising meetings is required. Individual advising records are in the students' permanent file. Students may request to see their advising record at any time.

In addition to advising, to facilitate awareness and monitor accuracy of documented progress through the master's program, students are expected to monitor their individual profiles via the Clinical Assessment of Learning, Inventory of Performance and Streamlined Office-Operations (CALIPSO), a web-based on-line tracking program designed for this purpose.

CALIPSO software program tracks students' progress in terms of acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as clinical hours. Students are required to monitor progress and keep contact information updated in CALIPSO. An electronic record of the learning marker form will be kept in the department for the duration of each student's master's program and for seven years following graduation. The CALIPSO web address is: [www.calipsoclient.com](http://www.calipsoclient.com)

## Degree Requirements

The UH COMD Master of Arts program provides opportunities to meet all the requirements of a CAA-accredited. This is done by offering rigorous coursework, various practicum experiences, and other pre-professional activities. Students have the option of a full-time or part-time program.

Full-time students take 12 required content courses (total of 31 credits), one elective content course (total three credits) and a minimum of five practicum courses (15 credits) for a total of 49 credits of graduate study. Specific degree requirements are described in the Graduate Catalog: <https://publications.uh.edu/index.php>.

Part-time students take 12 required content courses (total of 31 credits) and one elective content course (total three credits). Clinic loads for part-time students do not increase as rapidly as for full-time students. Because of the smaller clinic loads, part-time students

complete 7 practicum courses (21 credits). Part-time students will graduate with 55 credit hours.

All full-time students complete a clinic assignment in each term they are enrolled in the graduate program. Part-time students may have one summer term without a clinic assignment; in all other terms they will have clinic assignments.

COMD offers departmental electives during the summer term. Students may choose to take a graduate-level elective in another department at UH. Approval from their advisor is required. A special problems or selected topics course may be taken to explore areas of the field more extensively. These must be approved by a student's advisor and Program Director.

In addition to completing all required coursework, graduate students must: (a) earn all required clinical competencies and complete a minimum of 25 guided observation hours and 375 supervised clinical practicum hours under an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist, including at least 30 minutes of experience in each required disorder area; (b) complete a minimum of 3 hours of professional engagement activities; (c) pass the formative assessment; and (d) pass the comprehensive examination or successfully complete a master's thesis.

### *Full-time Master's Curriculum*

| FIRST YEAR  |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fall 1      |                                                             | Spring 1                           |                                                             |
| COMD 6261   | Research and Critical Thinking                              | COMD 6340                          | Augmentative and Alternative Communication                  |
| COMD 6372   | Remediation of Childhood Language Disorders                 | COMD 6387                          | Voice Disorders                                             |
| COMD 6334   | Aphasia & Related Communication Disorders                   | COMD 6321                          | Swallowing Disorders                                        |
| COMD 7322   | Speech Sound Disorders                                      | COMD 6230                          | Autism Spectrum Disorder                                    |
| COMD 7391   | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (1)                     | COMD 7391                          | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (2)                     |
| Summer 1    |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| COMD 6397   | Selected Topics in COMD (or another elective course)        |                                    |                                                             |
| COMD 7391   | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (3)                     |                                    |                                                             |
| SECOND YEAR |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| Fall 2      |                                                             | Spring 2                           |                                                             |
| COMD 6328   | Acquired Cognitive Disorders                                | COMD 7190                          | Graduate Seminar in Speech-Language Pathology               |
| COMD 6326   | Motor Speech Disorders                                      | COMD 7221                          | Fluency Disorders                                           |
| COMD 7392   | Adv Practicum in Speech & Language Disorders (Externship 1) | COMD 7392                          | Adv Practicum in Speech & Language Disorders (Externship 2) |
|             |                                                             | Comprehensive Exam (if applicable) |                                                             |

| Summer 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| As needed to complete clinical experiences, thesis, electives, outstanding interventions                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| In addition to the courses above, students may take COMD 6397 Selected Topics in COMD, or COMD 6398 Special Problems in COMD to pursue individual interests. These must be discussed with specific instructors and approved by the Program Director or Department Chair. |

## Part-time Master's Program

The part-time program has several aspects which differ from the full-time program. These are listed here:

1. Graduate school must remain a priority. Although part-time students have reduced course & clinic loads per semester, they must remain flexible in their availability, particularly for the clinic schedule. Students with more restrictive schedules may have fewer clients assignment opportunities and less variety in their clinical experiences. Given current client scheduling procedures, it is difficult to place students who are not available multiple full days each week.
2. Part-time status is permanent. Once a student elects part-time status, they may not return to full-time status later in the program. Students may opt for part-time status any time before externships begin. Once assigned to an externship site, requests for part-time status will be considered only in extenuating circumstances. All students, whether full-time or part-time, complete externships at approximately 35 hours/week.
3. Program length is extended. Students who begin the program as part-time students cannot graduate before the spring term of their third year. The part-time program includes more clinic terms (typically seven) than the full-time program (typically five-six).
4. First summer term. Part-time students typically do not enroll in clinic or classes during their first summer term.
5. Clinical workload increases over time. While part-time students take no more than 2 academic courses in any term, clinical responsibilities increase each term as students progress from on-campus clinic experiences to externships. The part-time program extends the timeline for completing the degree, but it does not reduce clinical hour expectations. Students are expected to achieve the same clinical competencies and approximately the same number of client contact hours during each clinic experience. For example, Clinic I and Clinic Ia have the same clinical hour expectations; the requirements are not divided between the two terms.
6. Final externship requirements. The final 2 terms of the program require full-time externship placements or equivalent (i.e., 30- 40 hours/week).
7. Enrollment status and financial aid. Part-time students may register for fewer than 9 credit hours in some terms. Because the University defines nine credits as full-time enrollment for graduate students, this may affect financial aid, insurance or other benefits. Students who need full-time status should discuss options with their

advisor, such as enrolling in a 1 credit special topics course with specific activities/objectives, or increasing externship credit hours.

8. Completion of hours does not accelerate graduation. Due to the extended nature of the part-time program, some students may complete the required 375 client contact hours and all competencies before finishing the program. However, all students must complete two full externship placements (and all other program requirements). Students may not graduate before the spring term of their third year, nor may they shorten their final externship placement.

Changes to the typical plan of study (FT or PT) must be made via coordination with the student's advisor as well as with the approval of the graduate program director and the externship coordinator.

### Part-time Master's Curriculum

| FIRST YEAR           |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fall 1               |                                                             | Spring 1                           |                                                             |
| COMD 6372            | Remediation of Childhood Language Disorders                 | COMD 6340                          | Augmentative and Alternative Communication                  |
| COMD 7322            | Speech Sound Disorders                                      | COMD 6230                          | Autism Spectrum Disorder                                    |
| COMD 7391            | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (1)                     | COMD 7391                          | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (1a)                    |
| Summer 1             |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| No classes or clinic |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| SECOND YEAR          |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| Fall 2               |                                                             | Spring 2                           |                                                             |
| COMD 6261            | Research and Critical Thinking                              | COMD 6387                          | Voice Disorders                                             |
| COMD 6334            | Aphasia & Related Communication Disorders                   | COMD 6321                          | Swallowing Disorders                                        |
| COMD 7391            | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (2)                     | COMD 7391                          | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (2a)                    |
| Summer 2             |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| COMD 6397            | Selected Topics in COMD (or another elective course)        |                                    |                                                             |
| COMD 7391            | Clinic in Speech-Language Disorders (3)                     |                                    |                                                             |
| THIRD YEAR           |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |
| Fall 3               |                                                             | Spring 3                           |                                                             |
| COMD 6328            | Acquired Cognitive Disorders                                | COMD 7190                          | Graduate Seminar in Speech-Language Pathology               |
| COMD 6326            | Motor Speech Disorders                                      | COMD 7221                          | Fluency Disorders                                           |
| COMD 7392            | Adv Practicum in Speech & Language Disorders (Externship 1) | COMD 7392                          | Adv Practicum in Speech & Language Disorders (Externship 2) |
|                      |                                                             | Comprehensive Exam (if applicable) |                                                             |
| Summer 3             |                                                             |                                    |                                                             |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| As needed to complete clinical experiences, thesis, electives, outstanding interventions                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| In addition to the courses above, students may take COMD 6397 Selected Topics in COMD, or COMD 6398 Special Problems in COMD to pursue individual interests. These must be discussed with specific instructors and approved by the Program Director or Department Chair. |

## Formative Assessment

The program uses two formative assessments to support students' development throughout the curriculum: the Academic Formative Assessment and the Clinical Formative Assessment. The Academic Formative Assessment focuses on students' development of clinical reasoning through case-based learning activities completed in academic coursework. The Clinical Formative Assessment evaluates students' development of clinical knowledge and skills during supervised clinical practicum. Successful completion of both formative assessments is required for degree completion.

## Academic Formative Assessment

All master's program students complete an academic formative assessment reflection report that is submitted near the end of their last fall semester (second fall semester for full-time students or third fall semester for part-time students). The reflection report uses Gibb's Reflective Cycle to provide structure to the learning experience. Students use six stages to explore the formative assessment experience: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

Instructions for how to complete the reflection report and the grading rubric used for the written paper are distributed in advising meetings. Progress through the formative assessment process is documented by students on the "Formative Assessment Activities" form. Advisors review the completed form, verify the student's participation in case-based activities from academic courses, and grade the reflection report as Pass, Pass with revision, or Fail. Failure to successfully complete the academic formative assessment activities in classes or to pass the reflection report, will constitute lack of sufficient academic progress and may result in removal from the program.

### Reflection Report Rubric for Academic Formative Assessment (Case-Based Activities)

| Requirement                                                                                           | Met? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Submitted a two-page report                                                                        |      |
| 2. Described experiences completing case-based activities in classes                                  |      |
| 3. Shared feelings and thoughts about the impact of case-based activities on clinical thinking/skills |      |
| 4. Provided an evaluation of the experiences, both positive and negative                              |      |
| 5. Provided an analysis to make sense of the activities/assignments                                   |      |
| 6. Concluded and shared what they learned and what they could have done differently                   |      |
| 7. Described an action plan for how they will apply knowledge and skills to                           |      |

|                                                                                                                             |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| clinical practice                                                                                                           |  |
| 8. Clearly described changes in their clinical thinking that occurred because of case-based activities completed in courses |  |
| Students must meet each of the requirements for the requirement to be met and recorded in the KASA section of CALIPSO       |  |

## Clinical Formative Assessment

All master's program students complete end-of-semester clinical reflections throughout their clinical education experiences and submit a Reflection Report on Clinical Growth near the end of their final fall semester (second fall semester for full-time students or third fall semester for part-time students). The reflection report uses Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to provide structure to the learning experience. Students use six stages to reflect on their clinical growth: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

Instructions for completing the end-of-semester clinical reflections, Reflection Report on Clinical Growth, and advisor evaluation are distributed during advising meetings. Throughout the program, students complete an end-of-semester reflection that documents their clinical strengths, areas for growth, and goals for future development. Students are encouraged to review feedback from their Clinical Educators, including CALIPSO evaluations, when completing these reflections.

Advisors review the completed semester reflections, verify successful completion of required clinical experiences and earned clinical competencies, and approve the final Reflection Report on Clinical Growth. The Clinical Formative Assessment is considered complete when the student has: (a) completed all end-of-semester clinical reflections; (b) successfully completed all required clinical experiences and earned the required clinical competencies; and (c) submitted a Reflection Report on Clinical Growth that is approved by the advisor. Failure to successfully complete the Clinical Formative Assessment will constitute lack of sufficient academic progress and may result in removal from the program.

### Reflection Report Rubric for Clinical Formative Assessment (Clinic Growth)

| Requirement                                                                                                                                       | Met? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Submitted a one-page report                                                                                                                       |      |
| Described clinical experiences completed in the program (populations, settings, responsibilities)                                                 |      |
| Shared feelings and thoughts about clinical growth and the experiences that most influenced development                                           |      |
| Provided an evaluation of clinical performance, including strengths, challenges, and experiences that contributed to growth                       |      |
| Provided an analysis of how clinical experiences, CE feedback, and academic coursework influenced clinical reasoning and decision-making          |      |
| Concluded by describing what was learned about themselves as a clinician, how clinical thinking changed over time, and areas for continued growth |      |

|                                                                                                                                          |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Described an action plan for continued professional development                                                                          |  |
| Clearly described changes in clinical skills, clinical reasoning, and professional behaviors that occurred throughout clinical education |  |
| Students must meet each of the requirements for the requirement to be met and recorded in the KASA section of CALIPSO                    |  |

## Comprehensive Examinations

The master's comprehensive examination (comps) is one of the requirements of graduate education. It meets the summative assessment accreditation requirement. Full-time graduate students take the comprehensive exam during their 5th term while part-time students take the test during their final term. The exam consists of complex clinical scenarios with related multiple-choice questions. The goal is to assess how students integrate material across content areas rather than simply reciting facts. Integrating the major aspects of the field across disorder categories that are within the scope of practice of the profession encourages the student to think like a clinician. Comps questions probe etiology, assessment, and treatment of a variety of communication disorders, as well as research, professional, interprofessional, and ethical issues which present throughout the entirety of the field.

The information assess in comps is not new; it comes from program content. The exam is designed not only to assess summative knowledge but also to help students achieve more confidence in their knowledge as they prepare for clinical fellowship. The ability to integrate information is a key aspect of a successful career in speech-language pathology, regardless of the employment setting. Further information concerning preparing for comps will be discussed at a mandatory group advising meeting during the last term. Information regarding comps intervention is in the [Formative Assessment of Knowledge and Skills](#) section.

## Professional Engagement

As future speech-language pathologists, students are expected to participate in the broader professional and community environments in which they will work. Prior to program completion each student will participate in at least one professional engagement activity. This requirement will be documented as part of CAA Standard IV, Contemporary Professional Issues.

Students must complete a minimum of 3 hours of professional engagement across 1-3 activities. Activities must involve active interaction with the community outside of the department and beyond regular course or clinic requirements. Each activity must be at least one hour in length. Preparation is considered an inherent expectation and generally does not count toward the required hours. For student-led activities, up to one hour of preparation time (e.g., content creation) may be counted toward the requirement. Examples of professional engagement activities include:

- Staffing a booth at a community event (e.g., Autism Speaks Walk)
- Providing hearing screenings at a community event beyond required clinic activities
- Volunteering at events serving special populations (e.g., Mayor's Back to School Fest)
- Participating in advocacy, outreach, or public education activities related to communication disorders

The department will provide examples of potential activities. Students who wish to complete an activity not included on the departmental list should obtain approval from their academic advisor in advance. Activities completed without prior approval may still be considered, but acceptance is at the advisor's discretion.

For each activity, students must submit:

1. Confirmation of participation from an organizer, supervisor, or volunteer coordinator (e.g., signed note, email, or business card).
2. A one-page reflection that includes:
  - A brief description of the activity
  - The student's role and responsibilities
  - Examples of engagement with the public
  - The impact of the activity
  - Connections to professional advocacy, ethics, or contemporary professional issues
  - Plans for future professional involvement
  - The date of the activity and number of hours completed

Documentation should be submitted to the student's academic advisor, who will record completion in CALIPSO.

Professional engagement activities must be completed during the graduate program and documented prior to graduation. Completion of this requirement is necessary to satisfy program requirements related to contemporary professional issues and professional engagement.

This competency aligns with the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Education Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Code of Ethics. Specifically, this competency addresses CAA Standard 3.1.3B: Identification and Prevention of Speech, Language, and Swallowing Disorders and Differences and CAA Standard 3.1.6B: General Knowledge and Skills Applicable to Professional Practice, including students' development of knowledge and skills related to identification and prevention of communication and swallowing disorders, ethical conduct, advocacy, clinical education and supervision, professionalism, counseling and collaboration, and self-evaluation of clinical effectiveness.

Citation: Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. (2025). Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Education Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Retrieved July 21, 2026, from <https://caa.asha.org/reporting/standards/>

Citation: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2023). Code of Ethics [Ethics]. Retrieved July 21, 2026, from <https://www.asha.org/policy/code-of-ethics/>

## Academic Progress

The UH Graduate Catalog (<http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=40&navoid=13997>) states: A satisfactory rate of progress toward the degree is required throughout a student's enrollment. A department may terminate enrollment at any time if the rate of progress is not satisfactory. A student whose enrollment is terminated will be notified, with an explanation, in writing by the chair of the department of the major. Copies of this notice and explanation will be sent to the dean of the student's college.

Furthermore, Graduate students cannot graduate with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) less than 3.00 calculated as described above. Students whose cumulative GPA is below 3.00 will be classified as on GPA Warning. Students on GPA Warning are not eligible for graduation.

When a student on GPA Warning raises their cumulative GPA to 3.00 or above, they will return to Good Academic Standing. Failure to maintain a 3.00 GPA may also result in academic probation, suspension, loss of financial support, or dismissal according to college/departmental policy. The student should review and be familiar with the degree requirements and academic policies of their academic unit.

[http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=40&navoid=14006#cumulative\\_gpa](http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=40&navoid=14006#cumulative_gpa)

In the UH COMD program, satisfactory performance occurs when a student demonstrates knowledge and skills in the key attributes of professional practice which have been defined by the department and ASHA's Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and speech-Language Pathology (CFCC). Satisfactory progress toward the degree is defined as (a) grades of B- or higher and (b) demonstration of the specific learning objectives for academic courses established by CFCC. Progress in clinic includes (a) grades of B or higher for clinic assignments and (b) demonstration of clinical competencies in clinical skill areas established by CFCC.

Lastly, students must successfully complete application activities (i.e., formative, and summative assessments, see below). Students who do not initially demonstrate acquisition of knowledge or skills in academic or clinical components of the program will need to complete an intervention plan to demonstrate acquisition of the specified learning expectation (see Intervention Plans below). Any COMD academic course for which a grade of D or lower is earned must be repeated. Any COMD clinic course for which a grade of B- or lower is earned must be repeated.

| Progress in the Master’s Program                                         |                                                       |                              |                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Academic Classes                                                         | Meets specific learning objectives in each course     | Earns grades of B- or higher | Passes all components of the Formative Assessment |
| Clinic Assignments                                                       | Meets clinical competencies in each of the nine areas | Earns grades of B or higher  |                                                   |
| Passes Summative Assessment (i.e., comprehensive exam or thesis defense) |                                                       |                              |                                                   |
| Completes professional engagement activities                             |                                                       |                              |                                                   |

A letter from the master's program director will be sent to students who earn unsatisfactory grades or objectives (academic or clinic). This letter will serve as a warning or dismissal and include steps that must be taken by the student. Master's students who earn 2 or more unsatisfactory grades will be dismissed from the program. This can be any combination of academic and/or clinic courses either in 2 different terms or in the same academic term (e.g., two final grades of C in academic courses, one D and one C in academic courses, two grades of B- in clinic courses, or one C in an academic course and one B- in a clinic course). Graduate students who were admitted on a conditional/provisional basis who earn 1 or more unsatisfactory grade(s) during their first term (full-time) or first two terms (part-time) will be dismissed from the program.

