

# **SLP Graduate Student Manual**

**Fall 2026 - Spring 2028**



**Department of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences**

**Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology**

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## Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Arts (M.A.) graduate program in speech language pathology (SLP) at Western Michigan University (WMU). You have joined one of the nation's first speech language pathology programs, founded by Dr. Charles Van Riper and first accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology in 1966. Our program offers unique educational opportunities that incorporate evidence-based interprofessional practice, person-centered care, applied research, and social justice.

This manual provides information about the degree program and related resources to support students and faculty advisors. It is intended to be consistent with and superseded by all WMU policies and procedures, including the [University Graduate Catalog](#). In addition, as a professionally accredited program, we draw heavily on program accreditation and clinical certification requirements provided by the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) and American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA).

As the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences (SLHS) department, we value meaningful and productive relationships with our students and with one other. Consistent with our professional code of ethics, we are committed to maintaining collaborative professional relationships that are foundational to providing quality services to clients and to cultivating a sense of belonging for all. Frustration and tensions are an inevitable part of working together and offer an opportunity for both personal and community growth. While some of your classmates may become good friends, keep in mind that ALL of your classmates are emergent colleagues who you could have working relationships with for the remainder of your career. Invest in each other. Related supports for managing interpersonal conflict are provided in the Student Resources section below.

The **Department Chairperson** oversees management and leadership of the Department of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences as a whole. The **Academic Program Coordinator (APC)** oversees program advising, course registration, and annual student performance reviews specific to the speech-language pathology program. The Academic Program Coordinator also assigns each student to a **faculty advisor** who serves as an additional student resource for professional advice and mentoring. Clinical education is overseen by the **Clinical Education Coordinator (CEC)**, who oversees all speech-language pathology services at the on-campus Charles Van Riper Language, Speech and Hearing Clinic, broader WMU campus and community and coordinates clinical externships for the second year of the program.

## Emergency Management

The University hosts an emergency management website and system. The [WMU homepage](#) is WMU's official source for information on critical incidents, closures (including weather-related closures), and campus wide alerts. Students and faculty should register for campus wide alert delivery to their cell phones as soon as possible through [WMU Alerts](#) . For general information regarding severe weather preparedness, we are referred to [ready.gov](#). For an active shooter threat, WMU recommends a '[Run. Hide. Fight.](#)' approach. For any immediate life safety issue or crimes in progress, please call 911. Other key phone numbers include Public Safety (269) 387-5555 and Police Non-Emergency (269) 488-8911.

### **Health, Safety & Wellbeing**

As an allied health science, personal health and wellbeing, public safety, and evidence-based practices are fundamental to our professional discipline and mission. We refer students to [WMU's COVID-19 page](#) for the most current campus information. In addition, please note the specification for vaccination with our Minimal Work Requirements for clinical service provision within our Charles Van Riper Language, Speech & Hearing Clinic. In addition, our program partners with many facilities throughout Southwest Michigan and the United States to provide critical clinical externship opportunities. Some of these health and social service organizations mandate that their employees and guest students receive the COVID-19 vaccination and/or other preventative healthcare. Some facilities may have an approved waiver or exemption process in place, while others may not. Students who complete clinical placements at off-campus sites must adhere to all of the respective site's policies and procedures (which may differ from the on-campus MWR mentioned above).

### **Program Overview**

Our **mission** is to educate speech, language, and hearing professionals for a diverse and changing population, to advance knowledge through research, to deliver high-quality clinical services, and to serve as an expert resource for the community and professions.

In addition to our mission, our **program goals** follow:

1. Graduate an average of 25-30 MA-SLP students or more over 5 years who meet or exceed professional standards.
2. Graduate MA-SLP students will be prepared for SLP service provision across a variety of settings throughout the state of Michigan and beyond.
3. Graduate MA-SLP students with strong intraprofessional expertise in audiology
4. Graduates will demonstrate professional competencies related to ethical conduct, collaboration, and cultural linguistic responsiveness.
5. Graduates will develop self-advocacy skills and understanding of accountability processes.

6. Graduate MA-SLP students who integrate all 3 components of evidence-based practice into clinical practice.

The professional journey to becoming a speech-language pathologist involves three distinct but inter-related sets of requirements: a) graduation, b) professional accreditation, and c) state licensure; each will be discussed in turn.

### **Graduation Requirements**

Requirements for a Master of Arts degree in speech-language pathology from Western Michigan University are specified in the [Graduate Catalog](#). All courses are taught in English; consequently, the program adheres to [English language proficiency requirements](#) specified by the university for international students. That said, we recognize and value language variation and are committed to actively resisting linguistic discrimination. The program includes completion of 56-65 credit hours of required courses (or their equivalent), as specified by the department. Additional coursework may be required if foundational courses are not completed before admission. The sequence of courses typically takes two academic years plus two summer sessions (six terms of enrollment). The program is designed to meet [ASHA certification requirements](#), which currently includes at least 375 hours of supervised clinical practicum (a minimum of 125 of which must be direct, onsite, in-person therapy), combined with 25 hours of observation, for a total of 400 hours. Students are also required to meet professional competencies related to clinical practice.

