



THE DEPARTMENT OF
Communication
Sciences & Disorders

Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology

Residential modality (**MS-Res**)
Distance-Education modality (**MS-DE**)

STUDENT MANUAL

2025-2026

*Version February 19, 2026**

**Revision of this manual is ongoing. Matriculated students should refer to the Student Community Blackboard page for the most recent version.*

**Department of Communication Sciences
ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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1 Welcome from the Chair



Welcome to COMD at the University of South Carolina! COMD offers the opportunity to learn and develop clinical and investigative skills in one of the [top 30 graduate speech-language pathology programs](#) in the US. USC has established a philosophy of students learning from exceptional master clinicians and world class researchers. In COMD, you will find teachers who are committed to developing outstanding professionals to lead in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communication disorders, and to expand our understanding of typical communication and the factors that interfere with it. You will have the opportunity to develop your clinic skills in a state-of-the-art clinic space, the [Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic](#) on the beautiful campus of the University of South Carolina.

This Student Manual provides most practical information that you will need to find your way in our Master's Program. Please note that information specific to our [on-campus modality](#) is color-coded [blue](#), and information specific to the [distance-education modality](#) is color-coded [purple](#). All other text is relevant to both modalities. More details, forms and information can be found on our website (<http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd/>), and you should of course always feel free to ask questions to the faculty and staff that are here to help and support you.

If you want an education that will challenge you and develop you to your full potential, we welcome you. We hope that you enjoy reading about us here. I look forward to meeting you in person.

[Jean Neils-Strunjas](#)

Ph.D. CCC-SLP

Professor and Chair, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

ASHA Fellow

2 Mission Statements

2.1 *University of South Carolina*

The primary mission of the University of South Carolina is the education of the state's citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and community engagement.

2.2 *Arnold School of Public Health*

The Arnold School of Public Health will improve population health and well-being by fostering innovative education and research that promotes health and healthy environments and will use that knowledge to prevent and effectively respond to disease, disability, and environmental degradation in diverse communities.

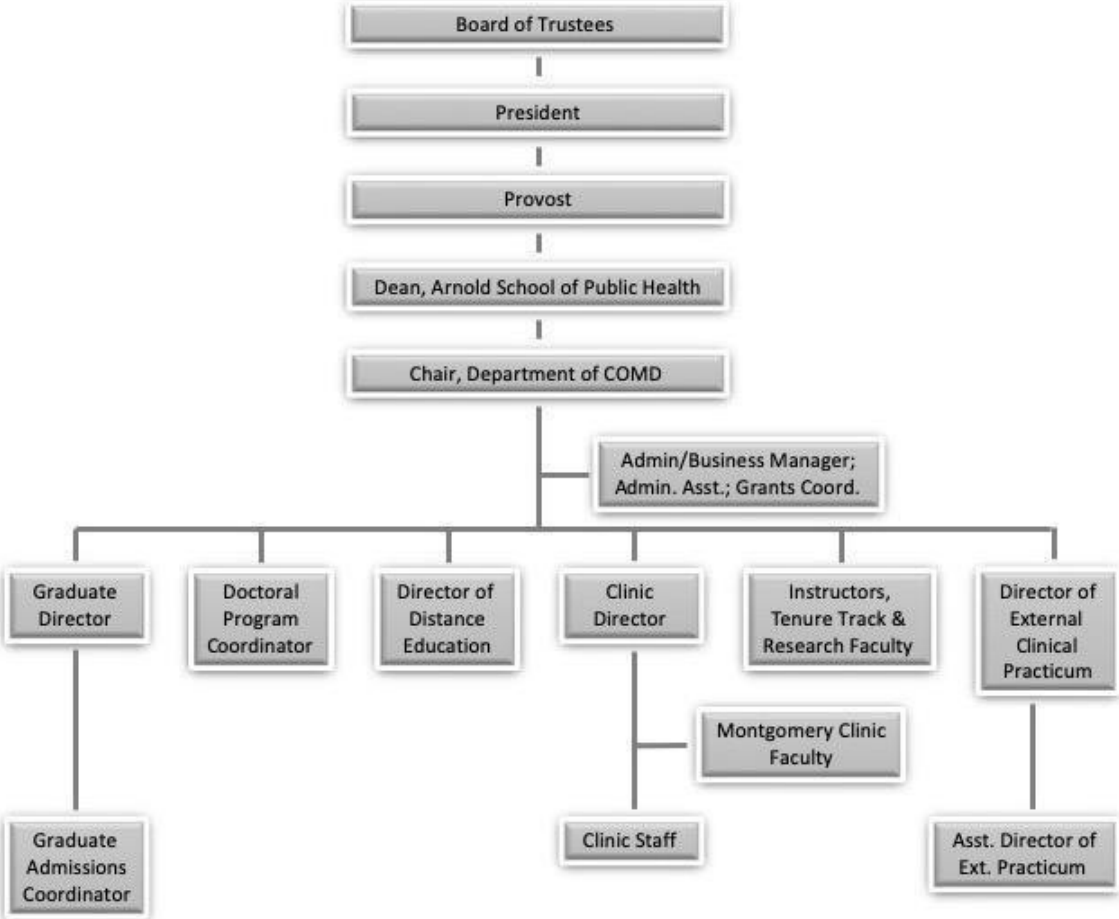
2.3 *Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders*

