

Student Assistance Plan

Background

The Master's program in Communication Disorders at Southeast Missouri State University prepares its students to meet the qualification standards for entry into professional practice as a speech-language pathologist as prescribed by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The program is designed to meet specific knowledge and skill outcomes related to scope of practice in speech-language pathology. Further, the program is tasked with developing in its students professional practice competencies that encompass accountability, integrity, evidence-based practice, clinical reasoning, cultural competence, professional duty, collaborative practice, empathic concern for others, and effective communication skills.

In accordance with prescribed [ASHA accreditation standards](#), graduate students' progress towards satisfactory acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills is maintained by the graduate program and verified by the program director. Knowledge acquisition is primarily addressed in content-specific academic courses, while skills acquisition is supported via a variety of supervised internal and external clinical practicum experiences.

Tracking of knowledge and skill acquisition is completed electronically via CALIPSO, a web-based clinical education tool created specifically for this purpose. The expectation is that the student will have achieved satisfactory acquisition of all expected knowledge concepts and clinical skills by the time the graduate degree is awarded.

The academic course checklist indicates which knowledge outcomes are addressed in each course and how they are assessed. Students can access this information in CALIPSO to assist in documenting his/her progress or deficiencies; this checklist is completed by the course instructor at the end of the course and placed in the student's academic record. The graduate advisors then ensure that the information is recorded electronically via CALIPSO.

Note that skill outcomes are typically demonstrated in clinical practicum experiences. The student reviews their proficiency with these various skills as related to each clinical experience with his/her respective clinical educator(s) at mid-term and upon the completion of each semester. The student can monitor his/her achievement of the skill outcomes at any time by accessing CALIPSO.

To maintain enrollment in graduate study at Southeast, [minimum standards must be met](#). Maintaining enrollment in the Master of Arts in Communication Disorders program requires meeting additional, program-specific provisions as outlined in the handbook.

Overview of Knowledge and Skills Outcomes Assessment

Upon the conclusion of each course taken at the graduate level, students receive a course grade. In the university clinical practicum courses (CD603, CD402), students receive a course grade in addition to a rating on a scale of 1-5 (below) on each of the individual knowledge and/or skill outcomes addressed in the course. A detailed explanation of the Performance Rating Scale is provided in Appendix A.

1- Not evident 2 - Emerging 3 – Present 4 - Adequate 5 - Consistent

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In content-specific academic courses, competencies are assessed according to the established knowledge outcomes for each course. Achievement of these knowledge outcomes is rated as met or not met.

If a student receives an “A” or “B” in an academic course, it is assumed that all knowledge and/or skill outcomes applicable to that course were satisfactorily achieved and the student has demonstrated an adequate level of independent analysis and integration of the concepts presented.

If a student receives a grade of “C” or lower in an academic course, it is assumed that the student’s acquisition of the concepts presented in that course requires a high level of ongoing support. In this case, there is a need for additional opportunities to facilitate learning and foster independent acquisition and application of the concepts presented in that course.

Similarly, if a student fails to demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on all knowledge and skill objectives prior to receiving the graduate degree, as determined by the course instructors or clinical educators, additional learning opportunities will be required.

All remediation opportunities must be provided in a systematic, timely manner that directly addresses each individual student’s specific needs. The mechanism for providing remediation is the Student Assistance Plan (SAP). The SAP addresses situations in which a student must complete additional work to achieve a specific knowledge or skill outcome not achieved during the regular course offerings.

In addition to completion of coursework and clinical practicum experiences, there are other requirements for the graduate degree that must be met. These include: written and/or oral comprehensive examinations or equivalent (submission of a passing Praxis score, completion of a thesis project) and completion and presentation of a capstone research project. The SAP identifies a student’s need for additional opportunities and increased mentorship to satisfactorily complete any requirements for the graduate degree.

A student must meet all knowledge and skills outcomes, in addition to all other graduate program requirements, prior to the application deadline for graduation (in Spring or Summer of his/her second year of graduate study). If the student is unable to achieve satisfactory completion of the knowledge and skills requirements prior to the deadline for application for graduation despite consistent and substantial support provided by the graduate faculty, as documented in the SAP(s), the result may be dismissal from the graduate program. If the student is dismissed from the program as a result of not completing the SAP requirements, he/she can reapply re-admission to the graduate program the following admissions period.

