



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

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Department of Audiology  
and Speech Pathology

# **UTHSC Speech-Language Pathology Information Packet**

Information on MS-SLP and PhD Programs

# Speech-Language Pathologists

## About Speech-Language Pathology

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.

- Speech disorders occur when a person has difficulty producing speech sounds correctly or fluently (e.g., stuttering is a form of disfluency) or has problems with his or her voice or resonance.
- Language disorders occur when a person has trouble understanding others (receptive language), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings (expressive language). Language disorders may be spoken or written and may involve the form (phonology, morphology, syntax), content (semantics), and/or use (pragmatics) of language in functional and socially appropriate ways.
- Social communication disorders occur when a person has trouble with the social use of verbal and nonverbal communication. These disorders may include problems (a) communicating for social purposes (e.g., greeting, commenting, asking questions), (b) talking in different ways to suit the listener and setting, and (c) following rules for conversation and story-telling. All individuals with autism spectrum disorder have social communication problems. Social communication disorders are also found in individuals with other conditions, such as traumatic brain injury.
- Cognitive-communication disorders include problems organizing thoughts, paying attention, remembering, planning, and/or problem-solving. These disorders usually happen as a result of a stroke, traumatic brain injury, or dementia, although they can be congenital.
- Swallowing disorders (dysphagia) are feeding and swallowing difficulties, which may follow an illness, surgery, stroke, or injury.

## Additionally, SLPs:

- Provide aural rehabilitation for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems for individuals with severe expressive and/or language comprehension disorders, such as autism spectrum disorder or progressive neurological disorders.
- Work with people who don't have speech, language, or swallowing disorders, but want to learn how to communicate more effectively (e.g., work on accent modification or other forms of communication enhancement).

## Careers in Speech-Language Pathology

SLPs work with the full range of human communication and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages. SLPs:

- Evaluate and diagnose speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders.
- Treat speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders.
- Provide training and education to family/caregivers and other professionals.
- Work collaboratively with professionals from many other disciplines.

### **Additionally, SLPs may:**

- Prepare future professionals in colleges and universities.
- Own or run clinics or private practices.
- Work for national, state, or local associations or agencies.
- Supervise and direct public school or clinical programs.
- Engage in research to enhance knowledge about human communication processes and develop new assessment and treatment methods that may lead to more effective outcomes.
- Provide counseling and consultative services.
- Train and supervise support personnel.

## Employment Settings

SLPs work in many different research, education, and health care settings with varying roles, levels of responsibility, and client populations. Because of the high demand for speech-language pathology services, part-time, full-time, and PRN (literally, *pro re nata*—in medicine, on an "as needed" basis) opportunities may be available depending on location, desired facility, employment flexibility, and other factors. In many settings, SLPs often work as part of a collaborative, interdisciplinary team, which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and rehabilitation counselors.

## Salary Information

Salaries of SLPs depend on educational background, experience, work setting, and geographical location. According to the 2017 ASHA Health Care Survey, the median annual salary for SLPs in health care was \$78,000. The median annual salaries were \$72,000 for clinical service providers and \$96,000 for administrators or supervisors. According to the 2018 ASHA Schools Survey, median academic-year salaries for clinical service providers ranged from \$62,000 in preschools to \$68,000 in secondary schools. For those being paid an hourly rate, the median hourly wage was \$51.00.

## **Market Trends in SLP**

According to ASHA, job opportunities in speech-language pathology are expected to grow by 18% from 2016-2026. Of the 204,000 professionals whom ASHA represents, 174,025 are certified SLPs and 813 hold dual certification as both audiologists and SLPs. The profession continues to grow for a variety of reasons, including the rapid increase in aging populations, medical advances that improve the survival rate of preterm infants as well as trauma and stroke patients, growth in elementary- and secondary-school enrollments, and increasing demand in health care and private practice settings.

For more information about the job outlook for speech-language pathologists, visit the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

## **Education Requirements**

Applicants for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP) must earn a graduate degree, successfully complete the required clinical experiences, and pass a national examination. In some areas, such as college teaching, research, and private practice, a PhD is desirable.

To earn the CCC-SLP, individuals must complete graduate course work and a clinical practicum at a college or university whose program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA). This assures graduates that their academic and clinical experience meets nationally established standards.