Upon admission to the program, the Academic Program Coordinator will oversee review of each student's undergraduate transcript for foundational coursework associated with the professional standards set by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. If additional undergraduate courses are necessary, students will be notified by their academic advisor and/or Academic Program Coordinator to modify their program of study/permanent program. For example, students who need to take an undergraduate course in Rehabilitative Audiology or Neuroscience for Communication Disorders may need to complete a [Permission to Elect Undergraduate Course form](#) and submit it to the Academic Program Coordinator who will gather the appropriate signatures, add to the electronic file and submit to the Office of the Registrar.

The coursework in the M.A. graduate program prepares a student to enter the field of speech-language pathology with a generalist background in the discipline. As such, all courses are required. The sequence

of courses and the semester or session in which the courses are offered may vary from year to year; the anticipated course sequence is provided in Appendix A.

The program includes an optional master's thesis (a minimum of six credit hour enrollment) or one or more independent research registrations, which can be substituted *in place* of SLHS 6150 (Research Methods) if faculty mentorship is available. In general, students with an interest in research should meet with their academic advisors early in the graduate program to discuss their interests and identify a research mentor. A sample timeline for students who wish to pursue a master's thesis is provided in Appendix B.

A student who feels they have already completed an equivalent to one of our required courses at another institution can request a waiver of the graduate course requirement. Course equivalency is typically based on level of the course, specified course prerequisites, number of credits, specified ASHA standards, and at least 75% overlap in specified content based on a review of the syllabus and related materials. The student must have earned a 'C' or higher in the course to be considered for a course waiver. The decision regarding course equivalency will be made by the Academic Program Coordinator in consultation with the instructor of record, and the student's individual plan of study will be updated as needed. Any change to the [permanent program](#) of study must be approved by the Academic Program Coordinator before forwarding to the Office of the Registrar for audit, prior to graduation.

The application for graduation deadline is set by the Registrar and typically occurs during the latter half of the semester or session prior to the anticipated last semester/session of study. Students should read the [academic calendar](#) to verify the deadline date and must submit the application for graduation on time.

### **ASHA Certification**

As an accredited program, our curriculum is designed to prepare students for professional certification through the [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#) (ASHA), which will earn them the "Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology" (the "CCC-SLP" designation often listed after a certified speech-language pathologist's name). Consistent with our accreditation status, syllabi for academic coursework should include specification of relevant [2020 ASHA Certification Standards](#), or the updated standards as of January 2023. Application for certification currently requires an official graduate transcript, completion of the *Clinical Fellowship Report and Rating Form*, which

includes the *Clinical Fellowship Skills Inventory* (CFSI), and evidence of passing the Praxis examination.

The clinical fellowship (CF) is a mentored professional experience that begins after the completion of the master's degree and typically includes professional compensation. Students are expected to find their own Clinical Fellowship positions that begin after graduation. For more information on the CF process, please visit [Clinical Fellowship \(CF\) Experience](#).

The Praxis Exam administered by ETS is the summative examination utilized by ASHA for certification and is required for speech-language pathology licensure in some states. Our graduate program is designed by nature to provide students with the requisite knowledge and skills to pass the Praxis. For those who seek additional exam preparation, ASHA offers a [Praxis preparation resource](#). It is recommended that students take the Praxis examination and report their scores during the last semester of the M.A. program so that they will be ready to obtain state licensure in a timely manner.

### **State Licensure Requirements**

Often, requirements for state licensure mirror those for ASHA certification. Transcripts are used to verify coursework completion and award of degree. It is recommended that students take the Praxis examination and report their scores during the last semester of the M.A. program so that they will be ready to obtain state licensure in a timely manner. In the State of Michigan, a new graduate cannot work as a speech-language pathologist without a state-issued license. See the State of Michigan, Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs website for detailed instructions and application materials, which can be found here: [Speech-Language Pathology](#). Licensure requirements for all states within the U.S. can be accessed [here](#).

### **Clinical Practicum**

As reflected in the program of study, students typically enroll in clinical practicum every semester/session of graduate study, either through SLHS 6700 *Clinical Practicum* or SLHS 7120 *Professional Field Experience*. Students typically register for *SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum* in the fall, spring, summer 1 and summer 2 sessions of the first year of the program. Students typically register for *SLHS 7120 Professional Field Experience* in the fall and spring of the second year of the program. Students must successfully complete all clinic registrations as scheduled to graduate on time. Should a student's Plan of Study change due to extenuating circumstances, this timeline may be affected and need to be extended. In

that case, the student must work with the Academic Program Coordinator to make the necessary adjustments to the Plan of Study.