The mission of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is to promote and advance knowledge of the nature, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communicative and related disorders through all stages of the lifespan and across all individual backgrounds. As the leading graduate and research program in communication sciences and disorders in South Carolina and one of the leading programs in the nation, it seeks to prepare students as clinical scientists through excellence in clinical training, scientific research, instruction, and service. The department seeks to fulfill its mandate in providing an open and welcoming environment where all can develop to their highest potential.

2.4 *Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic*

The Mission of the [Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic](#) is to advance knowledge and skill in the nature, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communicative disorders. It seeks to educate students who will become leading clinical scientists and researchers in their work settings. Through excellence in instruction, research and service, the Clinic seeks to fulfill its mandate as a leading Clinic in communication disorders in South Carolina. The scope of the programming addresses the needs of the diverse community at state, national, and international levels.

3 Organizational Chart



4 Important Contacts and Addresses

4.1 Web Addresses

USC	www.sc.edu
COMD	www.sph.sc.edu/comd/
Graduate School	www.gradschool.sc.edu
Tuition and Fees	sc.edu/bursar/fees.shtml
Academic Calendars	registrar.sc.edu/html/Calendar/
Distributed Learning Support Services	www.sc.edu/dl/
Office of the Registrar	registrar.sc.edu
Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships	www.sc.edu/financialaid/
South Carolina Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SCSHA)	www.scscha.net
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)	www.asha.org
SC Department of Education	ed.sc.gov
SC Department of Educator Services (Teacher Certification)	ed.sc.gov/educators/certification/
Teacher Portal: SC Teacher Certification	https://ed.sc.gov/educators/certification/portal/
SC Board of Examiners in SLP & Audiology (LLR)	https://llr.sc.gov/aud/
Educational Testing Service (Praxis II)	www.ets.org/praxis
Council on Academic Accreditation	https://caa.asha.org/

4.2 Phone Numbers

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (COMD)	(803) 777-3643
Distributed Education & Instructional Support	(803) 777-7210
<i>(Formerly Distance Education / University Instructional Services)</i>	1-800-922-2577
The Graduate School	(803) 777-4243
Office of the Registrar	(803) 777-5555
Tuition and Fees	(803) 777-4233
Student Financial Aid & Scholarships	(803) 777-8134
South Carolina Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SCSHA)	(803) 665-3676
SC Office of Educator Services (SC Teacher Certification)	(803) 896-0325
SC Board of Examiners in SLP & Audiology (LLR)	(803) 896-4655
ASHA Action Center	
Members	1-800-498-2071
Non-Members	1-800-638-8255
Educational Testing Service (ETS)	1-609-771-7395
	1-800-772-9476
Council of Academic Accreditation (CAA)	1-301-897-0142

4.3 **Addresses**

Dept. of Communication Sciences and Disorders

University of South Carolina,
Close-Hipp Building
1705 College Street, 2nd floor
Columbia, SC 29208

Discovery I (Drs. Bonilha, Fridriksson, Den Ouden, & Matchin)

915 Greene Street, second floor
Columbia, SC 29208

Distributed Learning (*Formerly Distance Education / University Instr. Services*)

University of South Carolina
1716 College Street
Columbia, SC 29208

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

2200 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3289

South Carolina Speech-Language-Hearing Association (SCSHA)

P.O. Box 2471
Columbia, SC 29202

Office of Educator Services (Educator Certification)

S. C. Department of Education
8301 Parklane Road
Columbia, SC 29223

Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR)

Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 11329
Columbia, S.C. 29211 - 1329

Street Address:

Synergy Business Park
Kingstree Building
110 Centerview Dr. Columbia, S.C. 29210

4.4 **COMD Faculty and Staff**

Primary contacts in Program

Dr. Jean Neils-Strunjas	Department Chair	neilstj@mailbox.sc.edu	777-8114
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Dr. Beth Barnes	Graduate Director	bbarnes@mailbox.sc.edu	919-280-1063
Crystal Murphree- Holden	Director Distance Ed.	cmholden@mailbox.sc.edu	777-1170/803- 238-7198
Dr. Heather Bonilha	Doctoral Program Coordinator	hbonilha@mailbox.sc.edu	

Juliana Miller	Director External Clinical Practicum	miller39@mailbox.sc.edu	777-2628
Teresa Boyett	Graduate Admissions Coordinator	tboyett@sc.edu	777-3080