A student who has been dismissed from the program must re-take all courses in the graduate plan of study unless given written permission by the department chair and dean of the college. Should written permission be granted, the student must maintain continuous enrollment via the Student Assistance Plan Course, a 0-credit hour course, during any semester they are not enrolled in other courses offered by the program. All coursework required by the graduate program must be completed within six years of the initial enrollment date.

The Student Assistance Plan

Academic Courses

A Student Assistance Plan (SAP) will be required for content-specific academic courses if the student achieves a grade of “C” while maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. [The procedure for a student who earns an “F” in a course or has a cumulative GPA below 3.0 is outlined in the Graduate Bulletin.](#)

When a student earns a “C” or “F” and must retake an academic course, it is assumed that the student has not demonstrated adequate acquisition of the knowledge required for application for professional certification through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The student must repeat the course the following year with another cohort and earn a “B” or higher to fulfill both certification requirements and requirements for graduation. As long as a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher is maintained, the student can continue to work through the course of study, but the student’s anticipated graduation date must then change accordingly.

If the student receives a “C” in a course at mid-term, he/she may be required to complete additional work to increase competency in any knowledge or skill area which has not been satisfactorily met. A SAP may also be instituted at the discretion of the instructor, should the instructor determine that the student requires additional academic support in a specific area, regardless of the student’s overall course grade.

Clinical Practicum Courses

Students must demonstrate a satisfactory level of clinical skill acquisition to meet the program requirements for graduation and the Standards for Certification by ASHA. A student must demonstrate skill ratings that are the equivalent of a “B” or higher across all skill areas in university and externship practicum courses to graduate from the program.

“Deficiencies in clinical skills” requiring a SAP are characterized as follows:

- The student receives an average cumulative rating equivalent to a “C” across all clinical educators at the midterm or final evaluation in a practicum course during a semester of graduate study:
 - An average cumulative rating of <3.0 for a beginning clinician (undergraduate students; first semester graduate students)
 - An average cumulative rating of <3.5 for an intermediate or advanced clinician (graduate students in the second semester and onward)
- The student receives an average rating for a specific single clinical skill equivalent to a “C” or below across all clinical educators despite a cumulative grade of “B” at the midterm or final evaluation in a practicum course:
 - An average rating of <3.0 for a beginning clinician (undergraduate students; first semester graduate students)
 - An average rating of <3.5 for an intermediate or advanced clinician (graduate students in the second semester and onward)
- The student demonstrates the need for additional opportunities to develop and achieve some or all knowledge or skill outcomes required for graduation for which there will be no other

opportunity to acquire the knowledge or skill in subsequent academic courses or on-campus clinical practicum experiences

- A SAP may also be instituted at the discretion of the clinical educator, should the clinical educator determine that the student requires additional support in a specific area, regardless of the student's average rating across clinical educators for clinical skills.

Should a student earn a "C" for their overall grade in a university clinical practicum course or externship course, any clock hours earned during the semester will not be eligible to contribute towards ASHA's requirement for clinical clock hours as part of the application for the Certificate of Clinical Competence. The university practicum course must be repeated until three semesters of university practicum have been completed with a grade of "B" or higher. Upon completion of this requirement, the student can proceed to the off-campus clinical externship. The student must earn a grade of "B" or higher for two semesters of externship experiences to meet the program graduation requirements.

Determining Progress towards meeting ASHA Certification Standards

At the end of each academic course, the instructor will submit a completed knowledge acquisition checklist form for each course to the graduate advisors, verifying which knowledge outcomes have been achieved. The graduate advisors will then update the student's electronic record in CALIPSO.

At the end of each clinical practicum, the clinical educator(s) determine(s) which skill outcome(s) have been achieved using the student evaluation in CALIPSO. At any point during a student's graduate study, the clinic coordinator and/or graduate advisor may review the student's clinical skills outcomes. If it is determined that a student is excessively deficient in any skill, the student will be required to have a SAP. The student will be required to successfully complete the requirements of the SAP before being placed at an off-campus clinical practicum site.

If concerns are noted at midterm (as indicated by scores <3.5 for an advanced clinician), during the first off-campus clinical practicum, the externship coordinator, clinic coordinator, department chairperson, and academic advisor will review the student's record of achievement thus far. A SAP will then be implemented based on deficient skills. The externship coordinator will collaborate with the externship clinical educator to determine a remediation plan and measure progress regarding skill acquisition for the remainder of the off-campus practicum. Upon completion of the off-campus practicum, the externship coordinator, clinic coordinator, department chairperson, and academic advisor will meet to determine if acquisition of skills has been achieved satisfactorily. If the student has successfully met SAP requirements as determined by the above parties, he/she will be permitted to advance to a second off-campus practicum. If the SAP requirements are not met, the student may be dismissed from the graduate program.