Many first-year clinical practicum experiences occur within the [Charles Van Riper Language, Speech & Hearing Clinic](#) housed within [Unified Clinics](#) and are assigned by the Clinical Education Coordinator. Most first-year clinical practicum experiences will be scheduled on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, so students are required to keep these days fully open in their schedules (9:00am to 6:00pm). On occasion, some placements may take place on Monday and Wednesday outside of designated class times. Therefore, students are asked to keep schedules as open and flexible as possible until the clinic schedule is finalized. This usually happens by the second week of the semester. Mandatory weekly practicum meetings with clinical instructors will also be assigned to coincide with students' clinical placements; scheduling varies based on team availability. Students submit an Application for Therapy Assignment prior to each semester/session to indicate previous experiences and current educational needs. Clinical assignments are a complicated balance of many factors; areas in which the student needs to develop and address professional competencies are a necessary priority. Personal obligations (ie; personal travel, babysitting, external employment, etc.) are not considered part of the MA-SLP program and cannot therefore be accommodated around clinical placements.

### **Clinical Documentation**

In addition to direct client contact, practicum work will require students to produce clinical documentation in a timely and professional manner per clinical instructors' guidelines. This may include therapy session ("SOAP") notes, therapy plans and/or evaluation/treatment reports. Some placements will require self-assessment and/or written reflections to explore growth and future learning needs. Some of the clinical placements will require students to document their work in an electronic medical records (EMR) system. Training for this system will be provided by the Clinical Education Coordinator.

Students enrolled in clinical practicum are required to purchase a subscription to *Exxat*. This secure web-based platform will house students' accrued clinical contact hours, required health records, training certifications, as well as clinical competency Performance Evaluations. Performance Evaluations are completed by clinical instructors and reviewed with students at mid-term and the end of the semester/session. Think of Exxat as your clinical education portfolio. The CEC will introduce this to students in their SLHS 6700 class and guide them through the set up process. Students must purchase this subscription prior to beginning any direct clinical education work associated with SLHS 6700.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for all SLHS 6700 meetings and obligations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- All training, orientation and onboarding sessions
- Scheduled clinical sessions with clients
- Clinical practicum meetings with supervisors and practicum team members

**Excused Absences:** In the case of an unforeseen emergency (ie; illness, family emergency), a student should inform their clinical supervisor as soon as possible of the need to be absent. When possible, the graduate student should work to recruit a fellow SLHS 6700 student to provide coverage for the missed session(s) and per the clinical supervisor's discretion. An example might include a student who has a planned medical procedure scheduled three weeks in advance. The graduate student informs the clinical supervisor of the need to miss a scheduled therapy session for personal/medical reasons. The graduate student then contacts the students on the team to ask if another student is available to facilitate their colleague's session on the specified date. Once coverage is secured, the graduate student must a) confirm this new plan with their clinical supervisor and b) provide the covering graduate student clinician with an approved lesson plan a minimum of two hours before the scheduled session.

**Unexcused Absences:** Students may not miss clinical education sessions, meetings or other obligations due to vacation, work, weddings or other non-WMU or graduate school related event.

More than one unexcused absence will affect a student's assigned grade in one or both of the following Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) standards:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the effects of own actions and makes appropriate changes as needed (CAA 3.1.1B - Accountability)
- Demonstrates professionalism (CAA 3.1.1B - Professional Duty, 3.1.6B)

## **2<sup>nd</sup> year Clinical Externships (off-campus clinical placements)**

The CEC uses the information stored in Exxat, along with a fieldwork application to make assignments for professional fieldwork externships. All clinical contact hours must be obtained in placements approved by the CEC and at an approved partner site. There are many variables involved in creating community partnerships. The SLHS Department and its CEC will manage these partnerships. Students are explicitly asked not to pursue their own placements. If a student has any questions about their off-campus externships they are encouraged to contact the program CEC to discuss them. Two off-campus

externships are completed in the second year: a part-time placement (typically 3 days per week for 14 consecutive weeks) in the fall semester and a full-time placement (4-5 days per week for 14 consecutive weeks) in the spring. Placement decisions are made depending on variables such as previous clinical experiences, site/supervisor availability and (to the extent possible) professional goals. Externships can take place in a variety of clinical settings (ie; school, private practice, outpatient clinic, rehabilitation facility, skilled nursing, hospital, etc.). Clinical placements can be competitive and may require interviews, submission of resume and/or purchase of an *ACEMAPP Education* account (an online clinical education placement management system). Information on ACEMAPP can be found at: [ACEMAPP](#). Some sites may require students to complete specific onboarding requirements (ie; vaccinations, background checks, fingerprinting, purchase of a healthcare insurance plan) or other items in order to be eligible to participate at their site. These requirements are at the discretion of each respective clinical placement site and it is the responsibility of the student to meet those expectations and handle any out of pocket expenses that are associated with them.

Clinical externships are an explicit part of the MA SLP curriculum. Students are placed at sites by the CEC based on student's educational needs, site and instructor availability and through carefully cultivated partnerships within the community. The CEC will use information available in student records, along with an SLHS 7120 Placement application form, to assign students to their respective placements. Students must arrange to have their own reliable transportation and be prepared to commute up to 60 miles (each way) for externship placement eligibility. Without consistently reliable transportation to and from clinical sites, students may be limited in their ability to complete clinical externships, resulting in their graduation being delayed or prohibited.