Clinical Faculty, Research Faculty, & Other Staff

Updated contact info for all faculty and staff can be found at:

https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/faculty-staff/index.php?search=Communication%20Sciences%20and%20Disorders

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Carrie Austin	carrieaustin@sc.edu
Tania Canty	tc59@mailbox.sc.edu
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Traci Williams	theresaw@mailbox.sc.edu

5 Our Philosophy

5.1 The Clinical Scientist

The faculty in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders have adopted the goal of helping graduate students develop into clinical scientists – individuals who are curious, problem-solving, critical thinkers. Specifically, we believe a clinical scientist is one who:

- Is curious and asks questions
- Has the skills to find information and judge its value
- Appreciates and reads scientific research
- Is a critical and informed consumer of evidence, scientific or otherwise
- Applies the scientific method in all situations
- Views clinic and research as integrated
- Is not tied to a checklist, kit, or program
- Sees evaluation as objective, quantitative, and measurable
- Observes all behaviors, not just test behaviors
- Understands intensity, frequency, and duration variables as aspects of the treatment approach
- Has a theory of learning that guides treatment (e.g., social-interactionist vs. behaviorist)
- Understands the global context for a specific goal
- Considers the patient's perspective
- Informs patient and families of the rationale for a clinical approach
- Understands that evaluation drives treatment which drives evaluation
- Knows the difference between intervention approaches and intervention materials
- Evaluates outcomes and shares outcomes
- Is comfortable with the "gray zone"
- Is solid in his/her convictions (i.e., able to argue a case, defend ideas, or question others' ideas)
- Is a collaborator
- Is a life-long learner

We believe these traits we have listed are essential to have as a clinical scientist and to be successful in the field of speech-language pathology. Although we as faculty are individuals who approach teaching with different styles and strategies, at our core, we are dedicated to helping and encouraging you to acquire these traits so that you become a clinical scientist. Our expectation is that you will strive to acquire these traits in all class and clinical experiences.

5.2 Statement on Learning in COMD

Our department's mission is to train the next generation of clinical scientists in the field of speech-language pathology. The scope of this training has been previously described in the COMD 745 Course Syllabus (Dan Fogerty, 2014):

As a speech-language pathologist, you will be faced with challenging clinical cases that you have never encountered before. In order to provide treatment, you must understand the normal processes involved, identify the breakdown that has occurred, and formulate a plan to target that breakdown based upon a theoretical

and clinical understanding of the impairment. This requires a high-level analysis of fundamental processes that goes beyond memorizing facts or concepts. It requires developing a scientific framework for approaching clinical cases.

A clinical scientist is a lifelong learner, whose career begins upon entering our program. We expect that students training to become clinical scientists will develop these traits through classroom and clinical experiences:

- **Curiosity:** A clinical scientist is curious and regularly asks questions.
- **Critical thinking:** A clinical scientist is a critical and informed consumer of evidence, who has the skills to find information and judge its value.
- **Evidence-Based Practice:** A clinical scientist integrates the best scientific evidence with clinical experience and client and caregiver values to provide the highest quality services. Therefore, a clinical scientist is not tied to a particular checklist, kit, or program.

In graduate school, learning involves action from both the instructor and the learner. The instructor's responsibility is to facilitate and scaffold learning by providing information (through lectures, readings, supervision, etc.), learning opportunities (e.g., through listening, observing, practicing, reviewing, and testing), and critical feedback on performance. The student's responsibility is to be engaged in learning both in and out of class and clinic and to request feedback and assistance as needed.

Faculty as Instructors

In order to facilitate the development of students as clinical scientists, we have the following expectations for our academic and clinical faculty:

1. Instructors must provide students, who are developing clinical scientists, with both the foundational sciences of the profession and the scientific method. These tools help provide a problem-solving framework to guide future clinical decisions and help protect students from Falling prey to non-evidence based clinical gimmicks. It is our responsibility to ensure that students are knowledgeable of theory and research in the field.
2. Instructors must provide students with the most relevant and updated information in the specific content areas of the courses we teach. This content will be provided through lectures, readings, assignments, and projects.
3. Instructors should strive to make connections between academic coursework and application to clinical practice as explicit as possible. We believe that all of the material in all of our courses is applicable to assessment/intervention; however, course content may not always directly apply to planning an assessment or intervention session. Providing high quality clinical services requires much more knowledge and skills than selecting activities for a session; it requires a level of understanding that comes about when students and faculty together identify and strengthen the bridge between the classroom and the clinic.
4. It is the instructor's responsibility to help students develop into the best clinical scientists possible. This means providing genuine feedback, designed to help students optimize their education. Therefore, at times, we provide feedback/comments/grades that may be interpreted as less than positive. Although we strive to encourage a positive and professional learning environment, some interactions may be uncomfortable. However, our goal is always the same: to help our students be the best they can be.