Students are provided with academic advisors and access to CALIPSO to help track academic and clinical progress.

For cases in which external factors (medical, family, financial, etc.) may be preventing satisfactory progress, students may consider a leave of absence. After discussing options with an advisor, requests for leaves of absence must be formally filed with the master's program director and are considered on a case-by-case basis. While leaves may result in the extension of the program by one or more terms, often they provide the needed time for a student to address external factors so they can succeed once they return.

## Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

The UH COMD master's program provides academic preparation for application for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. The complete list of standards for this certification established by the Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology may be found at: <https://www.asha.org/Certification/2020-SLP-Certification-Standards/>.

The achievement of these standards may be summarized as follows:

- Knowledge of the field is not assumed based on acquiring a specified number of courses or credits in specific areas. Rather, students need to obtain knowledge that has been reflected in specific learning markers (student learning outcomes) for each of the standards.
- Every required course will specify the standards and learning markers that will be addressed. Students will be assessed by their ability to meet these goals through a variety of assessment tools (e.g., exams, quizzes, papers, presentations).
- Students who do not demonstrate knowledge of a learning marker will have an intervention plan developed to allow an opportunity to successfully demonstrate acquisition of that learning marker following additional support. Each intervention plan is developed on an individual basis. Please see the Intervention Plan section (below) for a more complete discussion of this procedure.

## Formative Assessments

There are many ways to assess knowledge and skills in the master's program. Because multiple courses and clinical experiences contribute to the development of each learning marker, some indicators cannot be fully achieved until all related coursework and experiences have been successfully completed. In CALIPSO, these indicators may be marked as "in progress" until all required components are completed.

The program uses two formative assessments to support students' development throughout the curriculum: the Academic Formative Assessment and the Clinical Formative Assessment. Both assessments emphasize reflection, self-evaluation, and continuous improvement as students progress through the program.

### Academic Formative Assessment

As students progress through the master's program curriculum, they are regularly assigned case-based activities that link didactic academic content to clinical decision-making. Most courses include activities that require students to apply didactic knowledge to clinical cases and analyze how academic concepts influence assessment, diagnosis, intervention, counseling, and professional practice. Through repeated exposure to case-based learning, students gradually build clinical thinking skills and learn to integrate knowledge across courses and experiences.

Near the end of the last fall semester students complete a reflection report on their academic formative assessment and submit it to their advisor. The purpose of this reflection is to evaluate how case-based activities contributed to clinical thinking throughout the program.

After reviewing the reflection report as well as checking the completion of the other classes or experiences, the advisor will mark the formative assessment as Pass, Pass with Revision, or Failed.

### Clinical Formative Assessment

Clinical education provides students with repeated opportunities to apply academic knowledge in real-world clinical settings. As students progress through clinic and externship experiences, they work with a variety of clients, disorders, settings, and clinical educators. Through these experiences, students develop clinical skills, clinical reasoning, professional behaviors, and independence.

At the end of each clinical semester, students complete a brief reflection on their clinical strengths, areas for growth, and goals for future development. Students are encouraged to review feedback from Clinical Educators, including CALIPSO evaluations, when completing these reflections.

Near the end of the final fall semester, students complete a reflection report on their clinical growth and submit it to their advisor. The purpose of this reflection is to evaluate how clinical experiences contributed to the development of clinical skills, clinical reasoning, and professional behaviors throughout the program.

After reviewing the semester reflections, final reflection report, and successful completion of all required clinical experiences, the advisor will indicate whether the Clinical Formative Assessment has been completed.

The Clinical Formative Assessment is considered complete when all the following requirements have been met:

- ✓ Completion of all end-of-semester clinical reflections
- ✓ Successful completion of most required clinical experiences and competencies
- ✓ Submission and advisor approval of the final Reflection Report on Clinical Growth

## Summative Assessment

Summative assessment taps the comprehensive knowledge students have obtained throughout their graduate education. Students will sit for an internal comprehensive examination or complete a thesis project and defense as an assessment of summative learning. More information regarding the [comprehensive examination](#) and [thesis options](#) is available in other sections of this handbook. Students will also receive detailed information about both throughout their programs.

## Clinical Skills Assessment

The Performance Evaluation Form, listing the knowledge and skills necessary for successful completion of the master's program, is used for clinical and externship practicum experiences. This is found on CALIPSO. Specific details relating to expectations and documentation of experiences and acquisition of skills can be found in the clinic section of the handbook about [CALIPSO](#).

## Intervention Plans

Students who do not initially demonstrate acquisition of knowledge or skills in academic or clinical components of the program will need to complete an intervention plan to demonstrate acquisition of the specified learning expectation. These are elaborated in the following sections.

The department will retain documentation of all intervention plans, work, and subsequent outcomes in the student's file.

## Interventions in Academic Coursework

Students who do not demonstrate adequate knowledge of predetermined specific learning markers on coursework (including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, presentations, written work) will be assigned an intervention plan. The plan, constructed by the instructor, may include an oral and/or written component. Completion of the intervention within the specified timeframe and to the satisfaction of the instructor is necessary for learning markers to be met and documented on CALIPSO.

Individual instructors will establish the timeframe and the number of attempts offered, for completion of the intervention. All interventions must be successfully completed by the end of the semester (unless otherwise specified by the instructor). Completion of intervention plans will not change a student's grade. An incomplete grade may be assigned if the student does not successfully complete the intervention on time but has shown acceptable progress towards completion. Additionally, students may or may not be assigned to clients until learning markers for the coursework related to relevant disorder(s) are met to the instructor's satisfaction. For example, if a student has an outstanding intervention for the aphasia course, the program director will inform the clinic director about the student's intervention, and the student may or may not be assigned a client with aphasia until the intervention is successfully completed.

Failure to successfully complete an intervention to the satisfaction of the instructor within the specified timeframe may result in dismissal from the program due to lack of academic progress.

## Interventions in Clinical Practicum

In clinic (COMD 7391), intervention plans are required for any student who earned a grade below a B. An intervention plan will be developed with support from the Clinic Director and the Clinical Educator(s) who supervised the student during the clinical placement in which the student earned a grade below a B. Specific behavioral objectives reflecting skills that need to be developed will be outlined with recommended intervention strategies. In the case where a student meets the grade requirement but does not meet expectations for specific clinical skills, and action plan may be created to provide extra time or experiences.

At the beginning of the subsequent term, the student's Clinical Educator(s) will be provided with the intervention documentation and an intervention plan tracking sheet to be reviewed weekly with the student. The student will receive written feedback on their progress on the intervention plan at the midterm and end-of-term conferences. All objectives of the intervention plan must be met before the end of the term to successfully fulfill the intervention plan. Completion of intervention plans will not change a student's grade.

Refer to the [externship section](#) for additional information regarding completion of Clinic I-III. Except in rare circumstances, externship placements may not proceed until interventions are successfully completed.

In externship (COMD 7392/7692/7992), intervention plans are required for any student who does not satisfactorily complete a clinical experience and/or fails to meet the competencies associated with the clinical placement. Specific goals for intervention in the areas of weakness will be developed with the student, Site Supervisor, and Externship Coordinator. The goals must be met before moving forward in the clinical sequence and before graduation. The student will receive written feedback on their progress on the intervention plan at mutually agreed upon times (e.g., weekly, monthly). All objectives of the intervention plan must be met before the end of the term to successfully fulfill the intervention plan. Completion of intervention plans will not change a student's grade.

Students cannot have more than three clinical interventions during their program. Interventions may not be repeated in the same area (e.g., language) or clinical skill area (e.g., displays effective written communication for all professional correspondence). Failure to meet these criteria will result in dismissal from the program due to lack of sufficient progress.

### Interventions Related to the Formative Assessment

An intervention plan for failed portions of the formative assessment will be constructed individually by the student's advisor depending on the area(s) failed by the student (e.g., incomplete course project or incomplete reflection of evaluation, analysis, etc.). The intervention must be successfully completed and passed before graduation exit procedures begin.

### Interventions Related to the Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination (comps) is a critical step in exhibiting summative learning. Therefore, interventions will be required for any student who fails one or more content area(s) of comps (i.e., 6 or less incorrect answers in a content area). Interventions will focus on the failed area(s) and will be constructed by the relevant instructor. Interventions may involve an oral and/or written component and must be completed prior to final exit advising meetings. A student who fails 3 or more content areas or receives a score below 70 will be required to re-take the comprehensive exam. Students who must retake the exam are not given details of the content areas that were passed/failed.

A re-take of the comprehensive exam will be set by the department and will be a minimum of 4 weeks after the initial comps scores are posted. A re-take exam may involve the student staying for an additional term of graduate school. To comply with university requirements for graduation, the student is required to enroll in at least 1 credit during the term in which they re-take the comprehensive examination. Any student who fails the comprehensive examination twice will be dismissed from the program due to lack of academic progress. Students may petition to be reinstated (see information regarding petitions for reinstatement).

## Clinical Programs

The [clinic section of the handbook](#) outlines policies and procedures for the clinic. All students admitted to the graduate program are required to be familiar with the information provided about the clinic.

Students must submit the required 25 clinical observation hours, with appropriate signatures and ASHA certification numbers and confirmation of supervision training for hours accrued after January 1, 2020, prior to beginning graduate practica. Documents that do not include the required signatures or ASHA certification numbers will not be accepted. Students who have clinical hours from other universities are responsible for submitting a record of those hours to the Clinic Director prior to their first graduate practicum experience. Students may submit up to 50 hours of clinical practicum obtained at another accredited institution to be counted toward their 375 clinical hours. The clock hours record must be signed by the supervisor with CCC-SLP or CCC-A and ASHA certification number.

Any student who drops clinic or externship after their practicum has been assigned will not be assigned clients or placed at another externship until, at a minimum, the subsequent semester unless prior approval was granted by the Clinic Director.

## On-Campus Clinic

The University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (USLHC) is the training facility housed within the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Houston. COMD master's students are required to enroll in a minimum of 3 terms of on-campus clinic and/or community collaborations, consisting of treatment, diagnostic, and screening experiences.

Participation in the on-campus clinic or community collaborations is contingent upon completing the Practicum Enrollment Form and attending the master's program orientation prior to the first clinical practicum experience.

The USLHC policies and procedures are found the [clinic section of the handbook](#). Policies and procedures for [off-campus externships](#) are also included in the clinic section of the handbook.

ASHA sets forth specific guidelines regarding practica that address ethical behavior (see the ASHA Code of Ethics; <https://www.asha.org/Code-of-Ethics/>), supervision requirements during

practica, the number and types of clock hours students must earn as part of the pre-certification process, and the clinical competencies that must be demonstrated in nine areas of clinical practice. Students who successfully complete clinics and externships during their matriculation through the UH COMD master's program should accrue a sufficient number of hours and demonstrate all clinical competencies required to begin their Clinical Fellowship after graduation. However, students are responsible for working with CEs, clinic director, and extern coordinator to ensure they obtain the types of clinical experiences they need and that they demonstrate entry-level clinical competence across the age span and in all disorder areas.

### Off-Campus Externships

Externships are available for students to do practica off campus.

Prior to enrollment in an externship experience, students need to have successfully completed Clinic I-III with a grade of B or better. Specific regulations for the externship experience will be presented at an externship meeting.

The master's program is designed to minimize the number of academic courses taken concurrently with externships. Only in rare instances will a student be allowed to take more than 2 academic courses in the same semester as an externship placement.

Students are expected to complete their entire assigned extern placement. Students who complete all 375 contact hours and/or all competencies prior to the end of the second extern placement are not allowed to have a shortened externship. Students often find that the remainder of the time at that site provides the freedom to fully immerse themselves in learning through the experience without the pressure of meeting minimum hour and competency requirements.

If less than 20 hours per week is spent at an externship site (or combination of externship sites), and/or a minimum of 50 client contact hours is not achieved, the student will earn a grade of incomplete. The student will work with the extern coordinator for an additional externship experience. This may result in an extension of the student's degree program by one or more terms.

Should a summer externship placement apply, the rotation will generally follow the Summer Session 1 schedule (See UH Academic Calendar for details).

### Dropping Courses

Students are encouraged to talk to their advisor if they find that they are struggling to meet program and personal expectations for success in the program. In some cases, the best option is to drop an academic course. Due to the tight sequencing of courses and clinical experiences and the expectation for prior or concurrent relevant academic coursework with some clinical placements, dropping a course typically will result in extension of the graduate program. The University policies concerning dropped courses are as available at:

<http://publications.uh.edu/content.php?cat0i=37&navoid=13814>

## Withdrawal from Program

Upon beginning the program, continuous enrollment is expected for the fall, spring and summer terms until the degree is completed. Although the program is intended to be completed in 5 (full-time) or 7-8 (part-time) semesters, students have five years to complete all the requirements for the master's degree. Leaves from the program for medical or other exceptional reasons are allowed and may be recommended. Leave request must be submitted in writing on the graduate petition form (<http://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/forms/>) to the master's program director and approved by the department chair and the college. Requests are considered on an individual basis. Graduate and professional students who receive medical withdrawals must provide medical documentation indicating they are able to return and obtain permission from their college Dean to enroll again at the University of Houston.

## Praxis Examination in Speech-Language Pathology

The Praxis Examination in Speech-Language Pathology (code 5331) is the national exam for speech-language pathology (SLP). It is required for ASHA certification and for Texas SLP licensure. It is not required for graduation from the UH COMD master's program.

The Praxis is a 2.5-hour timed test consisting of 132 questions. A passing score is determined by ASHA's Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Students must indicate that they are from the University of Houston, Main Campus (or University Park), code 0300, and request that their score be sent to the UH COMD department (code 0300) so that we can keep records for our files and accreditation reporting. Further information concerning preparing for the Praxis will be discussed at a mandatory group advising meeting during the final term and is available on the ASHA website.

<http://www.asha.org/Certification/praxis/About-the-Speech-Language-Pathology-Praxis-Exam/>

Students are encouraged to take the Praxis exam around the time of their comprehensive examination. Registration and further information are available from ETS.

<https://www.ets.org/praxis/register/> Students who receive accommodations from UH in the MA program may request accommodations from ETS

(<https://www.ets.org/praxis/register/disabilities/>)

## Graduation Exit Procedures

To be eligible for exit checkout students must have completed (a) all coursework including receiving a grade and completing all interventions; (b) all clinic assignments.

Students must then schedule final exit appointments in the following order:

1. Clinic Director and Externship Coordinator check out - clinic hours and skills verification (CALIPSO review)

- a. Students are expected to submit their clinic hours on CALIPSO and have them approved prior to the checkout meeting. The Clinic Director will verify that all the clinical competencies have been met.
2. Advisor academic checkout - knowledge verification (CALIPSO review).
  - a. Students will review a copy of the completed ASHA Standards and Implementation Record from CALIPSO at the exit appointment.
  - b. Advisor will confirm program completion and complete an exit interview (or verify that it was completed).

As part of the program check out, students will receive a letter to present to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation verifying final grades and total clinic experience hours and certify that all graduate degree requirements have been fulfilled. This allows the student to apply for Texas licensure prior to receiving their official diploma.

The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Coursework and Clinical Experience confirmation form, SPA016, found at: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/slpa/forms/Intern-in-SLP-Course-Work-and-Clinical-Experience-SPA-LIC-016-E.pdf> and will be completed and signed by the department chair.

In addition to the forms required by the State, the Verification by Program Director page of the ASHA Application for Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology will be prepared for students via CALIPSO. For the certification electronic application, the form will be generated and sent to the Department Chair for verification when the student begins the CCC application process. The full CCC application process can be found at <https://www.asha.org/certification/SLPCertification/>.

## Texas Licensure

A master's degree is required for certification by ASHA and by the State of Texas for professional licensure. The master's degree and ASHA certification are the minimal credentials in speech-language pathology. The Texas Department for Licensing and Regulation licenses certified speech-language pathologists and audiologists as well as interns (persons completing their clinical fellowship under the supervision of a licensed, certified SLP) and speech-language pathology assistants. A Speech-Language Pathology license is granted to applicants who have completed their master's degree at an accredited school, have completed their intern requirements working under the supervision of a licensed SLP and who have passed the [Praxis examination](#), (the national examination in speech-language pathology) and a jurisprudence examination described below.

An individual must hold one of the licensure credentials to practice speech-language pathology in the State of Texas. Speech-language pathology assistants work under the direct supervision of a licensed SLP and are required to have (a) completed undergraduate major coursework in communication sciences and disorders, (b) obtained 25 hours of observation, and (c) completed 25 hours of supervised clinical experience.

The link for online license applications is: <https://vo.licensing.tdlr.texas.gov/datamart/login.do>. Follow the directions for license applications. The details for this process change frequently, so it is best to check the website before beginning.

Professionals licensed within the State of Texas must adhere to the Rules/Regulations set by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. These can be found at: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/slpa/laws-rules.htm>.

All individuals applying for or renewing SLP licensure in the State of Texas must take a Jurisprudence Examination. This on-line examination can be taken at the time of application. Details are available at: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/slpa/slpaexams.htm>.

Verification by Program Director Form for Speech-Language Pathology:

Students who are applying for certification in speech-language pathology must exhibit knowledge and skills determined by the Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech Language Pathology as described above. This will be documented on the Certification Application form and elaborated on the Knowledge and Skill Acquisition (KASA – form) found on CALIPSO.

At the conclusion of the program, the advisors verify that the student completed all requirements, which generates a completed Verification by Program Director page of the ASHA application for certification. When the applicant submits certification paperwork, an email will be sent to the program for an electronic signature verifying completion of all academic requirements.

Students will be able to print a copy of their completed education and clinical records via CALIPSO. All students are advised to keep copies of their records for future reference. However, the entire record does not have to be submitted to ASHA when applying for certification.

## Master's Thesis & Specialty Concentrations

### Master's Thesis

Graduate students have the option of completing a Master's Thesis under the direction of one of the COMD faculty members. A Master's thesis is an original research project that may involve collecting and analyzing new data or analyzing existing data. The project completed as a Master's thesis should meet quality standards for a peer-reviewed publication or presentation. Students pursuing the thesis option should consult the Graduate School's website for current policies, formatting requirements, resources, and submission deadlines:

<https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/thesis-dissertation/>. Students who are considering a Master's Thesis must obtain consent from a COMD faculty member who is willing to act as the thesis committee chair. Students who opt to complete a thesis must register for six thesis credits. The first 3 hours typically are taken in the summer term and replace the program elective. Students must be registered for thesis credits in the term their

thesis is completed and defended; therefore, the other 3 hours tend to be completed in the last spring term. Thesis students are exempt from taking the comprehensive examination.