Attendance at assigned clinical externships is mandatory. Students must follow the calendar and schedule of their assigned clinical site during the course of their placement. For example, if WMU has a campus-wide closure such as Spring Break, the MA-SLP student continues to attend their externship and adhere to the site's respective calendar. If the site has a closure (such as an elementary school going on Winter Break), the MA-SLP student would not attend their externship during the time their school site is closed. In the case of an unforeseen emergency (ie; illness, family emergency), a student should inform their clinical supervisor and the WMU Clinical Education Coordinator of the need to be absent. These would be considered excused absences and we request that all missed days are made up per the site and supervisor's ability to accommodate such a request. More than one unexcused absence may affect a student's assigned grade in one or both of the following Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) standards:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the effects of own actions and makes appropriate changes as needed (CAA 3.1.1B - Accountability)
- Demonstrates professionalism (CAA 3.1.1B - Professional Duty, 3.1.6B)

### **Professional Expectations for Collaboration, Cultural-linguistic Responsivity, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Our professional competencies include ethical conduct, collaboration, cultural-linguistic responsivity, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (CFCC Standard IV-G & CAA Standards 3.1.6 & 3.4). Prior to enrollment in clinical externships, we expect students to demonstrate the ability to:

- Recognize microaggressions (from oneself and others) and demonstrate an emerging ability to respond
- Show an awareness of one's own biases
- Refrain from negative talk about co-workers 'behind their backs'
- Recognize one's own positional power (e.g., race, gender, professional role, disability status, socioeconomic differences) and how that affects others
- Lean into curiosity and cultural humility about others' differences, rather than judgement
- Seek knowledge/resources/consultation regarding less familiar cultures and identities

If faculty/staff observe any actions toward others (e.g., classmates, faculty/staff, or clients) that may be derogatory in nature, such as snickering, eyerolling, requests not to work together, exclusive and negative backchannel communications, or other behavior consistent with macroaggressions, bullying, and exclusion, we will address the person(s) responsible as soon as possible. Potential repercussions include but are not limited to a) submission of a referral to WMU Student Affairs (Student Conduct Concern), b) report to the Title IX office, c) requirement of an improvement plan that may delay externship and/or graduation, and/or d) filing of a concern with the ASHA Board of Ethics. Please see below section on Student Resources related to Interpersonal Tensions.

### **Minimum Work Requirements**

Health and safety documentation requirements differ across clinical practicum sites. Failure to meet specified requirements may delay or prohibit graduation.

## Charles Van Riper Language Speech & Hearing Clinic

The following summarizes Minimum Work Requirements (MWR) for clinical service provision within our Charles Van Riper Language Speech & Hearing Clinic, which is housed within Unified Clinics on campus. Registration for clinical practicum in the Charles Van Riper Language Speech & Hearing Clinic is associated with SLHS 6700 and begins the first semester of enrollment in the program. The following MWR must be met prior to beginning any in-person clinical practicum work:

- **National Background Check** (required through Exxat/Approve third party)
- **CPR** certification (required - must be adult/child BLS class)
- Vaccination records:
  - **Hepatitis B** (required)
  - **Measles, Mumps and Rubella MMR** (required)
  - Seasonal **influenza** (required)
  - **COVID-19** (*optional but recommended*)
  - See the below resources for more information on these vaccinations
    - [Vaccine Information Statement: Hepatitis B Vaccine - What you need to know](#)
    - [Seasonal Flu Vaccine Basics | Influenza \(Flu\) | CDC](#)
    - [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines | COVID-19 | CDC](#)
- **Personal health insurance coverage** (*optional but recommended*): for international students specifically, WMU may have health insurance resources, and information can be reviewed through the following link: <https://wmich.edu/internationaladmissions/resources/insurance>
- **Completion of Unified Clinics training**, including HIPAA, SANS (e.g., safety and security training)

Students will not be able to begin participating in services within our on-campus clinic until the above documentation has been uploaded into Exxat and verified by the CEC. Any student who has questions about Minimal Work Requirements should contact the Clinical Education Coordinator to discuss them.

## Clinical Externships

Note that clinical externship sites associated with enrollment in SLHS 7120 during the second year in the program may have additional minimal work requirements, including but not limited to: drug screenings, site-specific trainings, provision of uniform/scrubs, medical mask fitting and national background checks.

WMU students, including those in our program, must meet all work requirements and waiver processes established by those external placement sites. Failure to meet external placement site requirements may result in removal from the placement, delayed graduation and/or could deter successful graduation altogether. If a student has concerns related to meeting requirements for an external placement, please discuss these concerns as soon as possible with the Clinical Education Coordinator.

### **Evaluation of Clinical Competencies**

Clinical educational programs in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences address the knowledge and clinical skills specified in the ASHA 2020 Certification Standards ([2020 Certification Standards in Speech-Language Pathology](#)). Clinical instructors formally assess each student's demonstrated clinical competencies at midterm and at the end of the semester via Student Performance Evaluations. Students must demonstrate ongoing progress in knowledge and skill development relevant to their clinical work with a given client or client group. A student may receive credit for a clinic registration without demonstrating full competence or independence in all areas assessed. Students who do not meet all competencies in a given clinic registration will be required to complete an improvement plan in order to ultimately earn credit and/or associated contact hours for that registration.