Students as Learners

While the academic and clinical faculty are responsible for facilitating students' development as clinical scientists, learning is ultimately the responsibility of the students themselves. Therefore, we have the following expectations for COMD students as learners:

1. Students must remain engaged both in and out of class. They should complete assigned readings and come to class prepared to ask questions or discuss topics.
2. Students should be self-initiators in their learning. Learners may not be aware of what they don't know if they haven't yet evaluated their own knowledge. Therefore, we believe students should be testing themselves as a means of improving learning and retention.
3. Students should actively request assistance when they don't understand. We encourage students to ask informed questions, which signal that they have already attempted to solve the problem on their own. Informed questions seek clarification, additional information, and/or additional understanding and application.
4. Developing a deeper understanding of some concepts requires students to "get their hands dirty." Assignments and projects are designed to develop that understanding. Diving into these experiences with the goal of enriching your knowledge, as well as seeking out opportunities beyond the class and the clinic are traits of the developing clinical scientist.

We believe our program should be a rigorous program to provide students the best preparation they can receive to provide clients the best clinical care and to advance the clinical standards of our profession. We are educating students to be cutting edge, the best in the field. So, students will be challenged repeatedly, and instructors will be providing feedback and guidance to rise to those challenges. We expect that going through our curriculum will require students to adapt and learn (i.e., become a clinical scientist), and we strive to recruit to our program students who have a strong desire for lifelong growth. Instructors will tell students when they are doing well, but students also should expect to hear "work on this" or "you can improve in this area" a lot more than "great job" or "that's exactly right," especially in the first terms of the program. We expect students to solicit and embrace such feedback and use it constructively.

Summary

In summary, we believe strongly that the education of cutting-edge clinical scientists requires faculty to be rigorous in our instruction (providing current theoretical, research, and clinical information), and in our expectations. We support our students as they actively engage in that learning process, beginning when they enter our graduate program, and continuing throughout their professional careers.

6 COMD Academic Requirements and Policies

This section outlines academic policies pertaining to the graduate program in COMD. Please note that in case of contradiction between policies stated in this student manual and Graduate School policy, the Graduate School policy takes precedence, except where Department policies are more 'strict' than Graduate School policies (as, for example, on academic progression requirements). For details of the Graduate School policies, please see the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#).

The Master of Science (MS) education program in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of South Carolina is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard, #310, Rockville, MD 20850, 800-498-2071 or 301-296-5700.

6.1 One Degree – Two Modalities

The Master of Science (MS) in Speech-Language Pathology is offered in two modalities, residential (**MS-Res**) and via distance education (**MS-DE**)*. The **MS-DE** degree has a part-time, three- or four-year curriculum (depending on undergraduate background), offered through distance learning. The **MS-Res** degree has a full-time, on-campus, two-year curriculum. Both paths towards the MS degree in Speech-Language Pathology are equally challenging and require significant academic and personal commitment to be successful. The **MS-DE** and **MS-Res** degrees are comparable in curricula and differ only in course sequence, mode of delivery, and in the part-time versus full-time aspect of student status. Although we offer **two modalities**, there is only **one master's program** in Speech-Language Pathology in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of South Carolina, offering **one MS degree**.

* Before Fall 2019, we offered two separate degrees, the Master's in Speech Pathology (MSP), equivalent to our current residential modality (**MS-Res**) and the Master's in Communication Disorders (MCD), equivalent to our current distance-ed modality (**MS-DE**). Therefore, these terms may still be found on older documents. **All students who graduate from our Master's program after August 2020 will be graduating with the MS degree.**

6.2 COMD Completion Rates

Current COMD completion rates (Praxis and graduation rates) **continue to exceed 95%**. More information can be found under 'Student Outcomes' on the [COMD website](#).

6.3 Prerequisite Course Requirements

College transcript credits in each of the following areas are the required prerequisites for admission into Communication Sciences and Disorders (COMD) at the University of South Carolina (no exceptions). These are based on [certification standards from the CFCC](#) (Council for Clinical Certification):

- Statistics
- Social/Behavioral Science (Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, etc.)
- Biological Science (Biology, Human Anatomy, Physiology, etc.)
- Physics or Chemistry

Coursework in the areas of biological sciences, physical sciences, social/behavioral sciences, and statistics *cannot* be related to speech-language pathology, audiology, communication sciences, hearing sciences, or logopedia unless they fulfill a university general education requirement and are available to students who are not majoring in communication sciences and disorders (CSD).

6.4 Graduate Program Learning Outcomes (CAA)

1. At graduation, our master's students will be able to **demonstrate characteristics of clinical scientists**, such as appreciating and reading the scientific literature, viewing clinic and research as integrated, and understanding their roles as life-long learners.

This goal directly ties into our mission statement, which states that the Department "seeks to educate students who will become leading clinical scientists."

2. At graduation, our master's students will have been **involved in a research project** so as to further advance the field's knowledge in an area of communication and/or communication disorders.