For more information go to: <https://www.asha.org/slp/>

## MS-SLP Program Admissions and Selection

*The UTHSC Speech-Language Pathology Program utilizes The Centralized Application Service for Communication Science & Disorders Programs (CSDCAS). Prospective applicants may apply by accessing the Applicant website at <http://csdcas.liaisoncas.org/csdcas-students/>.*

### Requirements for Admission

1. Bachelor's degree from an accredited university.
2. A minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in the Bachelor's Degree.
3. A satisfactory score on the Verbal and Quantitative scales of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).
  1. GRE Code for UTHSC via CSDCAS: 0779
4. Three letters of recommendation preferably from 3 professors who had the student in class.
5. Foreign applicants whose native language is not English must submit results of TOEFL with a minimum score of 550.
6. Applicants who accept an offer of admission will be required to complete UTHSC's Pre-Admissions Requirement System (PARS).

### Applying to Graduate School

1. **Research** – Begin researching programs and gathering information, applications, etc. from programs you are interested in applying to. Different programs have different requirements and application processes; it's better to know about these variations on the front end. Give yourself a wide variety of options (i.e. different locations, large schools, small schools, etc.) Narrow down your field of choices by the beginning of your senior year.
2. **GRE** – Thoroughly prepare yourself for the GRE during the summer before your senior year. Take the exam during the first half of the Fall semester of your senior year. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to retake the exam if necessary. See the attached sheet for more information on preparing for and taking the GRE. Ideally, programs prefer a combined score of 300 on the verbal and quantitative sections or scores at least in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.
3. **GPA** – Your within-the-major GPA is very important. Ideally, you should have a GPA of 3.5 in your Audiology and Speech Pathology classes. Your cumulative GPA should be as close to 3.5 as possible. You will not necessarily be punished for a bad freshman year, or a D in Western Civ, but make every attempt possible to boost your GPA. This can be done through elective courses.

Each program will require one or more copies of your transcript from each college/university you have attended. Most require official copies directly from the Registrar's Office, so it is a good idea to plan ahead and be sure to have them sent in plenty of time before the deadline.

4. **Personal Statement/Letter of Intent** – Unlike many programs, we do not require a personal statement or letter of intent. We feel that every applicant's reasons for wanting to be admitted to our program and become an SLP are equally valid and we should not distinguish between students in this manner. However, we know that some students have something they would like to explain about their application. This may include reasons for poor academic performance in particular classes or having to take time off from college. Therefore, the letter is optional in our application and can be used to explain extenuating circumstances related to academic performance.
5. **Letters of Recommendation** – Most schools require 2-4 letters of recommendation. This is where getting to know your professors really pays off. The better they know you as an individual person and not just a face in the crowd, the better they will be able to convey your abilities and potential as a graduate student. You will also need to provide relevant information that will be helpful to them while writing your letter. Each professor has his or her own preferences as to the information they will need, so it is good to ask them in advance instead of just throwing a pile of papers on their desk. Typically, they will request a copy of your transcript, personal statement, list of programs you are applying and the application deadlines, individual rating forms for each program, GPA and GRE scores and a picture. Ask your professors to write your letters early, to insure they will have plenty of time to complete them before the deadline. Remember to be considerate of their schedules, it is usually not a good idea to ask their help during mid-term and finals week or a week before the deadline. Also, be sure to follow up with each professor in a timely manner to see if they have any questions and ensure that your recommendation letter has been submitted before the deadline.
6. **Application and Application Fee** – All schools have an application and application fee that must be paid in order for your application to be processed. Be sure to research this aspect thoroughly, as some programs require separate applications to the college or university's graduate school as well as to the individual program.
7. **Graduate Scholarships/ Assistantships** – The department offers a number of financial incentives to students in the department that range from approximately \$500-\$2000 per

semester. Scholarships are awarded without any work requirements. Assistantships are offered typically with 5-10 hrs per week of additional work within the department. Students do not need to apply for any of the scholarships or assistantships. They are awarded on the basis of merit after students have been in the program for one year. Therefore, incoming students are not yet eligible for these assistantships and scholarships. The only exceptions are our diversity scholarships which may be offered to students with diverse backgrounds as they enter the program or at any other time during their program.