Please see [Appendix D](#) for Thesis Guideline and Steps for Completion.

### Specialty Concentrations

The UH COMD master's program, like all accredited programs, must provide a range of courses and clinical experiences so that students obtain knowledge and skills that span the "Big 9" disorders identified by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and SLP (CAA). We understand that some students wish to specialize and obtain more in-depth, focused learning with a particular population or disorder area.

To provide a way to obtain some specialized learning, we offer Specialty Concentrations. A Specialty Concentration is an optional, mentored experience designed individually for each student. The Specialty Concentrations require work above and beyond the requirements of the UH COMD master's program.

Ideally the product generated will benefit more than just the student; it is not just writing a paper or creating a project just to show student learning. Some examples of specialty concentration activities include assisting with writing a chapter for a professional, scientific, or textbook; assisting with one or more components of a research project; experiences in assessment or treatment beyond clinic assignments; and creating materials to enhance communication or knowledge of communication disorders in the community or in practice. Interested students will meet with a faculty mentor and develop a specialty concentration contract that includes all required elements and deadlines.

Students who choose to do a master's Thesis will not be eligible for a Specialty Concentration, because they will develop a specialty area through the structured process of completing the thesis.

### Requirements

Students and mentors must include an educational component in their plan. Students, in consultations with their mentors, can take an elective course related to their topic either through the COMD department or another department or by completing 3 credits worth of COMD Special Problems or Selected Topics credits. The content of the Special Problems 'course' is at the discretion of the faculty mentor, and can include online workshops and trainings, assigned readings and/or discussion. These credits will fulfill the 3 credits of electives required in the UH COMD master's program. Selected Topics or Special Problems credits can be taken in 1-3 credit increments. If the credits are taken in 1- or 2- credit increments, once students begin taking Special Problems credits, they should also complete all the prescribed requirements for the Specialty Concentration, otherwise, they will have to find an alternative for the 3-credit elective requirement which could result in an extension of their program by one or more terms.

Students will be required to maintain the minimum grade for the clinic (B) and classes (B-) to begin and continue a specialty concentration. If students are below the minimum requirement in any course at mid-term, the specialty concentration will be put on hold until the end of the semester. If the final grade meets the requirement, the specialty concentration may be resumed. If it does not meet the final grade requirement, the specialty concentration is discontinued.

The activities, projects, and expectations of the Specialty Concentrations are individualized and agreed upon by the student and their faculty mentor.

#### Timeline and Deadlines

Students who choose to complete a Specialty Concentration must meet with a mentor and sign a Specialty Concentration contract by the end of January of their first year in the program (or second year for part-time students). Students must commit to completing the Specialty Concentration at the time that they begin taking 3 credits that are Concentration-specific if that is specified in the plan. Failure to complete the requirements after this point may delay graduation, as the Special Problems credits meet the required 3 credits of electives.

All aspects of the program must be completed 1 month prior to graduation for the student to earn a Specialty Concentration Certificate.

## Financial Assistance and Assistantships

### Departmental Scholarships and Traineeships

The Department of Communication Disorders offers a variety of scholarships, traineeships, and other funding opportunities. Many awards are offered at the time of admission, while others become available throughout the program. Eligibility requirements, application procedures, and current opportunities are available on the department website:

<https://www.uh.edu/class//comd/programs/masters/financial-assistance/>

Students are encouraged to monitor departmental communications for additional funding opportunities that may arise during the academic year.

### University Financial Aid

The University of Houston offers a variety of financial aid programs, including loans, grants, work-study opportunities, and graduate student funding programs. Students seeking financial assistance should complete the FAFSA and consult the following resources:

- Student Financial Services: <https://www.uh.edu/financial/graduate/>
- Graduate School Funding Opportunities: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/cost-and-aid/awards-scholarships-and-fellowships/>
- Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid: <https://www.uh.edu/financial/>

## Assistantships

Assistantships provide financial support while allowing students to gain experience in teaching, research, clinical, and departmental activities. Assistantships are competitive and availability varies by term.

Students accepted into the graduate program will receive information about assistantship opportunities and application procedures. Additional application cycles may be offered throughout the academic year as positions become available.

## Academic Teaching Assistants (Graders)

Teaching assistants support undergraduate COMD courses through grading and related instructional activities. Positions are selected by individual faculty members.

Typical commitment:

- Up to 10 hours per week
- Hourly stipend varies by term

## Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants provide support to the department, clinic, current students, and incoming cohorts.

Typical commitment:

- Up to 20 hours per week
- Hourly stipend varies by term

## Research Assistants

Research assistants support faculty research projects. Duties, schedules, and funding levels vary depending on the needs of individual projects.

Typical commitment:

- Up to 10 hours per week
- Stipends vary by project and funding source

## Additional Funding Resources

Students interested in pursuing external funding opportunities may consult resources available through the University of Houston Graduate School and other scholarship search databases. Because funding opportunities change frequently, students should rely on current online resources rather than printed lists.

# CLINIC: UNIVERSITY SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING CLINIC (USLHC)

## USLHC Mission Statement

The mission of the University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic is to provide high-quality speech, language and hearing services on the University of Houston campus and at community outreach centers to individuals of all cultures, ages, and abilities and be a resource for the community by:

- a. Enhancing clinical education through recruitment and retention of qualified clinical educators and provide opportunities for professional development.
- b. Delivering comprehensive speech-language clinical services.
- c. Optimizing technology for service accessibility and efficiency.
- d. Providing consistently strong clinical experiences for graduate students to serve our uniquely distinct Houston community.
- e. Expanding our role as a primary resource center for speech-language-hearing services for students, faculty, and staff.
- f. Strengthening and expanding community partnerships for enhanced service delivery through collaboration, community screenings and engagement.

## USLHC Parking

**STUDENT PARKING:** Students who have purchased the appropriate student parking permit from the University Transportation and Parking Office may park in Lot 15C located in front of the clinic or park in the Stadium Garage across the street. If a student parks in a metered space, they must pay the visitor rate, even if they have a valid parking permit. Students will be ticketed if they park in: any lot for which they do not have the appropriate permit; the reserved COMD spots in Lot 15C; or restricted areas (e.g., fire and loading zones and disabled or reserved spaces which are enforced 24 hours a day and seven days a week). All campus parking is controlled by UH Parking & Transportation; the department cannot waive or dismiss parking tickets. For additional information, visit Parking & Transportation site:

<https://www.uh.edu/parking>

**CLIENT PARKING:** Client and visitor parking is available in the stadium parking garage across the street, as well as metered parking along Holman Street. Clients can also park in the COMD reserved spots (Space 2-5) if they have registered with the front desk and have a parking permit.

## USLHC Rooms

**MAIN CLINIC OFFICE:** The main clinic office is located in Room M156. Clinician and clinical educator (CE) mailboxes are in the Clinician Workroom (M163C) and faculty and staff mailboxes are in the copy room (M244B) in the faculty suite upstairs. The clinic is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**CLIENT WAITING ROOM:** The waiting room is located just inside the main entrance of the clinic. Clinicians should arrange to meet clients in the waiting room prior to sessions unless special arrangements are made in advance and approved by the CE. Discussions with clients or parents should take place in the treatment room, the conference room, or the CE's office. DO NOT have conversations about the client's performance in the waiting room. This violates the client's confidentiality and constitutes a HIPAA violation.

**TREATMENT ROOMS:** There are pediatric treatment rooms, adult treatment rooms, and group treatment rooms. Please refer to the Therapy Room Scheduler on Microsoft Teams to schedule the appropriate room for your client.

**CLINICIAN WORKROOM:** A workroom, Room M163C, serves as a treatment preparation area for graduate clinicians. It is provided as a place to plan, construct materials, write reports, and write SOAP notes.

**GRADUATE CLINICIAN STORAGE LOCKERS:** Lockers are available to graduate students on a first come, first served basis, in the Clinician Workroom. Clinicians must supply their own locks. Do not bring purses into the treatment sessions. Cell phones should be left in lockers unless being used in a treatment activity. Do not leave purses, phone, keys, or other valuables unattended.

**CLINIC GRADUATE ASSISTANTS' OFFICE:** Clinic Graduate Assistants share an office in Room M164F.

**GRADUATE STUDENT COMPUTER LAB:** Computers in the Graduate Student Computer Lab (Room M162H) are for graduate clinicians only. A printer is available in M162H for clinic use only.

**STUDENT LOUNGE:** A student lounge (M218) is located on the second floor of Melcher Life Sciences. All students have access to the lounge with their Cougar Card.

**COMD STUDY ROOM:** A study room (M207) with carrels is located on the second floor of Melcher Life Sciences. All COMD students have access with their Cougar Card.

**ALL GENDER RESTROOMS:** There are two all-gender restrooms located in the USLHC. One is in the clinic lobby, and one is located in the CE suite.

## Clinical Program Overview

### Clinical Skills Assessment

The Performance Evaluation Form in CALIPSO, listing the knowledge and skills necessary for completion of the master's program, is used for clinical and externship practicum experiences. Specific details relating to expectations and documentation of experiences and acquisition of skills can be found in the Clinic Handbook.

An electronic record of clinical skill acquisition is maintained to chart progress throughout the master's program using CALIPSO. It is the student's responsibility to monitor skill acquisition and clinic hour accrual in CALIPSO and to work with the Clinic Director to obtain the necessary experiences for certification. The department will retain documentation of all intervention plans, work, and subsequent outcomes in the student's file throughout their program and for seven years after graduation. Upon completion of exit procedures, students will receive a [Verification by Program Director](#) Form to submit for ASHA certification.

The University Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic is the training clinic housed within the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Houston. Graduate students complete a minimum of three semesters of clinic through USLHC prior to receiving an extern placement. The clinical experiences may consist of treatment, diagnostics, and screenings. Placements include both at the USLHC and in community outreach settings with UH CEs. These placements often extend beyond the on-campus clinic calendar to conform to the site's calendar. The CEs in these settings will determine the final date of the clinical experience. The Clinic Handbook outlines policies and procedures for the clinic. All students admitted to the graduate program are required to be familiar with the information provided in the Clinic Handbook.

Participation in the on-campus clinic is contingent upon completion of the Practicum Enrollment Form and attending graduate orientation.

The UH COMD program follows specific ASHA and CAA guidelines regarding practica that address ethical behavior (ASHA Code of Ethics), supervision requirements, the number and types of clock hours students must earn as part of the pre-certification process, and the clinical competencies that must be demonstrated in nine areas of clinical practice.

Students who successfully complete clinics and externships during their matriculation through the UH COMD graduate program will accrue the minimum number of hours and demonstrate all clinical competencies required to begin their Clinical Fellowship after graduating from the master's program.

## Clinical Education Policies and Procedures

### Health Requirements and Immunizations

Proof of immunizations is not required when providing services at the USLHC. However, collaborative clinic sites and externship sites have specific health and immunization requirements. In preparation for externship rotations, documentation of the following list of vaccinations will be required in the spring semester before fall externships begin.

Please keep in mind that requirements standards can change. Some externship sites require American Heart Association CPR training only. This information is reflective of what is currently required.

- MMR
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Hep B
- TB Test
- Flu Shot
- COVID vaccines
- Tetanus

### Clinic Orientation

All first semester graduate clinicians must attend and successfully complete the clinic orientation held prior to the beginning of classes in the fall semester. Other mandatory clinic orientation meetings may occur throughout the year. The clinic orientation meetings are scheduled by the Clinic Director in consultation with the Department Chair and Graduate Program Director.

Incoming graduate students receive notification of the orientation dates in the packet of materials/ instructions sent from the Department prior to the fall semester. Orientation attendance is mandatory for all first semester graduate students.

### Accessibility in the Clinic

#### DART Accommodations

DART accommodations are reviewed and considered in clinic and externship settings. Reasonable accommodations may be implemented; however, if they compromise patient welfare or essential clinical operations, they will not be implemented. For example, documentation deadlines may not be extended when timely completion is required for patient care.

### HIPAA Training

All clinicians will complete HIPAA training and pass the final quiz prior to providing any clinical services or accessing any client information. Documentation indicating completion of training and passage of the quiz will be kept in the student clinician's academic file. This is also required

of all clinic personnel annually through the mandatory online human resources training modules.

It is imperative that clinicians exercise caution when accessing a client's protected health information (PHI) on Microsoft Teams. Be aware of your surroundings when accessing the information and do not leave your computer or device unattended when working in the Microsoft Teams site. Only relevant client folders should be accessed by the clinician and HIPAA guidelines should be followed at all times. Refer to the HIPAA training handout provided by the UH System Office of the General Counsel at clinic orientation.

### CPR/AED/BLS Training

All clinicians are required to hold current CPR/AED/BLS certification throughout the graduate program. Each student clinician must provide proof of current CPR/AED/BLS certification in the form of the certification card issued at the time of their successful completion of the CPR/AED/BLS training. A copy of the certification card will be retained in the student's academic file. Only courses that include hands-on skill performance with mannequins and a final quiz are acceptable sources of CPR/AED/BLS certification.

### Liability Insurance

The COMD Department carries professional liability insurance on all graduate clinicians.

### CALIPSO

All clock hours (from USLHC, collaborative sites, and externship placements), clinical competencies, and academic courses are tracked in the CALIPSO online system. All students are required to obtain a CALIPSO account. Students must keep (1) ongoing track of the clinical contact hours earned, and (2) the client diversity record. The student reports the accrued hours in CALIPSO and submits them for approval by the CE. It is every graduate student's responsibility to check the accuracy of the CALIPSO entries and notify the clinic director immediately if any entries appear inaccurate.

## Graduate Assistants

Clinic Graduate Assistants (GAs) share an office in Room M164F. Clinic Graduate Assistants are responsible for assisting the Clinic Director and CEs in their duties. They check out diagnostic assessments, audiometers, and AAC equipment to clinicians and will acquaint clinicians with the established procedures.

Tests are requested via an Excel file in Microsoft Teams. To check out a diagnostic test, test protocols, or audiometer, complete the request in the assessment request spreadsheet located in the Clinician Library at least 3 days before you need the test. A Clinic Graduate Assistant will pull tests and protocols and place them on the Check Out bookshelf in room M162H (graduate computer room).

Follow the CHECK-OUT procedures when retrieving and returning your tests. Please be considerate. You may check out tests overnight but be aware that others may need the test. DO NOT keep diagnostic tests for more than one week. If you have special circumstances that require you to have a test longer, email the GAs for permission to keep the test longer. The request must include details of the circumstance.

### Materials Room

The Treatment Materials room is located in M163B. The COMD Department and the USLHC provide a wide variety of materials for use in the Clinic. These include stimulus materials, toys, manipulatives, articulation and language treatment programs, and various pieces of equipment. Access to these materials is not a right, but rather a privilege extended to the students. The purpose is to present students with a variety of materials to support and enhance their learning process during clinical practicum. All materials must be checked out before being removed from the materials room. Items MUST BE returned to their original place in the Materials Room.

### Assessments Room

Assessment instruments are kept in the Assessment Materials room (M163A). They may be checked out via the Clinician Library in Microsoft Teams and must be requested at least three business days prior to the evaluation. No items will be released without a documented request. A GA will place the test and a protocol on the shelf labeled Test Pick-Up in the graduate computer room (M162H) for your retrieval with a check-out slip. All items must be collected within 48 hours after the GA completes the request. Tests must be returned within seven days from the date and time the GA signed the test request form acknowledging the request had been completed and with the attached check out slip. Please be considerate, as other clinicians may need the same test or instrument. If you have special circumstances that require you to keep the test longer than seven calendar days, email the GAs for permission to keep the test longer.

- Failure to return items on time will result in a reprimand for first time offenders.
- Should a student clinician fail to adhere to policy the second time, she/he will not be permitted to check out tests.
- If a student clinician does not return a test after repeated requests, this will result in a reduction in the letter grade in clinic.
- Clinicians who lose a diagnostic test while they are in their possession are held responsible for replacing the test at their own expense.

Materials and toys used for evaluations must be cleaned and disinfected using EPA approved disinfectant prior to returning.

## Professional Behavior

Professional behavior is an essential component to success in a clinical training program and to a career as a speech-language pathologist. All students are required to conduct themselves in a professional manner both in clinic and in academic classes. The required professional behaviors are described on the CALIPSO Performance Evaluation under the heading 'Professional Practice, Personal, and Interaction Qualities' found on the CALIPSO Evaluation. Students who consistently demonstrate poor performance in these areas may be placed on an intervention plan or be dismissed from the program.

**Clinician-Client Relationship:** Being a professional means building a relationship that is supportive and nurturing without promoting dependency. It is challenging to achieve this balance. You want to communicate through language and behavior you are committed to serving and supporting the communication needs identified by individuals and their families. It is important you recognize the boundaries of your relationship with a client/family. Personal friendships or inappropriate personal involvement with a client or family compromises your effectiveness as a clinician. If you encounter a circumstance where a client is promoting a personal association (including "friending" on social media), please discuss the situation with your CE who will advise you in tactful management.

**Attendance & Promptness:** Being professional also means being reliable. Your reliability shows through when you are on time and prepared for your appointments. Student clinicians are required to meet clients at the scheduled time. A student clinician who is tardy to a client's appointment will be counseled and clinical hours may not be awarded for the session in question; a student who is tardy two (2) times may be counseled by the Clinic Director to drop clinical practicum.

### **Professional Email Communication:**

With the accessibility of technology, students and faculty have numerous opportunities for quick and efficient communication. It is important to remember, however, that e-mail should follow a protocol that is respectful in tone and presentation, and sensitive to faculty time and availability.

- Use appropriate salutations (e.g., Dear or Good Morning versus Hey)
- Indicate the purpose of your e-mail in the subject line (e.g., question about upcoming session; would like to schedule a meeting)
- E-mails should be short and their purpose should be clear
- Be careful of spelling and grammar errors
- Use respectful language and avoid slang

CEs also want to respond to your e-mail in a timely fashion. Reasonable expectations for responding; however, must be considered. It is important to remember that CEs are not always at their desk as they are teaching, engaged in clinical service/supervision and research activities. They will respond as soon as they are able. Several CE are employed part-time and have restricted availability outside the days they are

scheduled to be on campus. Discuss your CE's on-campus schedule and plan your conference time and communications via email accordingly.

CEs are not expected to respond to e-mail in the evening or on weekends, although some may choose to do so. A good guideline for you is that CEs typically will not be responding to e-mail after 5:00 pm during the week, and from 5:00 pm Friday until 8:00 am Monday morning, unless you have made special arrangements with the CE in advance.