This goal directly ties into our mission statement, which states that one charge of the Department is to "advance knowledge of the nature, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of communicative disorders."

3. At graduation, our master's students will have **provided clinical services** to individuals in need of speech, language, hearing and/or swallowing assessment or intervention at a minimum of three different community settings.

This goal directly ties into our mission statement, which states that the "scope of the program reflects the broader communities (state, national, and international) it seeks to serve."

6.5 Sequenced Programs of Study

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders offers one MS degree in two modalities, **MS-Res** (full-time on campus) or **MS-DE** (part-time through distance education). Students are admitted to **one modality** only.

6.5.1 General Requirements

The general requirements for the MS degree in COMD are:

1. A program of study in accordance with the academic and clinical requirements set forth by the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders;
2. Completion of all degree requirements within a six-year period (or courses need to be revalidated by the Graduate School); and
3. Residence and other general requirements as established by the Graduate School of the University, and in accordance with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). There is no foreign language requirement of final comprehensive examination.

6.5.2 Students with a Background in Speech-Language Pathology

- **MS-Res:** For students with an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication disorders discipline), the **MS-Res** curriculum begins in the Fall term, requires two years (6 terms), and is offered only as a full-time degree.
- **MS-DE:** For students with an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication disorders discipline), the **MS-DE** curriculum begins in the Summer term, requires three-years (10 terms), and is offered only as a part-time degree.

6.5.3 Students without a Background in Speech-Language Pathology

- **MS-Res:** For students without an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication disorders discipline) but with a bachelor's degree in another major, the **MS-Res** curriculum begins in the Summer term, requires two years (5 terms) and is offered only as a full-time degree program.
- **MS-DE:** For students without an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology (or a communication disorders discipline) but with a bachelor's degree in another major, the **MS-DE** curriculum begins Fall term, requires four-years (12 terms) and is offered only as a part-time degree program. With the addition of observation and background course work to the program of study, the part-time degree path for students without a background in speech extends to a four-year program.

6.5.3.1 Background Courses

Four (4) background courses have been included in the curriculum for students without an undergraduate degree in communication disorders, speech-language pathology, or speech and hearing science. These four background courses **do not** have to be completed prior to application and are **not required for admission** into the master's program but need to be completed before students begin the core MS curriculum, with a **minimum grade of B** in each course.

1. COMD 501: Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism
2. COMD 507: Phonetics
3. COMD 570: Introduction to Language Development
 - a. *Prerequisite: COMD 501 and 507, or instructor permission*
4. COMD 526: Articulation Disorders
 - a. *Prerequisite: COMD 501 and 507*

Applicants who earned grades **lower than a B** for any of these courses prior to their application to our program will have to apply as students **without a background** and retake the course **with us** before proceeding in the program to the core master's degree coursework.

MS-Res students without a speech-pathology background complete these background courses in their first Summer term.

MS-DE students without a speech-pathology background complete COMD J501 and J507 in the Fall term and COMD J570 and J526 in the Spring term of their first year.

6.5.4 Clinical Observations

A minimum of 25 hours of clinical observations with a CCC-SLP must be obtained. **MS-Res students without a background complete all these hours during their first Summer term. MS-DE students without a background spread out these hours over 3 Summer terms.** A student **with** an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology, speech and hearing science or communication sciences and disorders who did NOT complete 25 hours of clinical observations as a requirement of their undergraduate program, must complete three (3) term hours of COMD 560: Observation in Speech-Language Pathology (**spread over 3 terms for MS-DE students**). Participation in these guided, clinical observation experiences are ONLY permitted **after being admitted** into the COMD program at USC. COMD 560 may NOT be taken as a non-degree student. All guided clinical observation experiences must be completed prior to beginning the first clinical practicum experience in the core curriculum.

6.5.5 Courses

Courses recommended by the Department may be grouped into one of three general categories, as follows:

1. *The normal processes of speech, hearing and language:*
 - COMD 501** Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism
 - COMD 507** Language Theory and Phonetics
 - COMD 570** Introduction to Language Development (Acquisition of Language)
 - COMD 745** Introduction to Speech Science and Acoustic Measurement

2. *The nature of communicative disorders and the principles of their management (Speech Pathology):*
 - COMD 526** Articulation Disorders
 - COMD 560** Observation in Speech-Language Pathology
 - COMD 700** Advanced Seminar in Speech Sound Disorders
 - COMD 701** Stuttering: Evaluation and Therapy
 - COMD 704** Disorders of Voice: Evaluation and Therapy
 - COMD 705** Language and Speech Disorders in Adults
 - COMD 706** Preschool Language and Literacy Development/Disorders
 - COMD 707** Clinical Evaluation in Communicative Disorders
 - COMD 715** Augmentative Communication: Assessment and Intervention
 - COMD 720** School-Age Language and Literacy Development/Disorders
 - COMD 721** Cognitive Disorders and Rehabilitation
 - COMD 722** Feeding and Swallowing Disorders
 - COMD 727** Advanced Study of Literacy for Speech-Language Pathologists
 - COMD 754** Aural Habilitation of Children
 - COMD 772** Practicum in Speech Pathology
 - COMD 774** Internship in Speech Pathology

3. *Related areas of study in ethics, professionalism and research:*
 - COMD 717** Professional Issues
 - COMD 790** Intro to Research in Speech Pathology and Audiology
 - COMD 799** Thesis Preparation

In addition to these courses, the program offers elective courses that vary each year, for example on autism, multicultural issues in speech-language pathology, linguistics, counseling, cochlear implants, etc.