Grading for clinical practicum is based on a 1-5 rating scale (with each numeric value defined in the Exxat Performance Evaluation template). A score of "3" or higher in a given competency area is required. A final grade is computed by the CEC, who weighs each assigned grade based on the number of clinical contact hours earned for each clinical assignment. One grade is then submitted to the Registrar. A grade equivalent to a "B" or higher (determined by the cumulative, weighted grade(s) earned across a student's clinical placements) is automatically converted to "Credit" while any grade lower converts to "No Credit." A grade lower than "B" for any clinical assignment indicates performance that falls below expectations, and clinical contact hours will not be granted in association with that assignment. Failure to earn credit for a practicum registration is likely to delay or prohibit completion of the program.

### **Dress Code and Appearance Guidelines**

Clinical guidelines for dress and physical appearance are provided in Appendix C.

### **Counting and Reporting Clinic Hours**

Students are responsible for recording all direct client/family contact time for each session toward the clinical hours they earn. Time spent in each session should be counted from initial contact to departure. This time may include contact that occurs outside of the therapy room, e.g., communication with the family/client on the way to/from the waiting room. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Council for Clinical Certification in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (CFCC) guidance on clinical practicum:

*"Only direct client contact time may be counted as clinical practicum hours. Time spent in writing lesson plans, scoring tests, transcribing language samples, preparing activities, and writing reports may not be counted."*

For more information about clinical practicum guidelines and direct contact hours, see: ([FAQs: Clinical Practicum for Certification in Speech-Language Pathology](#)) This topic will also be covered in the SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum course and with clinical instructors.

### **Continuation & Dismissal Policies**

A student's academic and clinical education status provides the basis for continuation in the graduate program. The categories of academic status as stipulated in the graduate catalog under [Academic Regulations](#) are: Good Standing, Warning, Probation, Extended Probation, Final Probation, Probation Removed, and Dismissal. Status in the program and progress toward degree completion is contingent on successful completion of academic coursework, credit hours within clinical practica, achievement of knowledge and skills tied to [2020 ASHA certification standards](#), and the [WMU student code](#). Students will be notified of changes in program status in writing by either the Department Chair or the Department Education and Coordination Committee (DECC). A copy of the notification will also be placed in the student's departmental file. Students are referred to the Graduate College for specified grounds and processes for an appeal ([Catalogs | Registrar's Office | Western Michigan University](#)).

### **Academic Standards**

Based on Academic Standards set by the Graduate Catalog; all graduate students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or better and a grade of "C" (2.0) or better in each individual course in order to continue their programs of study in good standing. If any grade below a C is submitted for the academic registration, the student will earn "no credit" for the academic course. The student must re-register for the course or experience. Receipt of a failing grade cannot be addressed through an academic improvement

plan. In addition, departmental academic standards specify that a student may re-register for one – and only one –graduate level course and must achieve a grade of “C” or better in order to continue in the program. Note that withdrawal from a course is still considered registration, and a second withdrawal or grade below a C in any course will result in dismissal from the program. In an effort to ensure that a student’s academic progress meets expectations, students on probation may not enroll in clinical practicum courses (SLHS 6700 or SLHS 7120) unless given written permission from the department chair.

In addition to grades, each graduate course is tied to specific ASHA Competencies, which should be specified in the course syllabi. Failure to meet competency standards associated with each course will result in the need for an improvement plan developed by the course instructor at the close of the semester. Details on Improvement Plans are provided in Appendix D.

### **Clinical Practicum**

Good departmental standing also requires assigned credit (tied to a cumulative score of “3” or above on Performance Evaluations) for each semester of clinical practicum tied to SLHS 6700 and SLHS 7120. A student may fail a clinical assignment or placement: (1) if they fail to demonstrate adequate clinical/professional progress as indicated by a clinical instructor’s written evaluations of the student’s clinical competencies, or (2) if a student’s performance is unsatisfactory for any client match in a given semester. In either case, performance is below expectations for the graduate program. If either of the aforementioned situations occur, an improvement plan will be developed with the student and the instructor of record under the oversight/guidance of the Clinical Education Coordinator. Referral to the Department Education and Coordination Committee may be warranted.

If a serious concern is identified in any clinical assignment by the instructor of record, the CEC’s responsibilities may include any of the following: contact the student’s assigned clinical instructors to determine if the concern is specific to one learning context or is a more general concern; schedule a meeting of all clinical instructors working with the student; meet with the concerned clinical instructor and student to review the improvement process and development of an improvement plan if necessary; and inform DECC of the concern and the improvement plan.

If the student successfully completes (passes) the clinical experience, but faculty concern remains, the CEC will consider the most appropriate action for the student given the individual circumstances.