When you are asking CEs to review a document and/or give you feedback on a document, it is important to allow 48 hours for their response. For example, sending a treatment log, lesson plan, report, etc., for feedback one day before a supervisory meeting does not provide a reasonable amount of time for the CE to provide thorough and thoughtful feedback.

### Professional Dress Guidelines

The purpose of a dress code is to present a positive, professional image and provide an environment conducive to learning. All students are expected to maintain good grooming habits and appropriate dress to provide an impression of professionalism to the clients and community we serve. We recognize that expectations around professional dress vary across generations, cultures, and personal experiences. Our goal is to foster a respectful and inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued. While honoring diverse expressions of professionalism, we ask that all employees and students dress in a manner that is appropriate for the setting, aligns with safety requirements, and supports the professional image of our organization. If you have questions or need accommodations related to dress, please reach out to your supervisor or program director.

Professional dress guidelines in externship placements should be discussed with your off-site CE as they may be more stringent or more relaxed, depending on the type of site. The following guidelines apply to all students participating in clinical work and students doing observations, as well as students who will be in the main office working.

- Clothes should not be revealing or suggestive. Clothing should be appropriate for the professional setting.
- Distracting tattoos and body piercings should be concealed by clothing.
- Clinicians are expected to consider their appearance from all angles (i.e., sitting, bending over, playing on the floor), from the perspective of the family members who are observing. Clothing must be clean and neat.
- Attention to personal hygiene should ensure that one is clean and without offensive body odor.
- Cougar Card must be worn. Observers, assistant clinicians, and clinicians (both student & certified) must wear identification when acting in a professional capacity within the clinic.

- Do not bring purses and/or bags into the therapy session. Lockers are provided for storage of personal belongings. Cell phones being used during a therapy activity are allowed with permission from your CE.
- When observing, interviewing at off-site placements, or conducting hearing screenings, students should follow the dress code of that facility. When unsure of the dress code policy at another site, contact the CE.

The following are NOT considered appropriate when acting in a professional capacity:

- Jeans (unless otherwise indicated & discussed with CE) and sweatpants.
- Flip-flops. (This does not include sandals).
- Shorts or very short skirts.
- Excessive jewelry, perfumes, & make-up should also be avoided. All jewelry should be discreet & professional. Jewelry worn in body piercings should be conservative and professional looking.

### Client Confidentiality

The information included in clinical files and/or provided to you during client contact is of a confidential nature and is protected by law. We are obligated NOT to discuss clients or their problems/accomplishments with persons outside the clinic without prior written consent from the client/parent. This is most important. No information regarding any client will be released without the client's written consent. In keeping with Principle of Ethics 1, Rule 1, and HIPAA, if there is any doubt about our having written consent, do not give out information. Violation of a client's right to privacy could lead to dismissal from the graduate program, a lawsuit, loss of clinical accreditation, and damage to the clinician's and the program's reputation in the community. Discussion of clients with other clinicians within the clinic setting and within the boundaries of HIPAA protection can be a meaningful learning experience and is highly encouraged. However, be careful to respect and preserve the dignity of the client as you speak.

### Client Files Policy/Procedures

All graduate students are required to read/sign a Confidentiality and Security Agreement before handling client files. This signed agreement is placed in the student's academic file.

Every client has the legal right to expect all information contained in their file to be safeguarded from unauthorized and unnecessary access. Only persons who have a legitimate reason to access such information should be able to do so and the information they are able to access should be only what they require. The following security policy is intended to ensure the legal rights of our clients as described above.

In order to comply with the Federal Law pertaining to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), faculty/staff are required to shield their computer screens in public

areas. This prevents any outside visitor in the office from having access to private and confidential information.

When away from your computer, you must log out of Practice Perfect. Faculty and students are expected to shred all hard copy drafts of reports once they are no longer needed. Any copy of a report being preserved, such as a model or example, must have all identifying information deleted or blackened to render the report anonymous and protect the privacy of the client and their identity.

### Clinic Attendance Policy

Attendance is maintained for each client on the clinic EMR, Practice Perfect, during Clinic Check Out at the end of the semester, the MCCF entries and SOAP Notes are crosschecked to verify accuracy.

**Client Absences:** The paragraph below is the printed attendance policy given to the parents/clients at the beginning of the semester. Familiarize yourself with this policy and advise your client to notify the clinic in advance if an absence must occur.

It is extremely important that all scheduled appointments be kept during the semester. Having a good attendance record and being punctual for your appointments is necessary for treatment to be most effective. In addition, the supervised students providing the treatment must accumulate specified numbers of clinical hours during the semester. Therefore, the Clinic policy is that a client's therapy will be terminated if there are two (2) unexcused absences during the semester. An absence may be excused if notification is received prior to the scheduled appointment. If more than two absences are anticipated because of illness or other unavoidable reason, please feel free to discuss the situation with the CE.

**Clinician Absences:** Clinicians must be present for all clinic sessions, unless there is an excused absence. Please refer to university policy: Excused Absence Policy | Office of the Provost | University of Houston. After being assigned clients, clinicians should discuss procedures for unplanned and planned absences with the CE to ensure adequate notification of clients and co-clinicians. Before scheduling a make-up session discuss the CE's availability and verify that there is a treatment room available at the specified day/time. Once confirmed, send the day and time information to the front desk to be added to the Practice Perfect schedule.

### Inclement Weather Procedures

The University has the responsibility for determining if campus will be closed due to weather or other situations. The COMD Department (faculty, staff, and students) will follow that decision. If the University is open, you should assume the clinic is open.

The Clinic Director, in consultation with the Department Chair, has the responsibility of deciding if the clinic should close. If the clinic is to be closed, each student clinician is responsible for contacting their clients to inform them that the clinic will be closed.

In some cases, an individual (student, staff, faculty) determines it is not safe for them to travel to campus even if the university is open. In this situation, students should contact their CE and/or Clinic Director and any instructors whose courses they will miss. Students are responsible for making up any work or sessions that are missed. Faculty and staff will communicate class or clinic cancellations through the appropriate channels to the students.

Emergency Status changes from the University will be sent by e-mail, text, and can be accessed via the UH Web site and by calling 713-743-1000. In an emergency, visit the Emergency Alert Web site at [www.uhemergency.info](http://www.uhemergency.info) for updates.

### Universal Precautions

All clinicians must follow universal precautions while engaged in clinic practicum. The clinician conducting the session is responsible for restoring the table surface, chairs, etc. to their clean condition before leaving the room. Disinfectant spray, sanitized wipes, hand sanitizer, and paper towels are stored in the cabinet of each treatment room.

Following are sanitization procedures:

- Clinic materials, including materials and toys used for evaluations and treatment, will be cleaned and disinfected using EPA approved disinfectant wipes after each session.
- Surfaces used during evaluations or therapy including tables and chairs will be cleaned and disinfected after each session using EPA approved disinfectant wipes.
- Doorknobs will be disinfected in between each session.
- Graduate clinicians will be assigned clinic rooms to clean on a weekly basis. Cleaning guidelines with a checklist will be posted in every therapy room, and clinicians will be required to document cleaning and sanitization of the room by initialing the checklist including the date and time the room was cleaned. The GAs will assign the rooms to the clinicians.
- For information regarding appropriate cleaning and disinfection, see CDC's Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities (2008) at: <https://www.cdc.gov/infection-control/media/pdfs/Guideline-Disinfection-H.pdf>

Items such as gloves, diapers and partially eaten food that are not visibly contaminated with potentially infectious substances are considered low risk items and can be disposed of as general waste.

With regard to spills on porous surfaces (i.e., carpet) of potentially infectious waste (e.g., mucous, body fluids containing blood), the janitorial staff should be contacted to carry out disinfection of such surfaces. Notify the Clinic Front Desk Program Coordinator of this need.

Procedures to be followed during Oral-Peripheral Exams/Hearing Screenings & Hearing Evaluations:

1. Gloves should be worn routinely while performing an oral-peripheral exam. If there is an indication of bleeding in the ear, gloves are to be worn for ear canal examination and probe placement for impedance testing.
2. Protective eyewear, if desired, must be supplied by the individual clinician.
3. Earphone cushions and headbands, audio microphones and microphones should be wiped with alcohol swabs before and after each use.
4. Probe tips used for the tympanometer and delayed auditory feedback units should be placed in the designated receptacles containing co-enzyme solution.
5. Items such as gloves, diapers and partially eaten food that are not visibly contaminated with potentially infectious substances are considered low risk items and can be disposed of as general waste.
6. Items such as gloves and diapers that are visibly contaminated with potentially infectious substances should be placed in clear plastic garbage bags and sealed for disposal.

Guidelines for the proper use of gloves:

1. Select latex (or vinyl if the patient or clinician shows a sensitivity to latex) examination gloves that fit properly. Properly fitted gloves will fit tightly, like a second skin. This is important because loose fitting gloves cause frustration due to a lack of dexterity. This frustration is the main reason people stop wearing gloves.
2. Always change gloves between patients. If a glove becomes torn or perforated in any way, replace it. Never reuse disposable gloves.
3. If questioned about the use of gloves, explain that gloves are worn to protect patients and to provide the best in modern care. Most people expect gloves to be worn. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists, as well as other healthcare professionals, wear gloves as a precautionary measure.
4. Place bandages on open sores or cuts prior to putting on gloves.
5. Use the following procedure to safely remove gloves, making sure that hands do not make contact with potentially infectious material on the surface of the glove. First, peel off one glove from wrist to fingertip, and then grasp it in the gloved hand. Next, using the bared hand peel off the second glove from the inside, tucking the first glove inside the second glove as it is removed. Wash hands thoroughly when completed.

## Clinical Observation

The required 25 clock hours of guided observation must be accumulated prior to beginning graduate clinical practicum. All 25 may be earned at the undergraduate level prior to entering the graduate program.

The purpose of the above requirement is to ensure that the graduate clinician has a basic understanding of communication disorders, some exposure to clinical interaction, and an introduction to procedures followed in clinical practice prior to being given responsibility for clinical interventions. While additional observation may be required during clinical practicum or externships, no more than a total of 25 hours of observation can be counted toward ASHA requirements.

Observation hours, with appropriate signatures and ASHA certification numbers, must also be filed prior to beginning graduate practica. Documents that do not include the required signatures or ASHA CCC numbers will not be accepted. The 25 observation hours must be in the scope of practice for speech-language pathology and be completed with an ASHA-Certified SLP who has nine months of practice experience post-certification before serving as a supervisor and two hours of professional development in the area of supervision post-certification before serving as a clinical supervisor or CF mentor.

Observations at the USLHC are available for graduate clinicians and undergraduate students. The observation room is M162E. Clinicians who are observing will log into the VALT system on an iPad or laptop to observe the sessions. Although the clinic has some headphones that can be used for observation, it is encouraged that observers bring their own. Undergraduate student observers should contact the assigned graduate clinicians prior to the observation and receive approval of the CE before initiating any observation. Client observations are not permitted during group sessions due to HIPAA policies.

Please abide by the following rules when observing:

- A release for observation must be on file for a client's session to be observed. Graduate clinicians setting up an observation are responsible for confirming this.
- All observations must occur on campus, including telepractice sessions.
- Observers should be respectful of others and avoid loud conversations or commentary in the observation room.
- No food or drink is permitted in the observation area.
- Any furniture that has been moved should be returned to its original position.

## Clinic Practicum Intervention Plans

See Program Requirements section.

## Clinical Practicum Requirements and Implementation

### Overview

Master's students are required to meet the COMD program clinical requirements to successfully complete the master's program. Students should continuously seek opportunities to earn clock hours and competencies. The COMD department requires at least 15 minutes in evaluation and 15 minutes in treatment until the minimum clock hours in each of the 18 areas are earned, except 10 hearing screening hours are required. If a clinician has not earned a clock hour or competency through direct client contact in a specific area, they must seek other opportunities to earn clock hours and/or competencies including, but not limited to:

- seek out additional opportunities in clinic or externship site;
- sign up for an elective offering competencies and/or hours;
- Sign up for a fluency or voice bootcamp screening;
- sign up for Simucase as arranged by the Clinic Director (students who use Simucase will be responsible to paying for this service). Master's students must meet all COMD clinical requirements to successfully complete the program. Students are expected to actively seek opportunities to earn both clock hours and competencies throughout their clinical training.

The COMD program requires students to accrue clock hours in each of the 18 clinical areas. With the exception hearing evaluation, which requires 10 hours, students must obtain at least 15 minutes of evaluation and 15 minutes of treatment experience in each area. Students must continue seeking opportunities to accrue clock hours even if competency has already been achieved. For example, a student may demonstrate competency through a fluency bootcamp but still need direct client contact hours in that area.

If a student has not been able to earn the required clock hours or competency through direct client contact, they are expected to pursue additional opportunities at their clinic or externship site. Additional opportunities may be available including:

- elective courses that provide competencies and/or clock hours
- fluency or voice screenings
- Simucase activities arranged through the Clinic Director (students are responsible for associated costs).

The COMD graduate program requirements periodically exceed the ASHA minimum clock hour requirements. The graduate student must complete their clinical assignment through the end of each semester, regardless of the number of practicum hours accrued. This policy applies to both in-house clinic and extern placements. A request for early release from practicum obligations based on having met ASHA's minimum requirements represents unprofessional and unethical behavior.

Clinicians have an obligation to provide the assigned clinical services to their clients throughout the duration of each semester's placement.

## Clinic Class

All 1<sup>st</sup> year graduate clinicians enrolled in COMD 7391 are required to attend the weekly clinic class in Fall and Spring of their first year. Topics relevant to professional practice and clinic procedures will be addressed in the class.

## Sequence of Clinical Practica

All students will complete at least three semesters of on-campus clinic practicum and at least two semesters of externship placement. On-campus practicum is generally completed in the first, second, and third semesters of the full-time graduate program. Externships are generally completed in the fourth and fifth semesters of the full-time graduate program. Students in the part-time graduate program typically complete on-campus practicum in fall and spring of their first 2 years and summer of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year, followed by externships in the last 2 semesters of their program.

## Clinical Skill Competencies

The acquisition of clinical skill competencies is an essential part of the graduate program in speech-language pathology. All graduate clinicians will have the opportunity to meet the clinical skill competencies required by ASHA through the clinical education program. These clinical skills competencies may be met through a variety of clinical activities including screenings, prevention, evaluation, treatment, and clinical simulation. The [ASHA 2020 Standards](#) which include the clinical skills competencies (Standard V) are listed below.

## Clinical Assignments

Clinical assignments are generally distributed during or before the first week of classes each semester. Assignments are determined by the Clinic Director. Client contact information is available in the assignment spreadsheets located in Microsoft Teams or the electronic medical records (Practice Perfect).

Clinic assignments are determined after taking into consideration the following factors: the clinician's prior experiences and needed competencies, the needs of USLHC clients/families, and client, clinician, and CE schedules. The Clinic Director's goal is to provide all students with a wide variety of experiences (e.g., client age, background, diagnosis; assessment and treatment; range of severity). However, depending on the types of clients in the clinic in any one semester and schedule restrictions, sometimes students will not get the extent of variety that they desire. Keep in mind additional hours and competencies will be available in externships. Students who have restrictions to their schedules due to outside responsibilities may have less variability in their clinic placements.

Per accreditation standards, students will be provided with at least 25% direct observation for each client seen. The amount of observation may be higher depending on complexity of client,

student's readiness for independence, and CE judgment of overall needs of student/client. Students will be provided with 100% direct observation for clients seen via telepractice.

All students must be enrolled in a practicum course (COMD 7391 or 7392) each semester in which they accrue clock hours. COMD 7391 is for Clinic and COMD 7392 is for externships.

### Clinic Collaborative Sites

The USLHC collaborates with several community sites to provide speech-language services. Students may be assigned to one of these sites during enrollment in clinical practicum (COMD 7391 or COMD 7392). The services and schedules of each community site vary.

The CE assigned to the site will inform students of the expected schedule and provide any orientations specific to the site. Clinicians should be aware that the schedule requirements of the collaborative sites may differ from the on-campus clinic. Clinicians are expected to follow the community site requirements calendar as indicated by their CE. The collaborative sites provide excellent opportunities for students to acquire skills with a variety of ages and populations in a community-based setting.

### Diagnostic and Treatment Services

As a part of the master's SLP clinical training program, speech, language, cognition, hearing, and swallowing assessment and treatment services are provided by graduate clinicians under the supervision of certified and licensed speech-language pathologists. These services are offered in-person at the clinic or via telepractice, whereby therapy is delivered online in the client's home, school, or any setting where high-speed Internet is available.

The USLHC offers equitable treatment services to all people, regardless of race, creed, gender, or national origin. All clinic staff, faculty, and graduate clinicians are committed to promoting and affirming diversity and respecting individuals' dignity and worth regardless of their gender expression and identity, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status.

### Community Screenings

When enrolled in clinic practicum, students will complete speech, language, literacy, cognitive, and hearing screenings. These may be completed at community sites or at the USLHC. Students are required by the COMD department to complete 10 hours of hearing screenings. Hearing screening hours will be earned by demonstrating required competencies. When attending a screening, you must stay for the entire time of the screening or scheduled slot time. If you are unable to attend a screening after signing up, you must find a replacement clinician.

## Scheduling, Cancellations, and Make-up Sessions

Scheduling for diagnostics and treatment is coordinated by the Clinic Director in coordination with the supervising CEs. No practicum credit will be given for unauthorized diagnostics or treatment done through private arrangements made by students with CEs or vice-versa. All inquiries for a speech/language diagnostic should be referred to the front office at 713-743-0915. Scheduling, cancellations, and make-up sessions are specific to your CE. Clinicians should work closely with their CE whenever there is a scheduling change.

New practicum assignments may occur at any time during a student's academic program. Some assignments may extend past the last day of the academic semester, before classes have started or after classes have ended. Please consult with your CE(s) before making vacation/travel plans, especially airline reservations.

All diagnostics and treatment appointments must be kept as scheduled. No changes can be made without the advanced knowledge and consent of the Clinical Director and the CE. All changes must be communicated to Clinic Front Desk to reflect in Practice Perfect schedule. Appointment cancellations initiated by a student clinician disrupt continuity of treatment and must follow university excused absence policy and may be made only with the expressed consent of your CE and/or Clinic Director. Every effort must be made to arrange a make-up session within the same week if a cancellation occurs. Please see the section on Clinic Attendance Policy.