At the conclusion of the final semester of graduate study, the student must schedule two review meetings, one with the academic advisor and one with the clinic coordinator. The academic advisor will verify that all knowledge outcomes have been achieved. The clinic coordinator will verify that the skill outcomes have been achieved and mark the Cumulative Evaluation in CALIPSO as "MET." In addition, the requirements of any SAPs must be met by this time for a student to graduate. If the SAP is not met at this time, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program.

Development and Stipulations of a Student Assistance Plan

If a student requires development of a SAP in the manner described in the previous section, the student should meet with chair of the department and the instructor (for content-specific courses), clinic coordinator (for university practicum experiences) or externship coordinator (for externships) to develop the SAP. A SAP form must be completed and retained in the student's academic record (Appendix B).

This plan should list the following:

1. the knowledge or skills outcomes that are deficient
2. the activities that will be completed by the student to address the deficiencies
3. how successful completion of the SAP will be assessed
4. the time frame for completion of the SAP

This form must be signed by the student, the instructor or practicum coordinator, as well as the student's academic advisor and department chairperson. If the student is retaking a course, regular course requirements will apply and the grade in the course will determine if the knowledge or skills have been met.

The student is permitted to address only one content-specific course SAP at a time and maintain a full load of graduate courses and a clinical practicum in a semester (i.e. approximately 12 hours). The student may address a SAP for clinical skills and one content-specific course SAP within the same semester. If the student must address more than one content-specific course SAP in the same semester, the credit load must be reduced by 3 hours.

Documentation and Appeals Process

The acquisition of knowledge and skills outcomes must be documented in CALIPSO. If a SAP was required and successfully completed, the student may indicate the SAP as the means by which the objective was achieved and the SAP form is retained in the student's record. If at any point, the student wishes to appeal a particular aspect of the SAP (e.g. the plan itself, the means of assessment, or the final grade or rating), the student must submit in writing an alternative assistance plan for review by the department chair and instructor or practicum coordinator.

Performance Rating Scale for Standards addressed in Clinical Practicum

- 1 Not evident: Skill not evident most of the time. Student requires direct instruction to modify behavior and is unaware of need to change. Supervisor must model behavior and implement the skill required for client to receive optimal care. Supervisor provides numerous instructions and frequent modeling (skill is present <25% of the time).
- 2 Emerging: Skill is emerging, but is inconsistent or inadequate. Student shows awareness of need to change behavior with supervisor input. Supervisor frequently provides instructions and support for all aspects of case management and services (skill is present 26-50% of the time).
- 3 Present: Skill is present and needs further development, refinement or consistency. Student is aware of need to modify behavior, but does not do this independently. Supervisor provides on-going monitoring and feedback; focuses on increasing student's critical thinking on how/when to improve skill (skill is present 51-75% of the time).
- 4 Adequate: Skill is developed/implemented most of the time and needs continued refinement or consistency. Student is aware and can modify behavior in-session, and can self-evaluate. Problem-solving is independent. Supervisor acts as a collaborator to plan and suggest possible alternatives (skill is present 76-90% of the time).
- 5 Consistent: Skill is consistent and well developed. Student can modify own behavior as needed and is an independent problem-solver. Student can maintain skills with other clients, and in other settings, when appropriate. Supervisor serves as consultant in areas where student has less experience; Provides guidance on ideas initiated by student (skill is present >90% of the time).

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Student Assistance Plan (SAP) Form

Student _____ Date _____

Describe reason necessitating a Student Assistance Plan and knowledge or skill outcome addressed in plan:

Describe the required activities for meeting the goals of the Student Assistance Plan:

Describe the method and criteria by which the student's performance on the Student Assistance Plan will be assessed:

Indicate the semester (or other deadline) by which the Student Assistance Plan should be completed:

Faculty Instructor or Clinic Coordinator

Student

Student's Academic Advisor

Department Chairperson

Externship Coordinator (If applicable)

Date Completed _____ Verified By _____

**A copy of this form should be retained in the student's academic file.