Examples could include the following actions:

1. Schedule additional clinical practice experience to match student's need(s) and afford opportunity for growth and development of the skill area tied to the instructor's concern.
2. Create a new improvement plan to meet the student's current skills and needs. This action may include relating previous concern(s) to new clinical instructor(s) of the student.
3. Monitor student's progress in developing competencies and make a recommendation to the graduate coordinator regarding future improvement plans and clinical placements. Recommendations may include delaying off-campus placement to another semester or finding an alternative off-campus placement if the student has not demonstrated the competencies necessary for that placement.
4. If a serious concern is identified and a failing grade is submitted for the clinical registration, the student will earn No Credit and no practicum hours for that experience and the student must re-register for the experience.
5. The clinical instructor and the CEC will recommend the most appropriate action for the student, including any of the following:
  - a. Develop a long-term improvement plan.
  - b. Meet with student and new clinical instructor to review the plan.
  - c. Monitor student's progress developing competencies and make recommendation(s) to the Department Education and Coordination Committee regarding future improvement plans and clinical placements, which may include an alternative for off-campus placement if the student has not demonstrated the competencies necessary for that placement.
2. Following the development and implementation of an improvement plan, if a second failing grade occurs in a clinical registration, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program.

## **Certification Standards**

In addition to course grades, a student may be placed on probation by the department in cases where repeated improvement is needed in relation to specified ASHA Certification standards tied to both academic courses and clinical practicum. The need for an academic or clinical improvement plan does not always lead to departmental probation. Departmental probation, however, may be warranted if an improvement plan is needed in multiple registrations in a given semester, if an improvement plan has not been completed within the specified timeframe, or if there is a pattern of repeated improvement plans needed across consecutive semesters.

## **Dismissal**

Dismissal from the graduate program occurs when a student has failed to meet minimal academic, clinical/professional, and/or ethical standards. The failure to meet standards may be the result of a single incident (such as academic dishonesty or behavior which endangers or violates the rights of another professional and/or client), the result of being placed on probation and/or failing to complete an improvement plan, or if the repeated need for multiple improvement plans becomes untenable.

Recommendations for dismissal are typically reviewed by the Department of Education and Coordination Committee. Documentation and the findings are provided to the department chair for approval and implementation. Based on the Graduate Catalog, once students are dismissed or voluntarily withdraw from the program, they must apply for readmission through the normal admission process.

## **Course Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals**

Students are entitled to appeal course grades and program dismissal decisions, under certain circumstances, as specified in the Graduate Catalog, under Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students are advised that such appeal processes are time sensitive, and the Office of the Ombuds may be available to assist.

## **Student Resources**

### **Student Feedback & Concerns**

- **Anthology Course Evaluations** is one of the fundamental forms for providing anonymous feedback to faculty about their courses. These course evaluations are automated for every course with an enrollment of at least 4 students and serve as the best mechanism for anonymous feedback regarding a specific nonclinical course or instructor. Student responses are anonymous unless the student chooses to share identifying comments within the open-ended responses. The results are not made available to the instructor until *after* course grades are formally submitted. While all numerical results from the Anthology evaluation will be available to the Department Chair, the open-ended comments are only seen by the primary instructor of record unless they choose to share them.
- **Qualtrics Course Evaluations** are utilized to mimic Anthology course evaluations for clinical education, specifically SLHS 6700, due to the unique registration properties of these courses. In such cases, students are advised to ignore any automated Anthology evaluations tied to SLHS 6700 and instead complete the Qualtrics links shared by either the Clinical Education Coordinator or the Department Chair. The evaluation results are not made available to the instructor until *after* course grades are formally submitted. Student responses are anonymous unless they are the only registrant, and/or the student chooses to share identifying comments within the open-ended responses.
- **Program Exit Surveys** are administered by the Academic Program Coordinator at the end of the M.A. course of study. Exit surveys are the best venue for feedback about the program as a whole (e.g., clinical education, course sequence, overall culture). Please make the time to complete these evaluations as they are one of the few ways we obtain comprehensive and systematic feedback from all students.
- **Program-Level Concerns** can also be directed to either the Clinical Education Coordinator, Academic Program Coordinator, or Department Chair for more immediate response/resolution.
- **Interpersonal Tensions** related to an individual faculty member, externship supervisor, classmate, or other professional relationship should first be raised through interpersonal interaction directly with the involved individual(s). We view self-advocacy and conflict resolution as valuable professional skills that are essential to the community we are working to create. We also recognize that power differentials can make these dynamics especially difficult, and we can all benefit from external support in these areas from professionals trained in creating safe spaces for all and in conflict resolution strategies in particular. Students and faculty are encouraged to seek advice and support through professional counseling services (see below resources), the [University Ombuds](#) (269) 387-0718, or [Gryphon Place](#), a community-wide

resource. The natural need to vent about others is best kept outside of your cohort/professional network.