8. **MEET ALL DEADLINES!** Deadlines for applications are typically anywhere between December 15-February 15. Do not be late with any of your application materials. Organization is key to meeting all deadlines, as you will have materials being submitted from several different people and it is up to you to make sure it all arrives on time. It is a good idea to call the program after you feel enough time has passed for your materials to get there to verify everything has been received.

## MS-SLP 3-year Program

Students with a bachelor's degree from another field may also apply to our program and be admitted as '3-year students'. The admissions process is very similar to those applying directly into the 2 year program. Admission is granted primarily on the basis of strong GPA and GRE scores. The first year of the 3 year program is considered a 'leveling' year, during which students take the required undergraduate courses to prepare them for the next two years of Master's level coursework and clinic. Students who successfully complete the leveling year are automatically entered into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year Master's level class and are eligible for departmental scholarships/assistantships as they enter year 2. The first year (leveling) classes are shown below. Please note that students completing this leveling year are not enrolled in classes during the summer between spring of year 1 and fall of year 2.

### Leveling Schedule

#### Year 1 (Fall):

- ASP 303 – Intro to Hearing Science (3 hrs)
- ASP 305 – Phonetics (3 hrs)
- ASP 306 – Anatomy and Physiology of Speech (3 hrs)
- ASP 320 – Speech and Language Development (3 hrs)
- ASP 433 – Observation of Clinical Practice (1 hr)
- ASP 455 – Introduction to Adult Speech and Language Disorders (2 hrs)

#### Year 1 (Spring):

- ASP 302 – Acoustics and Perception (3 hrs)
- ASP 435 – Introduction to Speech Sound Disorders (3 hrs)
- ASP 453 – Diagnostics in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (3 hrs)
- ASP 461 – Intro to Language Pathologies in Children (3 hrs)
- ASP 494 – Introduction to Aural Habilitation/Rehabilitation of the Hearing Impaired (3 hrs)

## MS-SLP Sample 2-Year Program

(for students **with** bachelors or equivalent in communication disorders)

#### Fall 2:

- ASP 506 – Neural Bases of Speech and Language (3 hrs)
- ASP 518 – Adult Neurogenic Communication Disorders I (3 hrs)
- ASP 522 – Advanced Speech Sound Disorders (3 hrs)
- ASP 561 – Child Language Disorders (3 hrs)
- ASP 534 – Clinical Education Series (1-4 hrs)
- ASP 515 – Practicum in Aural Rehabilitation (1-4 hrs) **AND/OR**

- ASP 533 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology (1-4 hrs)

**Spring 2:**

- ASP 514- Stuttering (3 hrs)
- ASP 519 – Adult Neurogenic Communication Disorders II (3 hrs)
- ASP 526 – Dysphagia (3 hrs)
- ASP 541 – Structural Disorders of Speech (2 hrs)
- Elective (3 hrs)
- ASP 534 – Clinical Education Series (1-4 hrs)
- ASP 515 – Practicum in Aural Rehabilitation (1-4 hrs) **AND/OR**
- ASP 533 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology (1-4 hrs)

**Summer 2:**

- ASP 508 – Voice Disorders (3 hrs)
- ASP 581 – School Speech-Language Pathology (2 hrs)
- ASP 553 – Research in Speech-Language Pathology (2 hrs)
- ASP 590 – Professional Series in SLP – Counseling (1 hr)
- ASP 534 – Clinical Education Series (1-4 hrs)
- ASP 515 – Practicum in Aural Rehabilitation (1-4 hrs) **AND/OR**
- ASP 533 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology (1-4 hrs)

**Fall 3:** *\*Comprehensive examination typically taken this semester*

- Elective (3 hrs)
- Elective (3 hrs)
- Elective (3 hrs)
- ASP 537 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology: Off-Campus School Sites (1-15 hrs) **OR**
- ASP 538 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology: Off-Campus II Medical Sites (1-15 hrs)

**Spring 3:** *\*Externship*

- ASP 537 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology: Off-Campus School Sites (1-15 hrs)
- ASP 538 – Advanced Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology: Off-Campus Medical Sites (1-15 hrs)