## VALT Video Recording System

The USLHC uses the Intelligent Video Solutions (VALT) Recording system to record sessions held in the USLHC. Clinicians are required to record all diagnostic and treatment sessions. Instructions for scheduling your session on VALT are posted in the Graduate Clinician Computer lab (M162H) and shared during orientation at beginning of the Fall semester

## Clock Hours

A total of 400 contact hours, supervised by an ASHA-certified SLP, are required to graduate and start the Clinical Fellowship (CF): 25 observation hours and a minimum of 375 direct clinical contact hours.

If a graduate student has undergraduate direct, in-person contact clock hours, earned through an ASHA- accredited training program, up to 50 of those may be counted toward the total requirement of 400-hour supervised clinical practicum requirement. Only direct clinical contact may be counted toward the required minimum of 375 clock hours of supervised clinical experience.

It is the shared responsibility of the student and the COMD Department to ensure that each student gains the clinical experiences and knowledge and skills competencies to meet all ASHA certification requirements. The student is required to demonstrate knowledge and skills in both

evaluation and intervention in the following nine areas with a representation of diversity, severity, and age ranges.

- Speech sound production
- Fluency
- Voice
- Language
- Hearing
- Swallowing
- Cognition
- Social aspects of Communication
- Communication Modalities

For clock hours in Audiology screening and management of speech/language problems associated with hearing impairment, students complete hearing screening and aural rehabilitation/management clinical experiences. Audiology screenings are conducted by the USLHC at collaborative sites (e.g., schools, preschools, community centers). Audiology/hearing management may include auditory/verbal check of amplification systems, teaching wear and care of hearing aids, listening training, and aural rehabilitation/habilitation therapy. All audiology hours must be in the SLP scope of practice.

When students advance to extern placements in their final year of the graduate program, they are encouraged to actively seek clinical experiences in their extern placements to address unmet competencies.

What Counts as Clock Hours?

- Direct contact with a client and/or family during assessment or intervention
- At the discretion of the graduate program, up to 75 direct contact hours may be obtained through Clinical Stimulation (CS). Only the time spent in active engagement with CS may be counted. CS may include the use of standardized patients and simulation technologies (e.g., standardized patients, virtual patients, digitized mannequins, immersive reality, task trainers, computer-based interactive). Debriefing activities may not be included as clinical clock hours. (ASHA, January 1, 2020)
- If a client presents communication disorders in two or more disorder categories, accumulated clock hours should be distributed among these categories according to the amount of treatment time spent on each.
- IEP/ARD meetings with the client and/or family present may count only when you are actively contributing.
- Counseling, prevention activities, and client education conducted with the client and/or family may be counted
- Periodic assessments during treatment are considered treatment hours, not diagnostic hours.

## What Does not Count Toward Clock Hours?

- Time spent writing lesson plans, logs of sessions, S.O.A.P. Notes, progress reports, case summaries, diagnostic reports, or other written documentation of client contact
- Time spent preparing for diagnostic or treatment sessions
- Time spent in scoring tests or transcribing language samples
- Time spent in CE conferences or clinic classes
- Time spent in travel when providing off-site services
- Participation in staffing when the client is not attending the staffing
- Debriefing activities following Clinical Simulation (CS)
- Time worked in an SLP-Assistant role

## Documenting ASHA Clock Hours

Graduate students will track their clock hours using the CALIPSO online system, both during on-campus clinical experiences and when placed at collaborative sites. Students must keep (1) ongoing track of the clinical contact hours earned, and (2) the client diversity record. The student reports the accrued hours on CALIPSO and submits them for approval by the CE/Supervisor. Graduate students must submit clinical hours in the same semester that they were earned. Screening hours must be submitted within a week from the activity or event. This ensures that the CE can accurately and ethically rate the clinician's competencies from the clinical experience.

It is every graduate student's responsibility to check the accuracy of the CALIPSO entries and notify the clinic director immediately if any entries appear inaccurate.

## Clinical Simulation

Per ASHA, clinical simulation (CS) is the use of alternative methods of clinical practicum and is part of Standard V-B and V-C. Clinical simulation may be used in the COMD graduate program. Students completing simulation must attend a pre-brief and debrief and meet any other indicated requirement in order to count the simulation hours. The students are responsible the additional fees incurred for clinical simulation.

## Telepractice

Telepractice is another service delivery platform offered by the USLHC. While enrolled in clinical practicum (COMD 7391, 7392, ) clinicians may have opportunities to provide evaluation or treatment via telepractice.

**Clinicians:** When you receive your telepractice client assignments, contact your CE to discuss the following information:

- Contact Information: Check with your CE to see how they would like you to communicate with them. This will vary depending on the CE.
- Amount of supervision: CEs will be observing 100% of teletherapy sessions as required by ASHA (American Speech Language Hearing Association).
- Session Recording: Please let your CE know as soon as possible if the client has agreed to record so they can record your sessions. Your CE will provide a link to the folder where you can access these.
- Lesson plan format they request for teletherapy.
- Scheduling time and preferences
- Zoom/Teams link: will be generated by the CE and sent to the clinician. Clinicians are responsible for ensuring their clients receive the Zoom or Teams link.
  
- Documentation Required for teletherapy
  - Intake Documentation: In addition to documentation noted for in-person therapy, you will also need the following:
    - Notice of Privacy Practice (NOPP) receipt
    - Consent for Telepractice
    - Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information (PHI) (Release of Information)
    - Consent for Audio-Video recording
    - Observation Release
    - Contract for Payment/Service
  - Documentation for Treatment: Refer to the Clinic Handbook to review all required documentation. Follow deadlines as noted in the Clinic Calendar as set by your CE.
- Billing: Add your client's session to the Practice Perfect schedule so they can be billed accordingly.
- Communication with caregivers: Set aside time to debrief caregivers at the end of each session. If the client's parents do not live together, send an update to both parents weekly
- Telepractice sessions should be done in a quiet room to ensure patient privacy and no distractions
  - Telepractice sessions should never be conducted in a public area
- Emergency Procedures: If your client has a medical emergency during a teletherapy session, refer to the procedures in the [Clinic Handbook](#).

## Clinicians

- Telepractice etiquette
- Please remember that the client can hear you even when their video is off or if they have walked away from their computer. Hold ALL conversations until the client has logged out of the session.
- Turn all notifications off during sessions. This ensures HIPAA protection for clients as well as FERPA protection for you.
- Students must be dressed professionally for teletherapy just as expected for in-person sessions.
- When your co-clinician is doing an activity and you are taking data, maintain eye contact, and maintain an attentive listening posture.
- ASHA Code of Ethics: Please refer to the ASHA Code of Ethics for further information.
- Observers: Please introduce any undergraduate observers you have in your sessions during the first session they attend. You will be responsible for sharing the Zoom or Microsoft Teams link and any schedule changes with observers. Observers have the option to stay on the link for the debrief after sessions.

## Technical Requirements for Sessions:

- Internet Connection: Check your speed at <http://www.speedtest.net> and click Begin Tests.
- Computer: Make sure you do not have automatic updates scheduled during your sessions.
- Zoom or Teams: Ensure you have the latest version of Zoom or Teams downloaded and maintain updates.
- Audio: Use an external microphone to minimize background noise. The microphone on the headphones that come with your phone is sufficient.
- Video: Set your camera at eye level and stay in the center of the video frame
- Room arrangement: Try to minimize distractions in your background. Virtual backgrounds are fine if they have minimal distractions.
- Lighting: Lighting in front, above or to the side of you will provide the best picture. Lighting behind you will put your face in shade and make it difficult for the client to see you.

## Supervision Requirements

Speech-language pathologists who hold the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) from ASHA, and a State of Texas license in speech-language pathology, will supervise students. CEs will have at least nine months of practice experience post-certification and two hours of professional development in supervision, before serving as a CE, as required by ASHA CFCC standards.

Clinicians will meet with their CE(s) on a regular basis either individually or in their clinic team meeting to review progress, planning, and performance. The CE will provide written and/or feedback on a regular basis to facilitate clinical growth and skill development.

All clinicians will receive direct supervision at least 25% of the time for each client receiving services. The amount of supervision will be adjusted based on experience and ability of the student. CEs will be observing 100% of teletherapy sessions as required by ASHA.

### Clinical Educators (CEs)

The CE functions as the student clinician's clinical instructors. The CE provides assistance, guidance, and feedback/evaluation. CEs are individuals and, therefore, do not function alike. Student clinicians benefit from exposure to our diversified and accomplished CEs, all of whom have recognized clinical expertise. Each CE holds the ASHA Certification of Clinical Competence and offers extensive experience with varied clinical populations. CEs and clinicians work collaboratively to plan a client's treatment.

During a clinician's first semester, each CE may schedule a weekly CE conference with the student. Student clinicians will meet with their CEs to review plans, client progress, and determine appropriate goals for the clinician's professional growth. These meetings may be used to evaluate past treatment sessions for areas of strengths and weakness, to discuss proposed plans, communicate upcoming responsibilities, or to jointly work on personal goals established by the clinician. Student clinicians are expected to use this conference time effectively; it is dedicated time when the clinician has access to the CE as a resource. Anticipate upcoming matters to use this time constructively.

The clinician is responsible for exercising their initiative and developing problem-solving skills as questions arise between scheduled meetings. Ongoing clinical and professional growth are represented by the level of initiative demonstrated. Clinicians who have reached an advanced stage of performance/ independence may require shorter conferences or a bi-weekly schedule of conferencing. The conference arrangements will change as the independence of the individual clinician increases. This is left to the discretion of the CE.

### Clinical Grading

#### Midterm and Final Clinical Evaluations

Student clinicians are formally evaluated on their clinical performance at mid-term and at the end of each Fall and Spring semester. During the shorter summer semester, the formal Clinician Evaluation will be conducted only at the end of the semester (feedback will be provided at mid-term using a 2x2 method of two strengths and two needs). Exceptions to this are at the discretion of the CE and required when a student is on clinic probation. A conference between the CE and a student clinician is held to discuss the clinical performance evaluation. The student

is expected to complete a self-evaluation at mid-term and at the end of the semester for discussion during the conference.

Clinic grades are computed by the weighted average of all CEs' evaluations for a given student at the end of the semester. Clinic grades will be determined on the basis of performance during the semester and completing all aspects of the practicum responsibilities, including submitting final copies of progress reports or other required clinical documentation. The clinician's ability to meet required timelines for clinical reports and other paperwork will influence the evaluation of clinical performance at the mid-term and end-of-term. The mid-term & end-of-semester evaluation forms are located in CALIPSO. Student clinicians evaluate CEs at the end of each semester using the Supervisor/Clinical Educator Feedback Form in CALIPSO.

### UH COMD Clinical Practicum Grading Scale

Clinical Practicum Grading Scale: The student's practicum grade is derived by averaging the final performance ratings assigned by each CE who has supervised the student. The ratings are weighted based on the number of clock hours completed under each CE's supervision. The rating scale is as follows:

#### Performance Rating Scale

**1 = Performs Unsatisfactorily.** The clinical skill/behavior is beginning to emerge. Efforts to modify may result in varying degrees of success.

**2 = Needs Improvement in Performance.** Inconsistently demonstrates clinical behavior/skill. Exhibits awareness of the need to monitor and adjust and make changes. Modifications are generally effective.

**3 = Meets Performance Expectations.** Displays minor technical problems which do not hinder the therapeutic process and requires occasional support at a graduate clinician level. 3.5 = Consistent satisfactory performance for a graduate clinician.

**4 = Exceeds Performance Expectations.** Effectively implements the clinical skill/behavior, demonstrating independence and creative problem-solving.

| Grade | Rating score range |
|-------|--------------------|
| A     | 4.0-3.75           |
| A-    | 3.74-3.50          |
| B+    | 3.49-3.25          |
| B     | 3.24-3.00          |
| B-    | 2.99-2.75          |
| C+    | 2.74-2.50          |
| C     | 2.49-2.25          |
| C-    | 2.24-2.00          |
| D+    | 1.99-1.75          |
| D     | 1.74-1.50          |
| D-    | 1.49-1.25          |
| F     | 1.24 and lower     |

To earn a B or better, the student clinician must earn an average rating of at least a 3.00, defined as “meeting performance expectations.”

### Clinic Check-Out Meetings

At the end of each semester, students complete a clinic check-out process as part of their final clinic requirement for the semester. This process is set up to ensure that all documentation and reporting has been completed and signed. This assists both the department and student in completing all program and ASHA/CAA requirements by the anticipated graduation date.

This check-out procedure applies to all clinicians enrolled in COMD 7391 and COMD 7392. Clinicians in the USLHC, collaborative sites, and externships are all required to participate in the end-of-semester check-out process. Student clinicians must follow the checkout process required to their assigned site. If any aspect of a student’s check-out is incomplete, the practicum grade will be reduced or designated “Incomplete,” and enrollment in a subsequent practicum course will be prohibited until all check-out requirements are met.

The Graduate Assistants will send all clinicians a check-out form prior to the end of the semester. This form may be found in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams. The form details items required for the clinic check-out meeting. The form may be found here. [Clinic \(on-site\) Checkout](#). CEs at the collaborative offsites will review any end-of-semester checkout process requirements in addition to the completion of offsite MCCFs. Clinicians in externships (COMD 7392) must complete an externship check-out meeting with the Externship Coordinator following the final date of their extern placement. The Externship Coordinator will provide the details regarding required items for externship check-out.

### Clinical Documentation Procedures

#### Required Clinical Documentation

Required clinical documentation is listed below and may be found in Microsoft Teams under Clinician Library. All General Client Paperwork is offered in both English and Spanish. It is imperative that the required clinic documentation be completed. All clinic documentation may be found at this link [Clinic \(on-site\) Checkout](#)

#### General Intake Paperwork

1. Notice of Privacy Practice (NOPP)
2. Release of Protected Health Information (PHI)
3. Consent for Teletherapy (teletherapy only)
4. Observation Release
5. Consent for Audio- Video Recording
6. Authorization for Use of Image, Voice, Performance, Artwork or Likeness
7. Consent to Receive Protected Health Information (PHI) by email
8. Payment Policy

9. Contract for Service
10. Informed consent (in-person only)
11. COVID-19 screener (in-person only)
12. PHI Review (to be for returning clients after all the above have been completed)

### General Client Paperwork

- SOAP Notes
- Treatment Rationale
- Treatment Plan and Progress Report
- Home Program
- CE Written Documentation for Missing Paperwork

### Evaluation Paperwork

- Diagnostic Evaluation Report
- Case History Form
- Evaluation Protocol Scanned

### Additional Clinician Paperwork

- Lesson Plan
- Clinic Letterhead

### Other Paperwork

- Emergency Information Form
- Request for Information from Another Facility
- Field Trip Release
- Permission to Transport
- Shot Records
- Statement from Physician
- Final Conference Planning Guidelines

### Practice Perfect

The USLHC utilizes Practice Perfect, an electronic medical records system, to house clinic documentation and charges. Clinicians will be instructed on how to use Practice Perfect during Fall Orientation with reminders in Clinic Class. Please refer to the instructions below regarding the use of the Practice Perfect system.

#### **Practice Perfect Instructions:**

1. Sign in to Practice Perfect with your username and password.

2. After signing in to Practice Perfect, the master list of all clients will appear. To access an individual client's file, search or scroll to the client's name. (If you do not see your client's name, notify the Front Desk.)
3. By double clicking on the name of the client you are trying to access, their contact information page will appear. There are two options to access their documents. 1) Click the symbol of a blue filing box on the task bar located on the page, and 2) click the symbol of two blank white pages on the task bar located on the page.

With both of these options, a list of documents will appear. With the two white pages symbol, documents that have been uploaded (e.g. SOAP note, rationale, treatment plan, progress report, final conference report, and home program) will appear.

### **Uploading Documents to Practice Perfect:**

To upload a document to Practice Perfect, click on the two white pages symbol. Click the "New Document" dropdown tab from the task bar and select "Import Document".

Select the appropriate "Document Type" and "Provider". Write the document title in the "Description". Then, click the yellow file folder to choose the document you want to upload. Once this is finished, click "OK" and your document will appear in Practice Perfect.

### **Editing an Uploaded Document:**

To edit a document previously uploaded to Practice Perfect, go to the two white pages document page and double click the document you want to edit.

Click on "View/Edit Document". The document will open in Microsoft Word where edits can be made. Be sure to Save the document before closing Word. The above box should still be open in Practice Perfect after you close the Word document. The "Re-Import" button will now be available and must be selected for the edited version to be saved on Practice Perfect.

## **Microsoft Teams**

The USLHC utilizes Microsoft Teams as a secure, collaborative work environment. Client electronic files are also securely stored on Teams. Clinicians will receive access to the Clinician Library and the Clinic Resources Library subsites. Other subsites, such as team (i.e. LLG) or collaborative sites (i.e. Magnolia Multi-Service Center) will be granted as needed.

## **Clinical Educator Resources**

### **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Compliance**

All CEs, student clinicians, and all office staff are required to successfully complete HIPAA training, as measured by a post-test, to demonstrate their understanding and readiness to comply with the USLHC HIPAA requirements. Student clinicians complete this during their initial clinic orientation in their first Fall semester.

## Requests for Information

### **Protocol regarding requests for information about clients/services to be provided to attorneys and local state and federal government officials**

On occasion an attorney representing a parent, caregiver, or client contacts the clinic requesting information, clinical records, or testimony regarding services provided to a USLHC client. Such contacts are received via phone, email, fax, or US Mail/Certified or registered mail, or other delivery service. CEs, office staff, and students are NOT authorized to provide any information without FIRST notifying the Clinic Director, who will consult with the UH General Counsel Attorney. No one at the USLHC may comply with a Subpoena or supply an Affidavit without FIRST obtaining the direct guidance and input from the UH General Counsel. All faculty, CEs, staff, and clinicians MUST comply with this requirement of the UH General Counsel Office.

## Clinical Educator Observation Log

An Observation Log must be completed by each CEs to reflect the amount of observation performed for each student during the semester. At the end of each semester, the CE Observation Log must be submitted to the Clinic Director or loaded in the Observations folder in the CE Library in Microsoft Teams. This record of observation is kept on file until the next ASHA re-accreditation site visit occurs (every seven years). An electronic version of the Observation Log is available in the CE Library on Microsoft Teams in the folder labeled Observations. CEs will need to adapt dates, clinician names, and client initials each semester.

## Clinical Educator Semester Duties

### **Beginning of the Semester**

- The week before clinic sessions begin, students receive their client assignments, call clients to confirm scheduled appt. times, and schedule a meeting with the assigned CE to discuss their initial session plan. CEs may organize a group meeting to share information about clients being evaluated or treated in the same disorder/difference area.
- CEs may wish to give each clinician an agreement of expectations, so they know when SOAPS are due, preferences for lesson planning, etc. CEs guide students in determining and wording goals/objectives. First semester clinicians need CE guidance in writing goals/objectives in measurable terms. Students place phone calls to “confirm” treatment times with parents - it can occasionally result in a changed treatment time that was not anticipated. The front desk calls and email clients to confirm scheduled days and times prior to the release of assignments; however, unforeseen changes do occur. The student/CE should then work out the time together and alert the Clinic

Director if there is an obstacle in scheduling that cannot be overcome. The clinician must then update the master schedule located in the Clinician Library in Microsoft Teams.