Students are also encouraged to ask their faculty advisors, clinical education coordinator, academic program coordinator, or department chair for advice in how best to self-advocate and address tensions with fellow students, faculty/staff, or externship supervisors. Together we will walk you through the departmental Self-Advocacy Support Form. However, we ask that students refrain from talking negatively about fellow students or WMU faculty members with other students or faculty members outside of this structured self-advocacy support process, as doing so does not support the sense of belonging and community we aim to provide. If the issue cannot be resolved through direct discussion between the parties involved, students are encouraged to report their concerns directly to the Departmental Chair. If a student's concern involves the department chair directly, students are encouraged to seek counsel with the University Ombuds (269) 387-0718 or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in the College of Health and Human Services.

- **Issues regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** can be addressed through any of the aforementioned processes. In addition, any concerns involving potential discrimination or harassment which violate the law, or which constitute inappropriate or unprofessional limitation of employment opportunity, University facility access, or participation in University activities, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, protected veteran status, height, weight, or marital status should be directed to the [Office of Institutional Equity](#) (269) 387-6316. The College of Health & Human Services also offers a virtual [DEI Dropbox](#), which is sent directly to the CHHS Director of DEI Office. This form is anonymous and offers an opportunity for asking DEI-related questions, making DEI-related suggestions, and reporting DEI-related concerns that you have seen or experienced anywhere on campus. You do not have to leave your name or email unless you want someone to respond.

In any case, if a student believes their complaint(s) is not being handled satisfactorily through the specified processes above, their concern may be directed to the national accrediting body, the [Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology](#).

## **Academic & Professional Support**

- [Disability Services for Students](#) (269-387-2116) aims to make education accessible and coordinates accommodation eligibility and supports for those who experience disability. Students who require accommodation are responsible for initiating the eligibility process directly with Disability Student Services. When contacting Disability Services for Students, please advise them that our program includes *both academic and clinical* components. To help guide relevant discussions about comprehensive support needs, the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders has provided an [Eligibility Requirements and Essential Functions](#) document. Although our department does not endorse all the specifications listed within this document, it provides a general reference to initiate meaningful discussions.
- [The Graduate College](#) offers a range of resources to support graduate students including but not limited to [funding opportunities](#), special circumstances such as [leave of absence](#), and details regarding [graduate assistantships](#).
- [CHHS Student Services & Success Center](#) is available to provide individualized support that includes academic advising, success coaching, & professional development.
- [The ASHA Career Portal](#) offers a fairly robust resource that covers everything from resume writing skills, to preparing for interviews, negotiating offers, etc. Resume examples representative of clinical professionals are available [here](#).
- [The Learning Resource Center](#) (LRC), located on the first floor of the College of Health and Human Services Building offers a quiet alternative for studying and assessment, student printing needs, and library resources.

### **Health, Wellness, & Equity**

- [Sindecuse Health Center](#) offers a range of services including but not limited to clinic and nursing services, nutrition, COVID-19, gender affirming care, and a range of [counseling services](#) (269) 387-3287.
- Psychology Clinic at Unified Clinics provides counseling services (269) 387-8302.
- [FIRE Place Service & Resource Center](#) for resources and support related to sexual assault.
- The Graduate College offers a range of general [wellbeing resources](#) focused on mental health.

## Appendix A

### Sample MA-SLP Course Sequence

#### Fall Year 1 - Total 11-14 credits

SLHS 4590 Neuro of CSD, 3 cr.\*  
SLHS 5530 Stuttering, 3 cr.  
SLHS 5970 Advanced Clinical Methods, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6480 Cult Responsive Practices, 2 cr.  
SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum, 3 cr.

#### Spring Year 1 - Total 12-18 credits

SLHS 4560 Rehab Aud, 3 cr.\*  
SLHS 5010 Speech Science, 3 cr.\*  
SLHS 5370 Speech Sound Disorders, 3 cr.  
SLHS 5380 Child Language Impairment, 3 cr.  
SLHS 5390 Acquired Language Disorders, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum, 3 cr.

#### Summer I Year 1 - Total 8 credits

SLHS 6150 Research Methods, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6560 Dysphagia, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum, 2 cr.

#### Summer II Year 1 - Total 8 credits

SLHS 6680 Autism, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6690 Ethics, Counseling, & Prof, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6700 Clinical Practicum, 2 cr.

#### Fall Year 2 - Total 13 credits

SLHS 6400 Voice & Related Structural Disorders, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6440 Motor Speech Disorders, 3 cr.  
SLHS 6450 Augmentative & Alternative Communication, 3 cr.  
SLHS 7120 Professional Field Experiences, 4 cr

#### Spring Year 2 – Total 4 cr.

SLHS 7120 Professional Field Experiences, 4 cr.

\*Courses that most students take as an undergraduate and do not need to repeat. However, students who have not taken these courses will need to enroll.