6.5.6 Program of Study

The Graduate School requires that students complete a Program of Study (POS) in addition to other steps that must be taken as part of their degree program.

1. Candidates for the master's degree should file a POS during their first term of study and in no case file them later than the term following the completion of their first 12 hours. A program of study is a formal agreement that protects the student in the event of unexpected curriculum or faculty changes. Although formal programs are binding, they can be modified by program adjustments.
2. Program adjustments are utilized when a student deviates from their approved POS. The procedure for change is similar to that of filing the original POS and usually requires the same series of signatures.

6.5.7 Credit Transfer or Substitution

At the time of admission, or no later than the beginning of the first term of enrollment, a COMD student may submit a request to approve a graduate course(s) for transfer credits taken at another institution or substitute credit from within USC as part of the student's graduate program of study. This process must follow the Graduate School's policy for transfer or substitute credit and is subject to approval by the COMD Graduate Director. No more than 18 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into the MS program. Only credits with grades of B or better (equivalent to a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale) may be transferred from another institution into any graduate degree program. Course work transferred for credit toward a Master's degree, Graduate Certificate or Specialist Program must be from an accredited institution and must be no more than six years old at the time of graduation.

6.5.8 Course Sequence

Students are not permitted to modify the curriculum sequence for the purpose of expediting graduation. The curriculum sequence must be followed as the courses are scheduled by the Department each year.

6.6 *Clinical Placement Requirements*

In addition to the academic requirements, students have required and optional clinical practicum placements. Upon completion of the degree, each student will have acquired a minimum of 375 supervised clock hours of clinical practicum, satisfied the requirements for clinical skill acquisition, obtained experience in a school, and in an adult setting.

6.7 *Master's Thesis in Speech-Language Pathology*

During the **Spring term of their first year**, students will decide whether or not to write a Master's thesis.

1. **MS-DE students** who are considering whether to write a thesis must notify the Director of Distance Education by the end of the Spring term of the first year. A special conference

will be arranged with the student, Graduate Director, Department Chair, and Director of Distance Education to discuss thesis options and advisement modifications that must be made to the student's program of study.

2. **MS-DE students** who do not write a thesis will follow the **MS-DE** curriculum as advised.

A Master's thesis is an independent piece of scholarly research pursued by a student in addition to the academic and clinical requirements for the **MS-Res/MS-DE** curriculum. Students who are interested in participating in the thesis option should seek a professor to direct the thesis preparation. Advanced students with specific interest in pursuing scientific research must obtain the consent and commitment from a departmental faculty member, who is approved by the Graduate School, to direct a thesis. According to the Graduate Bulletin, research and clinical faculty who hold the terminal degree may chair thesis committees, with the approval of the unit (in our case, ASPH) and the Graduate School. Master's thesis committees shall consist of at least three faculty members from the Department (one member of the three may be from another department if necessary, for the conduct of the thesis). Committee members have to be from the Columbia campus, and if they are not Regular or Associate Graduate Faculty, they can serve only with permission from the Department and from the Dean of the Graduate School (for example, postdocs, or clinical faculty who are not AGF). **The committee shall meet with the student to approve a prospectus and for a one-hour oral defense of the thesis prior to final acceptance.** To receive credit for the thesis, students must register for COMD 799 for at least three (3) hours, usually in the Spring term before graduation. Students approved to pursue the thesis program are expected to make continuous progress towards the work's completion. It is the student's responsibility to meet all deadlines.

For **MS-Res** students, the following timetable should be followed in order to graduate by August of the student's second year of the master's program. Individual faculty mentors may have additional timeline requirements:

1. Spring of the first year: Student selects a topic area and chooses a thesis committee. Committee includes the faculty mentor and two additional faculty members. Student begins literature review, if applicable.
2. September of second year: Student turns in a prospectus of his/her thesis (a research proposal). Typically, this prospectus is the first two chapters/sections of the thesis (i.e., the introduction and method). With consultation from the committee chair/faculty mentor, the student sends out the prospectus to the committee members and schedules a prospectus meeting. At the prospectus meeting, the student provides a presentation of the proposed study and then receives questions and feedback on the proposed study and the prospectus document from the committee members. When the prospectus document is passed by the committee, the student begins study procedures.
3. Spring of second year: First draft of thesis is due to thesis director.
4. Mid-July of second year: Thesis defense: In consultation with the committee chair/faculty mentor, the student sends the committee members the completed thesis and schedules a defense date. Two weeks before the defense date, the committee chair notifies the department faculty of the defense. At the defense, all faculty and students are allowed to attend the student's presentation. After the student presentation, non-committee members are dismissed, and the student receives questions from the committee members. After questions are complete, the committee determines whether the student passes his/her thesis. Upon approval of the thesis (passing the thesis defense), student submits the thesis to the Graduate School.