- Make sure students choose and understand treatment models for whatever goals are appropriate (for example: if phonology- minimal pair treatment, cycles approach, etc.). A mini-review or orientation to treatment methods in the disorder area may be needed.
- All due dates are listed on the clinic calendar shared by the Clinic Director. Part-time CEs may arrange alternative due dates that fit their on-campus work schedule.
- Set up your CE Observation log in Microsoft Teams and update it in Teams weekly.

### **Ongoing through the Semester:**

- Observation of Sessions: Observe at least 25% of treatment sessions (100% of services via telepractice).
- Provide written feedback regularly in the clinical documentation in Teams. Instruct the clinician to acknowledge your feedback (i.e., respond in some way)
- Provide verbal feedback regularly. A summary of the discussion should be documented (e.g., email, on Teams, etc.)
- CEs vary in how much they go into the session to support the clinician based on the clinician's needs
- Track how much time you observe all students weekly (templates available in the CE Library on Microsoft Teams). Make sure you note make ups/absences on the observation tracking form
- Check with your clinicians to ensure each one completes the online MCCFs [Monthly Client Contact Form] at the end of each month.

### **End of Semester:**

- Review/Edit progress reports and home practice program
- CALIPSO - All CEs must review accuracy of clock hours submitted by supervisees and approve the hours that are pending the CE's approval.
- CALIPSO - All CEs must complete a Performance Evaluation at mid-term and end-of-semester on each supervisee. The evaluation is converted to a grade and the areas of performance are 'mapped over' to the KASA form on CALIPSO.
- Observation Logs – review at end of semester for accuracy.
- Attend Parent/Client conferences. Schedule during treatment session time usually; student conducts treatment, but preserves 20 minutes to conduct a final conference at the beginning or end of the session. CEs set the conference time and student confirms with parents.
- Students may prepare a homework assignment/home program, attach it to the final progress report, and discuss the home program instructions during the final conference.

- If providing services onsite, students should bring 2 copies of the Progress Report document to the final conference (one for parents/one for the clinician to reference), Some students may choose to present the final progress in a Powerpoint presentations for the parent or the client to better understand. After reviewing the semester progress, student clinicians should determine if the client would like to continue services next semester (if recommended) with confirmed dates and times. This information should be noted in the final conference section in the progress report and in the notes selection of the clinical assignments spreadsheet for the semester. If providing services via telepractice, the client follows the procedure to request an emailed copy of the document and the student completes the PHI email request in the Client Paperwork folder in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams. Ms. Ozgen may alert clinicians and CEs about outstanding balances (progress report can be given at a later time when payment is made).
- Students lead the conference – CEs support. Students DO NOT conduct final conferences without the CE in attendance.

#### **Documentation:**

- Clinicians will document their sessions using SOAP notes. Lesson plan formats and requirements may vary depending on the CE and clinic assignment.
- Clinicians providing services in the USLHC must document their services in the relevant folders in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams. CEs of clinicians at the USLHC review and approve documentation on Microsoft Teams.
- Clinicians assigned to outreach settings may post treatment plans/logs, etc. on Microsoft Teams for CE review/feedback/approval. Additional documentation may be required for offsites. CE will inform clinicians at the beginning of the semester of these requirements.
- If a clinician fails to conform to this requirement, a HIPAA violation report must be filed with the HIPAA Privacy Officer (Clinic Director) and a sanction imposed. Consult with the Clinic Director.
- Make sure the short-term goals build on and represent a hierarchy advancing to the accomplishment of the semester goals and long-term goals.
- The Assessment section in the SOAP note is challenging for new clinicians. It is critical that CEs provide assistance in writing an interpretation of the goals, add information to their objective section, and guide the clinician in avoiding subjective statements.
- It can prove challenging to keep up with revisions. Add something at the end of the file name to show whether they need to edit/send back (1,2) or just edit/print (-done). Or you can use a grid or something to remind yourself which ones you have edited and emailed to them and when they are complete.

- Have clinicians complete and submit revisions quickly otherwise, it becomes challenging to keep up with them. Turn-around time of 24-48 hours is recommended, so you can provide feedback before the next session.
- Provide your clinicians with your full name, credentials, TX license number, and ASHA number before they begin submitting SOAPS so they represent this information accurately on the documents.
- Advise clinicians to include charting/data forms with the SOAPS. The charting needs to be reviewed to verify that the documentation in the SOAP is represented appropriately and accurately. This applies to scoring of diagnostic tests also.
- Treatment Plans: A template is in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams in the folder labeled Documents. CEs will need to provide guidance on goal writing and wording.
- Treatment Rationale: A template is in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams in the folder labeled Documents. Graduate clinicians are required to submit a Treatment Rationale document, that can be either part of or separate from the Treatment Plan. The CE will advise the clinician as to their preference. The clinician documents the evidence-based research that supports the decisions made about the treatment approach/techniques included in their Treatment Plan.
- Progress Report: A template is in the Clinician Library on Microsoft Teams in the folder labeled Documents. A client's progress report includes information about goals/performance accuracy, assessment completed if indicated, methods/procedures, prognosis, and recommendations for the next semester. CEs need to make sure they include section on assessment/interpretation of the semester (separate from the accuracy reporting). Check content for misused jargon as progress reports can require 1-3 revisions. The Clinic calendar includes due dates for these so remind students. A copy of the clinic calendar is in the CE Library, Clinic Resources Library, and Clinician Library in Microsoft Teams and is also emailed to students and CEs before a new semester.

### Supervisory Conferences

Clinicians often participate in small groups with other clinicians who are treating the same type of client/disorder during the first year of the program. During a clinician's first semester, each Clinical Educator may schedule a weekly CE conference with the students or address general tasks in the weekly team meetings. Student clinicians will meet with their CEs to review plans, client progress, and determine appropriate goals for the clinician's professional growth.

These meetings may be used to evaluate past treatment sessions for areas of strengths and/or weaknesses, to discuss proposed plans, communicate upcoming responsibilities or to jointly work on personal goals established by the clinician. Student clinicians are expected to plan to use this conference time effectively; it is dedicated time when the clinician has access to the CEs as a resource. Anticipate upcoming matters to use this time constructively.

The clinician is responsible for exercising their initiative and developing problem-solving skills as questions arise between scheduled meetings. Ongoing clinical and professional growth are represented by the level of initiative demonstrated. Clinicians who have reached an advanced stage of performance/independence may require shorter conferences or a bi-weekly schedule of conferencing. The conference arrangements will change as the independence of the individual clinician increases. This is left to the discretion of the CE.

### Final Grading Conference

The CE may post a schedule for final grading conferences. If so, the supervisees should sign up for a conference time. In the absence of a posted sign-up sheet, students should contact their CE to schedule a final grading conference. When possible, joint CE conferences will be held with the student clinician at the end of the semester. In the final grading conference, the clinician shares their self-evaluation, and the CE reviews the final evaluation and approves clock hours.

### Clinical Educator/Supervisor Resources

Resources for CEs and clinical education may be found at this link [CE Resources](#).

### Clinical Externship

#### UH COMD Externship Program Overview and Program Description

Externships are different from clinical education on campus because student clinicians receive training directly in an employment setting. Students placed in a facility should become active participants at the site. Students are expected to follow all rules/regulations/policies of the externship site. A very important aspect of this experience is that the student learns the role of the professional by following the model of the Site Supervisor (SS). All rules of the site and SS expectations should be discussed the first week of externship and acknowledged by both student and SS by completing the Student/Supervisor Agreement. This document is to be completed, signed, and submitted to the externship manager as part of your grade.

The University of Houston Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders (COMD) offers a comprehensive externship program that meets the standards set by ASHA (specifically the Council for Clinical Certification in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology; CFCC). <https://uh.edu/class/comd/programs/graduate/>

UH COMD has affiliations with a variety of medical facilities, public and private schools, early childhood programs, home health providers, outpatient clinics and private practices. Our program offers students a variety of over 80 different sites throughout the Houston metro area.

Graduate students are required to complete two terms of externship. Adult sites are classified as those in which adults make up the primary caseload. Pediatric sites are

classified as sites where children make up the primary caseload. At all externship sites, students obtain interprofessional experience with other professionals.

### Contact Information

The department and program contact information are provided in the [Contact Information](#) section of the handbook.

The Program Director for Externships is Angelle Pate, M.Ed. She may be contacted at (713) 743-8210 or [ampate@central.uh.edu](mailto:ampate@central.uh.edu).

### University Visits with Externship Sites

A site visit by the Externship Coordinator may be scheduled with the Site Supervisor during the semester to discuss the student's experience. Visits may occur via phone, virtually, or in person. The student does not participate in the visit unless deemed necessary. If you would like to request a site visit at any time, please contact Angelle Pate.

### Information and Expectations

#### Prerequisites

Prior to enrollment in an externship experience, students need to have successfully completed Clinics I-III with a grade of B or better. Externship placements will not be finalized until all Clinic I-III requirements have been completed, per verification by the Clinic Director. Additionally, all interventions must be passed before a student can begin an externship rotation.

#### Core Functions

Core functions are skills that individuals of such programs typically are expected to employ in didactic and clinical experiences. More information is available in the [Core Functions](#) section of the handbook and the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders website: <https://www.capcsd.org/academic-and-clinical-resources/>

#### Expectations

In line with the high standards of ASHA accreditation & professional certification and those stipulated by the university, the UH Communication Sciences and Disorders graduate program has a rigorous academic, clinical, and professional standard for student performance.

At least two externship placements (COMD 7192/7392/7692/7992 Advanced Practicum - Externship) are required as part of program completion. Students should be prepared, and are expected, to be trained approximately 35 hours/week at their externship site (or combination of sites) for at least 13 weeks. If 50 client contact hours are not accrued, the student will earn a grade of incomplete (I) for the term. Students are expected to complete the entire term at their assigned sites. Even if a student earns 375 contact hours and/or all competencies prior to the end of any extern rotation, students must complete the semester to earn a grade for the

COMD 7392/7692/7992 Advanced Practicum (externship) course. The minimum requirements described above are utilized only on very rare occasions, and require approval from the Externship Coordinator, Master's Program Director, student advisor, and COMD Department Chair. **It is not appropriate to reduce the weekly externship schedule after contact hours and competency requirements are met. Attempting to do so will result in a deduction of points on the final evaluation for lack of professionalism.**

A student's place of employment may not be utilized as externship sites, whether past or current. Students cannot work with clients with whom they currently, or may potentially, have other relationships with. Disclosure is required if you are placed in an externship site that is at a place of employment or a site in which any conflict of interest may occur.

Should a summer externship placement apply (due to an individualized track or the need for a 6<sup>th</sup> semester of training), the rotation will follow the Summer Session I schedule (See UH Academic Calendar for details at [www.uh.edu](http://www.uh.edu)).

All placements are final unless the site specifically requires a change due to unforeseen circumstances. Once students are assigned to an externship site, it cannot be changed. Should a student choose to leave or drop an externship assignment at any point after it is assigned, they will not be placed at another externship until, at a minimum, the subsequent semester unless prior approval was granted by the Clinic Director and Externship Program Director. Medical withdrawal from the university, or unethical practices by the externship site, does not apply to this policy.

Two sets of policies and procedures are to be followed throughout the externship terms. Those required by (1) UH COMD and (2) the externship site.

Violating any of these policies/procedures may result in loss of accrued hours, loss of competencies, or dismissal per Site Supervisor, Externship Coordinator and/or USLHC Clinic Director.

## Schedule, Attendance, & Miscellaneous

### Schedule

- Site Supervisors determine the days and hours that students are to be at the site, not the student extern. It is suggested that there is a weekly commitment of 35 hours/week (total for all sites if there are multiple). This does not include commuting time.
- Students are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the first client contact/meeting.
- Students will not be granted, nor should they request extra time off to study for their midterms, finals, comprehensive examinations, the Praxis Exam, or other program requirements (see below for allowed personal days)

- Student externships run Monday-Friday, unless otherwise preferred by the externship Site Supervisor, or specified at the time in which the placement was arranged by the Externship Coordinator.

### Attendance

Regular attendance, participation, and active engagement in the externship experience are an aspect of professionalism and important contributors to student success and the welfare of clients/patients receiving services:

- Students are allowed two personal days. Students should contact their site supervisor and email the externship coordinator prior to the start of their shift to inform them they will be absent.
- Student absences due to illness, professional conferences, or car trouble may require a physician's note, a certificate of attendance, or receipt of service to the externship Site Supervisor (SS) and/or Externship Coordinator.
- Students should not expect to take any university holidays. The schedule of the externship site is to be followed.
- Student absences will require make-up days to be completed before the Advanced Practicum/Externship course grade can be submitted. Missed days at the externship site may be made up at the site at the discretion of the site supervisor. Otherwise, these days will be made up in settings as determined by the Externship Coordinator. If inclement weather conditions arise, the student and SS should make a collaborative decision based on the safety of student travel (regardless of official university closure) and notify the externship coordinator. Because of the large size of the Houston metro area, not all areas are impacted equally.

### Absences - Extenuating Circumstances

If a student has extenuating circumstances that prevent participation in externship, the Externship Coordinator and student's advisor should be contacted for an alternative plan, which may result in semester or program extension and associated costs at student's expense. When excessive absences occur, regardless of reason, passing the course is not guaranteed. Please read the [excused absence policy](#) in [UH Graduate Catalog](#) regarding extended absences, should you need to consider this option.

### Miscellaneous

Use of cell phones during the externship work day should be at the discretion of the site and SS, informed by the policies of the site.

### Professionalism

Students are expected to adhere to the highest level of professional standards in both their appearance and actions in externship settings. This conveys dedication to excellence,

commitment to meeting obligations, as well as respect for other students, professionals, and clients.

**Core Objectives of Professionalism:**

1. Communication with Supervisor, Team Members, and Other Professionals
2. Communication with Patients and Family Members
3. Nonverbal Aspects of Communication and Pragmatic Behaviors
4. Motivation, Flexibility, and Adaptability Towards Education
5. Commitment to Patient Care
6. Written Documentation
7. Response to Feedback
8. Provision of Person-Centered Care

**Professional behaviors include, but are not limited to:**

- Using professional parts/elements for emails
- Demonstrate respect for authority, including chain of command
- Respect and treat individuals with cultural and personal differences equally

**Professional Dress**

Students should dress according to the dress code of the placement facility.

**Breach of Externship Policy and Dismissal from Externship**

Students in the graduate program are considered professional students and are required to exhibit professional behavior. If unprofessional behavior or a breach of a policy occurs, the incident will be documented and added to the student's file.

Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, this may lead to competency rating reduction, intervention plan, or dismissal from the externship site and/or program.

Dismissal from a site may be initiated by a site supervisor, other externship site personnel, or the UH Externship Coordinator. Site Supervisors have the right to dismiss students from the clinical setting if there is behavior that indicates that the student is unprofessional, unprepared clinically, incapable of providing safe care in their practice setting, violating HIPPA, and/or plagiarism. The Externship Coordinator should be notified as early as possible by the site supervisor when dismissal of a student is being considered.

Dismissal from an externship site is a serious matter that affects the student, the program, and faculty. It indicates that the student has failed to demonstrate appropriate clinical and/or professional skills; has not met multiple program benchmarks; has committed an ethical violation; or has shown inadequate professional or personal competency, including issues related to client safety.

In the event of a dismissal, a meeting will be held with the student, their advisor, the master's Program Director, the Clinic Director, and the Externship Coordinator (and possibly the Department Chair). The purpose of this meeting is to review the circumstances surrounding the dismissal and to determine an appropriate course of action.

In addition to, or in the absence of a stated site code of conduct policy, graduate students are responsible for adhering to the University of Houston's Student Conduct Code, which is available at <https://www.uh.edu/dos/behavior-conduct/student-code-of-conduct/>.

### Universal Precautions

Students must follow specific practices required by their externship site. Please see further information about universal precautions in the clinic section of the handbook: [Universal Precautions](#).

## Competency (Skills) Acquisition

### Standard V-C

Although a minimum of 375 direct contact hours is required, students do not need a specified number of clock hours in each of the nine disorder areas according to ASHA's Competency Based Education. Competency-based education is defined as an "approach [that] allows students to advance based on their ability to master a skill or competency at their own pace regardless of environment." (J.Walton, 2017)

Students are required to demonstrate knowledge and skills across nine disorder areas and across the age span.

Competency skills for the Big Nine areas are tied into the midterm and final evaluation ratings, which render a grade for the semester.

The Big Nine areas:

1. Speech Sound Disorders
2. Hearing / Aural Rehabilitation
3. Cognitive aspects of communication
4. Communication modalities (AAC)
5. Language
6. Fluency
7. Voice / Resonance

8. Social aspects of communication
9. Swallowing

Students are responsible for keeping up with their own competency and contact hour acquisition and needs.

### Standard V-B

Competency skills may be developed and demonstrated through various modalities. “These skills may be developed and demonstrated through direct clinical contact with individuals receiving services in clinical experiences, academic coursework, labs, simulations, and examinations, as well as through the completion of independent projects.” (ASHA, 2020)

### Clinical Hours Acquisition

Students cannot accrue hours if a CCC-SLP is not on site. Another designated on-site CCC-SLP may “substitute” if he/she agrees to be responsible for the student and clients during the main/primary Site Supervisor’s absence.

Early in an externship, Site Supervisors provide more supervision until the student is capable of, and comfortable with, more independence. Site Supervisors may consider having the student observe for the first week or two.

Clinical hours are tracked on CALIPSO via hours submitted by the student (Site Supervisors will receive email).

Site Supervisors should determine if they prefer accrued hours to be submitted by the student and at what frequency (e.g., daily vs. monthly).

Students are encouraged to keep logs to back up and/or justify accrued hours submitted into CALIPSO. These logs may be requested by the site supervisor or Externship Coordinator at any time.

All official student documentation must be co-signed by the supervising speech-language pathologist.