## Appendix B

### Sample Thesis Timeline

#### *October (1st yr)*

- Initiate discussions with one or more faculty members about potential topics
- Read sample thesis projects from MA students in Speech-Language Pathology from past 3 – 5 years
- Ask a faculty member to chair the committee
- Firm up topic (“Keep it simple” is a good rule to follow)
- Discuss research design with committee chair
- Invite at least 2 other faculty members to serve on thesis committee; submit form “Permission to Elect” to Graduate College;
- Review thesis guidelines: <https://wmich.edu/grad/current-students/dissertation>

#### *by end of April (1st yr)*

- Submit first draft of prospectus to committee chair
- Submit introductory statement and review of relevant literature
- Submit statement of specific statements or hypotheses and description of proposed methodology
- Initiate process to obtain Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approval (obtain forms on the WMU website); must receive HSIRB approval before contacting participants

#### *by end of August (2nd yr)*

- Complete “Permission to Elect” form; register for some or all of the 6 hours of credit in SLHS 7000 (these hours will be spread out over several semesters until graduation)
- Distribute draft of prospectus to committee members (at least 2 weeks before the scheduled meeting)

#### *by Sept – Oct (2nd yr)*

- Hold prospectus meeting with committee to obtain approval and advice regarding your plan
- Prepare to submit application to the Graduate Student Research Fund by Nov. 15 deadline

#### *by Nov – Dec.- Jan (2nd yr)*

- Collect data (if applicable)
- Refine Ch. 1 (Intro), Ch. 2 (Review of Lit), Ch 3 (Methodology) from prospectus, using Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Projects, and Dissertations

#### *by Jan.- Feb.-March (2nd yr) – Can extend into first summer session of second year*

- Analyze data
- Write Ch. 4 (Results) and Ch. 5 (Discussion)
- Schedule committee meeting at least one week before thesis submission due date to Graduate College
- Deliver “final” draft of thesis to committee members at least two weeks prior to Meeting
- Hold meeting and obtain committee members’ signatures of approval
- Make changes in thesis requested by committee

- Submit thesis to Graduate College; receive approval notice from Graduate College

## **Appendix C**

**Charles Van Riper Language, Speech & Hearing Clinic**  
**Dress Code and Appearance Guidelines**

The purpose of considering how we present to others is to support our ability to effectively perform within our scope of practice and to cultivate an environment of mutual respect. According to this, the questions below should be considered in decisions about personal presentation:

- Will my personal presentation support the perception of a clean and sanitary clinical environment?
- Will my clothing allow for safe and easy range of movement needed in my scope of practice?
- Will my personal presentation support positive rapport with my clients/patients?
- Will anything on my person communicate disrespect for a historically marginalized population?
- Will anything in my bodily presentation distract me or my clients/patients from working effectively?
- Have you considered potential allergies or sensitivities that might be present in persons with respiratory and/or sensory compromise (such as scented lotions, perfume, cologne)? For the health and well-being of others, we ask that you refrain from wearing any scented products while in a clinical/professional environment.

If at any time your preceptor clinical instructor has questions or concerns regarding your appearance or dress, these questions will be used to facilitate a discussion to ensure the safety and comfort of yourself, your preceptor, clinical instructor your peers and your clients.

Off campus placements are likely to follow different guidelines. The student is responsible for discussing dress code expectations with their preceptor at their respective field externship sites.

**Appendix D**

## **Improvement Plans**

Improvement plans are designed by the instructor to help students successfully meet academic and clinical competencies. The instructor will identify and discuss concern(s) with the student; measurable goals and a timeline for their completion will be developed. It is recommended that any improvement plan be completed by the end of the semester following the one in which the deficiency occurred. If either the student or the instructor fails to meet the agreed upon improvement plan, the problem will be referred to the Department Education and Coordination Committee as set forth in the following section on Procedures and Hearings. The necessity of an improvement plan may delay the course of study.

Strategies contained in an improvement plan may include, but are not limited to the following examples:

1. Structured observation of peers or professionals
2. Independent reading and/or written assignments
3. Interactions or work sessions with course instructor
4. Revising the student's schedule or reducing the course load
5. Repeating a course or a portion of a course
6. Remedial coursework in or outside of the department
7. Revision of assignments for a course
8. Leave of absence from the program

## Appendix E

### Acknowledgment of WMU SLHS Graduate Student Manual

**For those that accept admission**, please read and **initial** each of the following indicating your acknowledgment and understanding of each statement:

\_\_\_\_\_ *(initial)* I understand that, while Western Michigan University does not currently require students to have received the Covid-19 vaccine, some of the clinical sites that the program partners with for student experiences do require proof of vaccination (in addition to numerous other vaccinations and health requirements). Should an admitted student choose to not receive the Covid-19 vaccine prior to the start of classes, the program is not responsible for creating alternative learning opportunities or identifying clinical sites that do not require students to be vaccinated.

\_\_\_\_\_ *(initial)* I have reviewed and accepted the terms of the WMU CHHS Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Graduate Student Manual and will comply with the policies (and any revisions) throughout the duration of my academic program.

Students attending practice sites for their chosen profession through CHHS must meet all minimal work requirements (MWR) established by all associated practice sites. In addition to vaccines, such requirements often include health and drug screenings, OSHA and HIPAA training, and background checks. Failure to meet external placement site requirements may delay progress toward graduation and could deter successful graduation altogether. Students are responsible for arranging

Sign and return this form to Sophia Lentz at [SPPA-info@wmich.edu](mailto:SPPA-info@wmich.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date