The final printing of the thesis, to meet **Graduate School requirements**, should be conducted on the student's own time and at the student's expense. Under no circumstances should departmental secretaries, nor their equipment, be used to provide assistance during University

business hours. Furthermore, the Department's photocopy machines are not to be used to make copies of any portion of the thesis.

Graduate students considering a thesis are required to read the Graduate School's regulations for a master's thesis before making a commitment. **Detailed information on requirements (including title page format, deadlines, content, specific formatting issues and cost) is available on the [Graduate School Website](#)**

*The Graduate School requires that all students completing a thesis to **complete a preliminary check by the Program Coordinator** in the Graduate School office. The Graduate School recommends that this check be done before any defense. Students should contact the Graduate School at 777-4243 for the name of the Program Coordinator (the function rotates).*

6.8

6.9 **Academic Requirements for Progression in the Program / Policy on Grades**

1. Students entering the program in the Summer term (**MS-Res**), or in the Fall term (**MS-DE**) to complete background courses **cannot continue** in the program if they earn **below a "B"** in any of these courses. (Dept. Policy)
2. Students pursuing a graduate degree in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders **may not receive more than 11 credit hours of grades below "B"**. Upon earning the twelfth (12th) credit hour of C+ or below, the student becomes academically ineligible to continue in the program. It should be noted that this academic requirement is more stringent than that of the Graduate School, which requires only that the students maintain an overall graduate grade point average of 3.0. (Dept. Policy)
3. Graduate courses may be passed for degree credit with a grade as low as a "C", but **the student's average on all courses attempted for graduate credit must be at least "B"** (3.00 on a 4-point system). Additionally, the student's average on all courses numbered 700 or above must be no less than 3.0. Grades earned on credits transferred from other universities do not count in the grade point average. (Grad. School Policy)
4. If a graduate student earns a "C" or lower in any course, including clinical practicum, we reserve the right to restrict and/or postpone clinical practicum assignments, which potentially could affect the student's date of graduation. (Dept. Policy)
5. If a graduate student earns a grade lower than a C in any course, then she or he must retake the course. (Grad. School Policy)
6. Satisfactory Grades/Performance in COMD 772: To remain eligible for practicum, students must maintain satisfactory performance. Specifically, students who receive a final grade in COMD 772 that is below C during two consecutive or non-consecutive semesters will be discontinued from subsequent practicum participation. This policy is in place to ensure students possess the foundational knowledge necessary for clinical competency and successful program completion. (Dept. Policy)

6.10 **Course Participation Requirements**

According to the Graduate School, course instructors have complete autonomy over their course requirements. This includes the participation and attendance policy, grading scale, make-up tests, assignments.

Occasionally, professional meetings will overlap with test or assignment due dates. The

Department, with its focus on educating students to be clinical scientists, supports students' research presentations at state or national professional conferences. Given that students often submit research proposals a term or more before the conference dates, it may be that students are notified of an accepted presentation at a scholarly conference before the beginning of a term. In that case, students need to inform their instructors by the second week of the term about their presentation commitment and the dates of their absence for that conference. Should that absence affect course requirements (e.g., tests, assignments, class participation), students should work with the course instructor to make-up the missed work, preferably before the course absence. Should a student wish to attend a professional conference but is not presenting, the student should always **request permission** from their course instructor to submit an assignment or take a test at an alternate time prior to making any arrangements to attend a conference or workshop. In all cases, the granting of an excused absence, even for conference attendance, remains at the discretion of the instructor.

6.11 Policy Regarding Medical/General Leave & Return

Admission to the program in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is highly competitive and valid **only for the entry date specified** in both the student's application to graduate school and subsequent letter of acceptance. Each student is admitted to one of a limited number of slots in an entering class. Students who, for whatever reason, fail to begin graduate studies during the specified term, relinquish their slot and will need to reapply for admission to another slot in the program during another year. To ensure correct sequencing of courses, all students admitted to the MS program follow a prescribed curriculum. During the course of study, should a student find it necessary to interrupt graduate work for non-extenuating circumstances (see below), he/she reapplies for admission for another slot in another year. If the student is re-admitted, re-entry into the program coincides with the point of exit to ensure that all courses are taken in the proper sequence. Each year, the Department Admissions Committee reviews the total pool of applicants to fill available slots. It is possible that a student admitted to the program one year may not be admitted during a different year after withdrawing, due to the variations in overall quantity and quality of applicants.