The following activities may be included as direct clinical practicum hours:

- Administration of Screenings (formal or informal)
- Administration of Evaluations (formal or informal, parent/caregiver verbal interviews, explaining evaluation results to parents/caregivers/clients/patients)
- Treatment (must be synchronous; individual or group; “wrap-up sessions”)
- Counseling with caregivers and family
- Advising, training, and providing education
- Demonstrating skills to caregivers/family

- Demonstrating how to program AAC devices
- Time spent in meetings with the patient/family present can be counted (ONLY when the student is reporting evaluation results, treatment plans, progress, educating/providing examples, etc.) as this is considered advising, educating, and training caregivers and family

Activities such as preparation/planning, paperwork/documentation/reports, and asynchronous therapy cannot be counted. Billable hours should not be used as a guide as they do not always meet ASHA standards for direct contact time.

### Clinical Education/Supervision

See CE Resources section of the handbook: [Clinical Educator Resources](#)

#### ASHA Requirements for CEs/Supervisors of Graduate Student Clinicians

Externship Site Supervisors are expected to provide direct supervision of the student clinician's diagnostic and treatment sessions conforming to UH & ASHA guidelines.

ASHA-CFCC Standard V-E: (25% of total treatment sessions per client) "The amount of direct supervision must be commensurate with the student's knowledge, skills, and experience; must not be less than 25% of the student's total contact with each client/patient; and must take place periodically throughout the practicum. Supervision must be sufficient to ensure the welfare of the individual receiving services."

The amount of direct supervision must be commensurate with the student's knowledge, skills, and experience; must not be less than 25% of the student's total contact with each client/patient; and must take place periodically throughout the practicum. Supervision must be sufficient to ensure the welfare of the individual receiving services.

### Clinical Education for Telesupervision

Details are provided at the beginning of the externship placement.

[www.asha.org/practice/supervision/SLP-graduate-student-supervision/#telesupervision](http://www.asha.org/practice/supervision/SLP-graduate-student-supervision/#telesupervision)

[Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists Telehealth Services | Texas.gov](#)

### Semester Benchmarks of Supervision

The beginning of the supervisory experience offers many opportunities to set the stage for an effective CE-student relationship as well as to ensure positive outcomes for all involved.

Before the student begins working with clients, an initial meeting between the Site Supervisor and student can help establish what a typical day looks like as well as a plan for the semester.

The externship experience will vary by site and supervisor. Below is an **example of an experience but not a definitive schedule**.

#### Orientation/Week 1:

- Orientation: tour, introductions, documentation requirements & timelines, emergency procedures, site COVID procedures, dress code, where to store lunch/purse, workspace, site absence policy (see UH COMD policies in Attendance section of this handbook), acceptable communication modalities (address email, text, phone calls), cell phone policy, meeting/coordination day & time(s) etc.
- Discuss how & when student strength & weakness feedback will be given so that CE and student expectations are aligned
- Complete UH Externship Confirmation and Externship Agreement forms, if not already done
- Student clinician provides Emergency Contact Information to CE.
- CE familiarizes student with materials, equipment, and resources and required site paperwork
- Provide a facility handbook, policy and procedures (including those for ensuring confidentiality and security of records), regulations, etc. Ensure that the student has completed reading the materials
- Clarify, explicitly, your expectations of the student's clinical behavior/professionalism
- Identify specific student goals. For example, earning specific skills/competencies, and/or student elected personal/professional goals
- If applicable, train student on EMRs if it is to be used by the student (EMRs use is not required by students)
- Provide student with overview of patients/clients and provide opportunity for the student to review the charts
- Student will observe or may co-treat sessions. CE generally models and leads the treatment unless the student has had prior experience in the disorder area. Student may engage in treatment/evaluation with guidance and direct supervision, if appropriate
- Student may begin to write notes and document as appropriate, with guidance from the supervisor
- Ongoing communication before, during, and after treatment. Provide concrete, specific, and frequent feedback

#### Weeks 2-3:

- Student should continue to observe and participate in treatment with CE, or in close contact with the CE, for new experiences.
- If required by the externship site, help student identify a topic for in-service or patient case study to be presented near the end of the term.
- Schedule the presentation.
- Assist the student in writing and implementing treatment plans for less complex patients/clients

- Assist student in completing evaluations and report writing.
- Assist student with completion of treatment documentation
- Assist student with entering/completing billing and coding.
- Ongoing communication before, during, and after treatment. Provide concrete, specific, and frequent feedback

#### Weeks 3-5:

- Student may begin to increase responsibility for patient/client care under direct supervision to the extent needed to ensure client welfare
- Supervisor can expect student to be proficient with simple tasks, clinical problem solving, interventions, and data collection
- Continue to assist student with selection of treatment materials, treatment planning, evaluation, documentation, and billing
- Consistently provide concrete strength and weakness feedback
- The CE should start to see a decrease in amount of input required in response to an increase in the involvement/knowledge/skills and independence of the student
- A Collaborative style of supervision would be expected at some point within this time plan

#### Weeks 6 – 8 (midterm)

- Provide concrete and specific feedback at the level needed, or requested, by the student
- Encourage student self-evaluation/analysis and discussion of skills and progress
- Allow student to select diagnostic and therapeutic tools with decreasing guidance
- At or around midterm, student may assume primary responsibility for patient/client treatment and/or evaluation. However, CE may need to maintain certain patients/clients or maintain a higher level of supervision for more complex patients/clients to ensure client welfare
- Complete the midterm evaluation on CALIPSO
- Student completes self-evaluation on CALIPSO and provides a hard copy to CE at midterm meeting
- Student should have all clock hours accrued by midterm entered CALIPSO for supervisor approval
- Schedule/hold formal meetings with student to review and discuss mid-term assessment (student to bring hard copy of self-evaluation for discussion/comparison & determination of appropriate self- assessment abilities)
- Set updated student elected personal/professional goals (CE may have suggested goals as well)

#### Weeks 9 – 11 (or though week 15)

- Maintain discussions/feedback regarding student progress on gaining competencies and meeting personal/professional goals
- Within this time span, the student should start transition into self-supervision and utilize the CE as a consultant

### Weeks 13 – 15 (final)

- Complete final evaluation on CALIPSO
- Student completes self-evaluation on CALIPSO
- Schedule/hold formal meetings with student to review and discuss final assessment (student to bring hard copy of self-evaluation for discussion/comparison- CE will be able to determine if the student is able to self-reflect/self-analyze appropriately)
- Student should have all remaining clock hours entered into CALIPSO for supervisor approval by the end of last day
- Observe student's presentation of in-service, case study, or project presentation

*This is a general guideline and may differ by clinician, site, client's complexity/needs, and the supervisor's discretion.*

*Complex patients/clients may require greater than 25% supervision for the entire term and/or direct/active.*

#### Resources:

Alarcon, Nancy B. (2013). *Building a Foundation in Supervising and Mentoring* – presentation American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2004b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (1985). *Clinical Supervision in Speech-language Pathology and Audiology* [Position statement].

Anderson, J. L. (1988). *The Supervisory Process in Speech Language Pathology and Audiology*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed

### Check-ins with Site Supervisor and Student Throughout Semester

It is important for the Site Supervisor and student to regularly check in with one another throughout the semester to determine if any changes need to be made. As the semester progresses, the level or form of support will change. It is encouraged to discuss the progression and development of supervision openly, as this supports the student in becoming more independent.

- As a student, if you find that you need more support in one area or less in another, communicate openly with your Site Supervisor to explore possible adjustments. If you're interested in trying a skill independently or attempting something new or different for the first time, talk to your Site Supervisor about the opportunity. Be sure to include evidence-based practice (EBP) information to support your reasoning. Additionally, be transparent with your Site Supervisor about the type of support you would like to continue receiving, as well as any areas where you feel comfortable with support being gradually reduced.

- As a Site Supervisor, evaluate what is going well, and check in with the student to ask for ways you can adapt your support based on his/her current level of skill development.

Direct feedback often supports surface-level learning, as the Site Supervisor provides information to the student to teach specific concepts and skills. In contrast, indirect feedback such as open-ended questions encourages a more active role from the student. When students are asked open-ended questions, they are guided to develop their own responses, which helps the Site Supervisor support the development of problem-solving skills and promotes deeper learning. As student clinicians gain experience, they tend to benefit more from a less direct style of supervision (Anderson, 1988). Regardless of the feedback style used, feedback remains a vital part of the clinical education experience. It is through meaningful feedback that students are guided beyond surface-level knowledge and technical skills toward the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities essential for effective patient assessment and treatment.

### Student Evaluation of Externship Site Supervisors

At the conclusion of the semester, students will confidentially rate the Site Supervisor in the following areas:

- Orientation to site.
- Quality of feedback for – diagnostics, interviewing, conferences, behavior management, therapeutic skills, materials selection for treatment and diagnostics, clinical skill development.
- Verbal and/or written recommendations provided for improvements.
- Evidence Based Practices utilized by SS.
- Encouragement of student independence and creativity.
- Positive reinforcement provided to the student when appropriate.
- Enthusiasm for the profession & providing services.
- Receptive to student questions.
- Effective interpersonal communication with student.
- Realistic demands.
- SS availability.
- Resources provided– materials, articles, etc.
- Organizational & management skills.

### Evaluation of Student Performance

Students will earn ratings based on their skill level demonstrated during the externship rotation. Determination of these ratings requires thoughtfulness and attention to evidence the student has provided during the rotation. These ratings render a grade for midterm and final evaluations.

Please refer to the [Performance Rating Scale](#) explanation section to assist in determining the most appropriate rating that student has earned based on performance the student has demonstrated.

- A midterm and final evaluation form is to be completed in CALIPSO, each accompanied by student-CE meeting to discuss the outcomes.
- Students are expected to complete the self-evaluation to discuss at midterm and final performance conferences.
- Skill/competency level should change throughout the semester. See Semester Benchmarks of Supervision section regarding the evolution of progress throughout the semester.

Grade inflation, whether clinical or academic, hurts our profession and reduces the value of any grading system. Overall ratings below “3.0” indicate that additional training/practice is needed for the student to meet performance expectations for their current graduate clinician level. Additional rotation(s) may be needed to provide this opportunity. CEs should confer with the Extern Coordinator if they are concerned about the implications of a rating below 3.0.

- A student who has demonstrated abilities below expectations should be reflected in ratings of “1” through a “2.75” with examples documented in midterm and/or final evaluations.
- Ratings of “4.0” should be reserved only for exceptional skill level that has been demonstrated (above and beyond expected skill level). Evidence of skill refinement level should be described in detail in the comments section.
- After consultation with the site supervisor and student, the Externship Coordinator may adjust a rating according to the amount of support and guidance the student required to be successful clinically or professionally.

## Performance Evaluation

Performance Rating Scale Explanation:

All evaluations should be based on the current graduate clinician level (rather than compared to a CF or CCC- SLP). As a summative assessment, consider that an extern rotation 1 is the student’s 4<sup>th</sup> semester and rotation 2 is the student’s 5<sup>th</sup>, and last, semester of the graduate program.

## Advanced Clinical Practicum (Externship) Intervention Plans

Please see intervention section: [Interventions in Clinical Practicum](#).

## Clinical Educator/Supervisor Resources

Articles Available at [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

Clinical Education and Supervision <https://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Clinical-Education-and-Supervision/>

Knowledge and Skills Needed by Speech-Language Pathologists Providing Clinical Supervision <https://www.asha.org/policy/ks2008-00294/>

Graduate Student Supervision

<https://www.asha.org/slp/graduate-student-supervision/>

Issues in Ethics: Supervision of Student Clinicians

<https://www.asha.org/Practice/ethics/Supervision-of-Student-Clinicians/>

Tips for First-Time Supervisors of Graduate Student Clinicians

<http://www.asha.org/slp/supervisortips/#sthash.iHFOJZhN.dpuf>

Frequently Asked Questions about Student Supervision

<https://www.asha.org/practice/supervision/supervisionfaq/>

The Basics of Supervision <http://leader.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=2278349>

Clinical Supervision in Speech-language Pathology

Ad Hoc Committee on Supervision in Speech-Language Pathology

<https://www.asha.org/policy/TR2008-00296/>

Supervision of Graduate Students in Public Schools: What Administrators Need to Know

<https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/slp/adminfactsheetschools.pdf>

Supervision of Graduate Students in Health Care Settings: What Administrators Need to Know

<https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/slp/adminfactsheethealthcare.pdf>

Everyday Ethics: Do's and Don'ts for Clinical Supervisors of Students

<https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/everyday-ethics-dos-and-donts-for-clinical-supervisors-of-students/full/>

Web-based search: Go to [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org) and search "Clinical Education and Supervision."

Book: The Supervisory Process in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, Jean Anderson, 1998, College Hill

E-learning courses: Access codes are not required! These weblinks take the user directly to the FREE courses. You will sign-up and complete the form to create a user login/password and enter a valid ASHA number to receive CEUs. Provided by Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders

- Web-link URL for Foundations of Clinical Education, Modules 1-5:
  - <https://www.pathlms.com/capcsd/courses/21495>
- Web-link URL for Effective Student-Clinical Educator Relationships, Modules 1-5:
  - <https://www.pathlms.com/capcsd/courses/21574>

- Web-link URL for Feedback in the Clinical Education Environment Modules 1-5 (ASHA CEUs):
  - <https://www.pathlms.com/capcsd/courses/21579>
- Web-link URL for Assessing Student Performance Modules 1-5 (ASHA CEUs):
  - <https://www.pathlms.com/capcsd/courses/21586>

### Medicaid Billing and Student Clinicians

In the ASHA Issues in Ethics statement, [\*Ethical Issues Related to Clinical Services Provided by Audiology and Speech-Language Students\*](#) (2013), it states that "the ASHA Code of Ethics [2010] recognizes the professional acceptability of appropriately supervised clinical practice by students; hence, there is no basis for suggesting or requiring that fees charged for services delivered by students differ in any way from the fees typically charged for services provided by certified audiologists or speech-language pathologists." Therefore, billing for such services is allowable, provided those services meet or exceed professional standards of supervision.

CEs and graduate students must abide by current state and federal laws regarding Medicaid services.

### Medicare Coverage of Student Clinicians: Speech-Language Pathology

Medicare will reimburse student services only when they are billed by the licensed and enrolled clinician under Medicare's required level of supervision. See [Medicare Coverage of Students: Audiology](#) and [Medicare Coverage of Students and Clinical Fellows: Speech-Language Pathology](#) at [www.asha.org/practice/reimbursement/medicare/student\\_participation\\_slp/](http://www.asha.org/practice/reimbursement/medicare/student_participation_slp/)

CEs and graduate students must abide by current state and federal laws regarding Medicare services.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: COMD Grievance Policy

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders Grievance Policy UH COMD uses the definition provided in the CLASS Grievance policy [<http://www.uh.edu/class/students/graduate/academics-planning/policies-procedures/>]:

An academic grievance refers to an action taken against a student by a member of the faculty (including part-time instructors and teaching assistants), staff, or administration that either violates a university, college, or department academic policy or procedure or prejudicially treats the student on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, handicap, veteran status, or any other nonacademic status. Cases involving prejudicial treatment of any of the categories listed above will be referred to the UH Office of Equal Opportunity Services [<https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/about-eos/index.php>]. Department procedures will be put on hold until a report from EOS has been received. The time elapsed for the EOS investigation will not be counted toward any departmental deadlines described below.

All issues must first be addressed through the COMD complaint policy or petition procedure. If the issue is not resolved and it fits the above definition of an academic grievance, the aggrieved student may submit a formal grievance to the Chair of the department involved (or the college officer designated by the Dean if the Department Chair is the focus of the grievance) within 10 working days of the conclusion of the complaint or petition procedures.

### Definitions:

**Grievant:** the student making the grievance

**Respondent:** the person about whom the grievance was made

**Panel Chair:** the faculty member appointed to lead the grievance hearing

**Working days:** Monday through Friday, excluding university holidays such as spring break or breaks in between fall-spring, spring-summer, or summer-fall terms

*NOTE: Timelines may be altered during the summer term as described below in Special Consideration During Summer Months*

The following procedures will be used concerning a grievance:

- All communication will occur via uh.edu email addresses per the University policies.
- The Department Chair will be responsible for receiving and reviewing the formal grievance, selecting members of the panel, and appointing a Panel Chair. If the Department Chair is named in the grievance, the Vice Chair will take over these responsibilities. If both the Department Chair and the Vice Chair are named in the grievance, a full-time associate or full professor who is not named in the grievance

will be appointed by the Department Chair to serve as the Panel Chair and to initiate the proceedings.

- For grievances against a departmental decision in which a specific person is not named, the Department Chair and appropriate Program Director will serve as respondents.
- The Grievance panel will include:
  - 3 full-time COMD faculty members (one of whom will serve as Panel Chair)
  - 1 UH faculty member from outside COMD
  - 1 UH student from outside the department at the same level as the grievant (e.g., undergraduate, graduate)
- In filing the formal grievance, the grievant must state 1) the specific issue being grieved 2) when they discovered the issue being grieved, 3) a summary of the complaint or petition process the student completed, and 4) what the desired resolution would be.
- The formal grievance must also contain evidence to support the grievance.
- The Panel Chair will review the formal grievance. If any of the above is not present in the formal grievance, the Panel Chair will inform the grievant of the missing information and allow 2 working days for the grievant to provide the missing information or the grievance will be dismissed.
- After filing the formal grievance, additional evidence may be submitted ONLY if it meets ALL 3 of the following criteria:
  - the new information was discovered after the submission of the formal grievance
  - it provides novel information that is qualitatively different from what had already been submitted in the formal grievance, AND
  - it has potentially significant implications for the proceedings.
- Such evidence must be submitted to the Panel Chair no later than 2 working days prior to the hearing, in the form of a 300-word (maximum) addendum.
- Upon receipt of the formal grievance, the Panel Chair will
  - inform the respondent(s) and provide them with a confidential copy of the formal grievance.
  - select the Grievance Panel
- The respondent(s) will have 10 working days to produce a written response to the grievance and submit it to the Panel Chair. Deaf faculty named in the grievance have the option to provide a video response in ASL with simultaneous interpreting into spoken English (voice over) as there is no written form of ASL.
- The grievant will receive a copy of the response composed by the respondent(s) within 5 working days after the Panel Chair's receipt of said response.

- A hearing will be scheduled within a maximum of six weeks of receipt of the response to the formal grievance. The Panel Chair will work with the Panel to arrange a date, time and place for the hearing and will inform all parties at least 5 working days prior to the date of the hearing.
- The Panel Chair will:
  - provide the formal grievance (including all submitted evidence) and the written response to all members of the grievance panel a minimum of 5 working days prior to the hearing.
  - provide the rules for the hearing (e.g., how much time each party will have to speak) and the names of the members of the grievance hearing panel to all participants (grievant, respondent, and panel) a minimum of 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The grievant may invite an advocate to accompany them. If the grievant chooses to invite legal counsel as the advocate, the grievant must inform the Panel Chair within 10 working days after receipt of the written response. The hearing may be postponed up to 10 working days to allow the respondent time to obtain University legal counsel.
- The following hearing guidelines will be in effect:
  - The grievant, an advocate (if desired), the respondent, and the full panel will be present at the hearing.
  - The grievant, the advocate, and the respondent may speak at the hearing. These parties will present their cases directly to the panel. Discussion between the grievant/advocate, and the respondent is prohibited.
  - Only the panel members will be allowed to ask questions of the grievant and the respondent.
  - The hearing will be based on the original formal grievance, the response provided by the respondent, and any new evidence introduced prior to the meeting if admitted per the rules described above.
  - Recording of the hearings is allowed only by the Panel Chair to be used by the panel in their deliberation and writing their report. The Panel Chair will determine if the hearing will be recorded and will announce it to all parties at the beginning of the hearing. The recording will be destroyed upon submission of the written report.
  - After both sides have presented their cases and all questions from the panel have been answered to the satisfaction of the panel members, the grievant, advocate, and respondent(s) will be excused, and the panel will discuss the findings. The panel's discussion will not be recorded unless agreed upon by the panel. Recording will be solely for the use of the panel in their deliberations and report writing and will be destroyed upon submission of the written report.
- The outcome of the grievance process will be a written report from the panel which articulates, at a minimum, a brief summary of the allegations made and the respondent's rebuttal, the findings of the panel (i.e., the panel's judgment of the facts), and the recommendations of the panel. The recommendations must address the specific issues and resolutions provided by the grievant. The report will be completed within 7

working days after the hearing has been conducted. The decision will be sent to the grievant, the respondent, and the Department Chair.

- The grievant has the right to appeal the decision of the departmental grievance panel. This must be done in accordance with college procedures available at:  
<http://www.uh.edu/class/students/graduate/academics-planning/policies-procedures/>

#### **TIMELINE**

| <b>ACTION</b>                              | <b>TIMELINE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Complaint procedures fail to resolve issue | Grievant=10 working days to submit formal grievance                                                                                                                                                   |
| Panel Chair receives formal grievance      | Panel Chair: 2 working days to review for completeness & either return or send to respondent<br><br><i>If incomplete, return to Grievant;</i><br><br><i>Grievant: 2 days to revise &amp; resubmit</i> |
| Respondent receives formal grievance       | Respondent:10 working days to submit response to Panel Chair                                                                                                                                          |
| Panel Chair receives response              | Panel Chair: 5 working days to send response to Grievant<br>Panel Chair: 6 weeks to schedule hearing                                                                                                  |
| Panel Chair scheduling hearing             | Grievant: announce legal advocate within 10 working days<br><br>Panel Chair: send date/time to all parties 5 days prior to hearing                                                                    |
| Hearing held                               | Panel Chair: 7 working days to submit written report to all parties                                                                                                                                   |

#### **Special Consideration During Summer Months**

Most COMD faculty work 9-month contracts (Mid-August through mid-May), and many students are not engaged in on-campus University work over the summer. Therefore, in order to offer the grievant a fair hearing with a full committee, the departmental timelines established in the policy may not be met during summer months. A student may file a grievance during the summer, defined as May 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>, with the understanding and acknowledgement that the timelines could be altered based on availability of a full committee. It should be understood, however, that every effort will be made by the department to continue the process in a timely fashion.

To be completed and submitted with any grievance filed between May 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>.

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I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), acknowledge that I have been informed of and agree to waiving of specific timeframes for this grievance submitted during the University summer months of May through August. I have received assurance from the Communication Sciences and Disorders department that even with this waiver in effect, every effort will be made to conduct the process in a timely fashion.

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Signature

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Date

## Appendix B: Links to Graduate School Forms and Procedures

*NOTE: Please note that the web page links may change. This collection of links is provided for your convenience, but it is the student's responsibility to obtain and verify that the most current form is used. This is not a comprehensive list of all forms and procedures.*

- Graduate School Forms and Procedures: <https://uh.edu/graduate-school/forms/>
- General Petition Form: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/forms-procedures/files/gpsp-updated-petition-102020.pdf>.
- General Petition Form Instructions: [https://uh.edu/graduate-school/forms/gpsp\\_instructions.pdf](https://uh.edu/graduate-school/forms/gpsp_instructions.pdf)
- Student-Initiated Drop: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/forms-procedures/files/student-initiated-drop-form1.pdf>.
- Student-Initiated Term Withdrawal: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/forms-procedures/files/uh-official-term-withdrawal-form.pdf>.
- Medical/Administrative Term Withdrawal Request: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/forms-procedures/files/gradprof-med-adm-withdrawal-request1.pdf>.
- Inter-Institutional Course Registration Forms: <https://www.uh.edu/academics/forms/#IICR>
- Thesis/Dissertation Information: <https://www.uh.edu/class/students/graduate/thesis-dissertation-info/>
- Resources for teaching and learning:
  - Faculty Engagement and Development: <https://www.uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/fed/services/index.php>
  - Graduate Professional and Personal Development: <https://uh.edu/graduate-school/graduate-professional-and-personal-development/>

## Appendix C: Emergency Procedures

### ***Department Emergency Procedures***

Emergency Procedures for the COMD department and USLHC.

All Department members and students are responsible for being familiar with the exits in every area of the department and clinic. The department is equipped with smoke detection systems and fire alarms throughout the building. The alarms emit sound and a flashing red light. All exits are clearly marked with red EXIT signs.

Students are notified of an emergency either through the alarm system or verbally. Everyone should move to the nearest exit to the outside of the building until notified by a UH official that it is safe to return. Do not re-enter the building until the 'all clear' signal has been given by the University of Houston police. Students/faculty/staff/clients are not required to evacuate if there is an alarm in Garrison but are for Melcher Life Sciences.

#### Fire Drill Exit Procedures

- Evacuate in a calm, orderly manner.
- Begin evacuating immediately upon hearing the alarm.
- Move away from the building once outside.
- Do not interfere with Fire Dept. personnel or equipment.
- Do not return to the building until notified by University Police that it is safe to do so.

In the event of an external emergency, the University of Houston PIER notification system will be used in concert with the siren system to disseminate further information to the UH community. Only those persons that have current contact information in PeopleSoft will be able to receive these emergency messages. Students can find instructions for updating mobile phone numbers, email addresses, and other contact information at [www.uh.edu/emergency](http://www.uh.edu/emergency). All students are encouraged to regularly update their emergency contact information in the PeopleSoft system so they may be notified during severe weather conditions or other emergency situations.

Information concerning campus closures will be posted on the UH website, the PIER notification system, and will be broadcast on major Houston TV networks and radio stations.

Faculty and staff need to be aware of medical emergency conditions requiring immediate attention. These would include, but are not limited to:

- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Symptoms of stroke
- Altered mental status
- Loss of consciousness

- Seizures
- Overdose-accidental or intentional
- Major trauma-including head trauma with loss of consciousness or altered mental status, and injuries involving more than one body part
- Severe allergic reactions with facial swelling and difficulty breathing
- Severe pain

In each of the above medical emergency conditions, immediately notify University Police at 713-743-3333 or dial 9-1-1 from a campus phone and report the nature and severity of the medical problem and the location of the individual needing emergency medical care. University Police will meet emergency care providers and direct them to the individual needing medical assistance. If possible, someone should stay with the individual until the University Police officer or EMT arrives.

Do not move the individual unless there is an immediate threat to life (e.g., fire, dangerous fumes).

Notifying the University Health Center or transporting the individual experiencing the medical emergency conditions to the Health Center instead of immediately notifying University Police is not an appropriate, life-saving response. The Health Center is neither staffed for, nor supplied with, medications or devices to administer Advanced Life Support.

In case of an ocular (eye) emergency, please immediately notify the University Eye Institute Ocular Diagnostic and Medical Eye Service at 713-743-2010. Symptoms that require prompt attention include sudden loss of vision, seeing flashes of light, unusual light sensitivity, extreme pain, and/or redness of the eye(s). Licensed practitioners are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Refer to the University of Houston General Emergency Evacuation Procedures for more information: <https://www.uh.edu/emergency-management/planning-and-response/emergency-management-plan/>

### **Evacuation Circumstances and Procedures:**

All Department members and students are responsible for reviewing the evacuation map and being familiar with the exits for every area of the building. The building is equipped with a sprinkler system and fire alarms. The alarms emit sound and a flashing red light. All exits are clearly marked with red EXIT signs.

If you are notified of an emergency situation while engaged in clinical services, either through the alarm system or verbally, you are responsible for leading your client to the nearest exit. Do not leave a client in a treatment room, lab, audiology test booth, or restroom while you investigate the problem. Move with your client to the nearest exit to the outside of the building until you are notified by a UH official that it is safe to return to the building. Employees with

disabilities shall notify University Police immediately of their work location(s), medical condition and any special requirements. [UH Police: 713-743-3333]

**Areas of the building should be checked for occupants as follows:**

Front office staff will escort all work-study students and waiting room clients out of the building as they evacuate and will check the waiting room restroom as they go.

Clinicians/students evacuate the clinician computer room (M162H), clinical workroom (M163C), and clinic materials rooms immediately by going to the nearest exit. Do not delay by continuing to work on a computer document. Await further instructions from a UH official outside the building.

Clinicians in the clinic rooms escort their clients and families out of the building taking the nearest exit.

Clinical faculty will sweep the restrooms, student workroom, and clinic materials room as they leave the building, seeing that anyone they find comes with them. Persons in wheelchairs must exit via the main entrance.

All faculty & staff are responsible for evacuating all occupants from their assigned areas and reporting any problems (people who will not leave, etc.) to the University Police.

**Mandated Reporting**

USLHC is a mandated reporting agency; therefore, all staff and clinicians are mandated reporters. If a child or client discloses or exhibits signs of abuse of any kind—including sexual, verbal, physical, or emotional abuse—it is our responsibility to report the concern immediately.

Clinicians must notify their CE and the Clinic Director as soon as possible so that the allegation can be reported to the appropriate protective services agency, such as Child Protective Services (CPS) or Adult Protective Services (APS), in accordance with applicable reporting requirements.

Abuse or neglect reports can be submitted through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) website: **DFPS – Report Abuse or Neglect**. Or by calling **1-800-252-5400**.

## Appendix D: Master's Thesis

### Master's Thesis Guideline and Steps for Completion

Please note that the following should be used as a guideline only. Each thesis committee is different, and the thesis committee may deem it necessary to make changes in particular procedures or timelines. At each stage of the process, the student should confirm the procedures and timeline with their committee.

The guidelines presented here are based on a 5-term program. Students in a part-time program will adjust accordingly and with their advisors' support and approval.

The timeline may be impacted by academic standing. The academic standing and thesis continuation policy states that students must maintain good academic standing throughout thesis work. Students with a midterm grade of C or below in any graduate academic or clinical class will be asked to pause thesis work and meet with mentor and advisor to determine next steps. Students with a final grade of C or below in any graduate academic or clinical class may be required to discontinue their thesis project. In rare cases, students may petition the COMD Department Chair to continue; approval is discretionary.

Thesis discontinuation may be a mutual decision between student and mentor due to progress or other challenges. Discontinuing the thesis may extend the program's duration. If discontinued before the last fall semester, grades will be assigned for thesis credits earned, and the student will prepare for the comprehensive exam in the final spring semester. If discontinued during the last spring semester, program extension by one term may be required to complete the comprehensive exam.

The master's program encourages students interested in pursuing the academic challenge of a master's research thesis to do so. This process takes approximately a year and a half to complete (Spring 1, Summer, Fall and Spring 2) and involves 6 credit hours, so appropriate planning is necessary to meet the requirements. This guide can help students plan, but all final timelines and decisions are made by the thesis chair with input from the thesis committee as needed.

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences provides specific thesis guidance:  
<https://www.uh.edu/class/students/graduate/thesis-dissertation-info/>

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## Master's Thesis Timeline

### Spring 1: Planning, Committee Selection, & Prospectus

#### 1. Establish Your Committee & Contract

- **Identify a Committee Chair:** Choose a COMD faculty member with expertise in your project area to serve as your mentor and primary contact
- **Execute the Master's Thesis Contract:** Read, discuss, and sign the contract with your chair. The chair will log your topic in the COMD MA Teams Thesis Tracking and upload the signed copy to your student file
- **Form the Full Committee:** Select two additional members by the end of your first spring semester:
  - A second COMD faculty member
  - One external faculty member from outside the COMD department (can be from UH or another institution)
- **File Official Records:** Have all committee members sign the [CLASS Thesis Committee Appointment Record](#)

#### 2. Draft and Review Chapters

- **Prepare Literature Review & Methods Chapters:** Conduct a bibliographic search using the UH library's Communication Disorders Library Guide and consult the COMD liaison librarian for support. Clearly state your research questions and hypotheses. (*Note: This can expand upon a prior class project*)
- **Submit Chapters for Initial Review:** Obtain your chair's approval first, then distribute the Literature Review and Methods chapters to your full committee at least **two weeks** prior to your scheduled meeting

#### 3. The Prospectus Meeting

- **Schedule the Meeting:** Coordinate with all committee members to find a meeting time, aiming for the end of the spring semester. (*Summer or early fall meetings are only advised if no new data collection is planned*)
- **Present Your Proposal:** Deliver a 20-minute summary covering your literature review, study purpose, rationale, and proposed methodology to gather committee feedback
- **Secure Prospectus Approval:** Bring two copies of the Thesis Committee Prospectus Approval Record to the meeting. Once signed, upload one copy to your student file and retain the other
- \* Do not begin any data collection or analysis until after your prospectus meeting has concluded and approval is granted

Summer 1: Enrollment, IRB Approval, & Revisions

#### 1. Academic Registration

- **Enroll in COMD 6399:** Register for Thesis (3 credit hours) during the summer term in place of a summer elective
- **Understand the Grading System:** You will receive an **Incomplete (I)** grade at the end of the summer. Once your final thesis is defended and completed in Spring 2, the final letter grade will be applied retroactively to both COMD 6399 and COMD 7399

#### 2. Navigate the IRB Process

- **Determine Human Subjects Status:** If your research involves human subjects, you must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance
- **Submit Your Application:** Complete any required online or in-person IRB training, then submit your application to **UH IRB Committee 3** via the ICON system immediately following your prospectus approval
- **Account for Timelines:** The IRB meets monthly; expect the approval process to take **1 to 2 months**.
- \* No data collection or analysis may begin until formal, written IRB approval is received

### 3. Refine Your Writing

- **Address Committee Feedback:** While waiting for formal IRB clearance, utilize this time to revise your Literature Review and Methods chapters based on the notes received during your prospectus

Fall 2: Active Research & Data Collection

#### 1. Execute Your Project

- **Begin Data Operations:** Initiate data collection and/or analysis only *after* securing explicit IRB approval
- **Manage Your Time:** Allocate at least one full semester for this phase. Time requirements vary heavily depending on the nature of your specific project

Spring 2: Final Writing, Defense, & Graduation

#### 1. Register and Complete Writing

- **Enroll in COMD 7399:** Register for your final thesis credits (3 credit hours) at the start of the semester
- **Finalize Your Draft:** Draft and complete your Results and Discussion chapters by the **end of March**. Ensure your document adheres strictly to the layout rules found in the [UH CLASS Thesis Guidelines](#)

#### 2. Prepare for the Oral Defense

- **Schedule the Defense:** Coordinate a date, time, and location with your committee. Notify the COMD program coordinator so they can publicize the event, as the presentation is open to the public
- **Submit for Final Review:** Secure your chair's approval on the final manuscript first, then distribute the complete thesis draft to your committee members at least **two weeks** before the defense date
- **Prepare Meeting Materials:** Create a 20-minute presentation emphasizing your results and discussion
  - Print **three copies** of the signature page for your committee to sign upon passing

#### 3. Defense and Final Submission

- **Conduct the Defense:** Present your project and answer questions from the committee and public attendees. The committee will deliberate privately to determine a pass/fail outcome
- **Execute Post-Defense Revisions:** If you pass, the committee will sign your signature pages. Work closely with your chair to make any major or minor revisions requested during the deliberation
- **Submit to the College:** Format your finalized document according to college standards, run an Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Report, and submit the package to the CLASS thesis/dissertation coordinator for official university acceptance

## Contract for UH COMD Master's Thesis

(Thesis Chair to provide the actual form revised 1/2020)

Taking on a thesis requires time and work above and beyond the requirements of the Master's program. Thesis projects generally span 12-14 months and require an additional 3 credits beyond the non-thesis option program of study. In addition to the time/effort from the student, faculty thesis advisors and committee members that take on thesis projects commit their time and effort to guide the student and the project, above and beyond their teaching and research commitments. While the role of the thesis advisor is to provide assistance and mentoring, there is an expectation that the student will complete much of the project independently.

I (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ in taking on a Master's thesis with (print name) \_\_\_\_\_ as my thesis advisor, agree to the following:

- ◇ I will put in the required time and effort to complete the thesis project.
- ◇ I will meet the deadlines agreed to in my discussion with my thesis advisor.
- ◇ If I feel I am unable to complete the project within the timeline and with an appropriate amount of independence, I will discuss with my thesis advisor as soon as possible (ideally before the end of the first semester of thesis credits).
- ◇ I agree to assist with preparing the project/manuscript for presentation or publication. If I fail to assist within 6 months of completing the project, I agree that my thesis advisor can present or publish the project. If I do not assist on preparation of the presentation or publication, authorship on it is not guaranteed.
- ◇ I acknowledge that I may have to register for an additional semester of thesis credits if I do not complete all requirements by the university deadline in my final spring semester.
- ◇ I acknowledge that I may have to discontinue the thesis option if I do not meet the deadlines set by my thesis advisor.
- ◇ I acknowledge that I may have to discontinue the thesis option if I do not maintain an adequate level of academic or clinical performance.
- ◇ I acknowledge that discontinuing the thesis will require completing comprehensive exams.

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Student signature

Date

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Faculty Advisor signature

Date

## Appendix E: Acknowledgement of Graduate Program Handbook Review

The following will be signed during orientation and retained for the duration of the program.

### Acknowledgement of Graduate Program Handbook Review

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name printed), acknowledge that I have been introduced to the COMD Graduate Program Handbook and orientated to its contents. Furthermore, I am responsible for abiding by the contents therein.

The policies in this handbook apply to the academic year in which they are published. The handbook is reviewed and updated annually. Students are governed by the handbook in effect during the year they first enroll, unless they choose to adopt the policies of a later edition. I understand that I can locate the current handbook at any time on the UH COMD website.

Finally, I understand that I must also follow the expectations from the UH Graduate Catalog and I can locate the current UH Graduate Catalog on the UH website (<http://publications.uh.edu/index.php>).

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Signature

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Date