Students who have been approved to **withdraw for extenuating circumstances** through the Graduate School (medical reasons or other acceptable causes) do not have to reapply to the program when they return. They can return to the program when it is both the student's and the program's determination that the student is ready to return.

Any student that returns to the program after a withdrawal will be bound by the curriculum that is in place at the time of his/her return to the program. Likewise, students that return after a withdrawal will be bound by the *Standards and Implementation Procedures for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology*, as determined by the Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CFCC), in place at the time of their return to the program.

6.12 Maintenance of Student Records Policy

Academic and Clinical Records will be maintained for a minimum of seven (7) years.

6.13 Verification of Identity for Students (Departmental Requirement)

1. At the initial orientation, all students must present an original government-issued ID (driver's license or passport) to verify their identify at the time of check-in.
2. All students are required to provide a legible photocopy of their government-issued photo ID (driver's license or passport) to be placed in their student file.
3. All students are required to have a USC student photo ID made on the day of orientation. This ID must be worn during all student observations and in all clinical practicum placements to identify them as a USC-COMD student.
4. When a student is required to visit a testing center for a proctored paper exam, the student photo ID should be presented for student verification.
5. The student's USC student ID photo is available to instructors in *BlackBoard* to provide digital photo rosters that can be used for student verification.

6.14 Criminal Background Checks

All Graduate Students accepted into the program are required to complete Federal criminal background check (to include their state of residence and the state of South Carolina) upon entering the program. The following policy applies to criminal background checks for graduate students:

1. All students are required to order the "Background Check & Clinical Requirements Tracker Package" through *CastleBranch* (<https://castlebranch.com/>) and create a secure MyCB account **prior to entering the program**.
2. Once the MyCB account is created, the student will follow instructions to complete requirements for the background check **prior to entering the program**.
3. Criminal background check reports are stored by *CastleBranch* through a secure, online portal. When a student is assigned to a practicum site, a statement is provided that the student has completed and passed a criminal background check to be eligible to participate in clinical practicum. If a specific request is made to obtain the student's individual criminal background check, the graduate student may download and provide the report directly to the facility. Copies of the student's criminal background checks are ONLY provided to practicum sites by the Department with the express written permission of the student.
 - a. *NOTE: The external site makes the final decision on accepting a practicum student at the facility for practicum. If a facility does not accept a student, the Department will attempt to place the student in another practicum site. If the student cannot complete practicum, the student is typically advised that completion of the program in COMD may not be possible as practicum is a requirement for graduation.*
4. **All students** participate in clinical practicum in **different settings**. After initial background checks are completed, a practicum administrator will review the initial background check reports with "alerts", to determine if any alerts are due to minor offenses (i.e. speeding/traffic citations) or if criminal convictions (or criminal activity) are reported, needing further review. If criminal activity and/or criminal convictions are reported, the practicum administrator will notify the following individuals: **Department Chair and Director**

of Distance Education (**MS-DE Students**) and Department Chair and Director of the Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic (**MS-Res Students**).

- a. **MS-DE students** - The Department Chair and Director of Distance Education. This committee will review criminal background reports for **MS-DE** students with “alerts”. If a conviction is present, the Department Chair and Director of Distance Education determine if the student can participate in practicum. The student is notified by the end of the first term in the program if a change is to occur. *NOTE: MS-DE students DO NOT participate in clinical practicum until the second Summer in the program.*

Appeals: If the student wishes to appeal the decision, the student files a written appeal to the Department Chair to be reviewed by the Appeals Review Committee.

The **MS-DE Student Appeals Committee** consists of the Department Chair, the Director of the Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, and the Director of External Clinical Practicum. The student is notified within 15 days from the notice of appeal of the committee’s decision. **This decision is final.**

- b. **MS-Res students** - The Department Chair and Director the Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic. This committee will review criminal background reports for **MS-Res** students with “alerts”. If a conviction is present, the Department Chair and Director of the Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic will determine if the student can participate in practicum. The student is notified within 15 days of the initial date of practicum if a change is to occur.

Appeals: If the student wishes to appeal the decision, the student files a written appeal with the Department Chair to be reviewed by the Appeals Review Committee. This **MS-Res Student Appeals Committee** consists of the Department Chair, the Director of Distance Education and the Director of External Clinical Practicum. The committee reviews the Department’s decision and the student is notified within 15 days from the notice of appeal of the committee’s decision. **This decision is final.**

5. **MS-Res and MS-DE students** may be assigned for practicum at the **Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic**. The Clinic is a rehabilitation agency licensed by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control. Therefore, the Chair only notifies the Clinic Director if a concern arises. The Clinic Director does not routinely review the background checks on every student. If a conviction is present, the Clinic Director and the Chair of the Department determine if the student can participate in practicum. The student is notified within 15 days of the initial date of practicum if a change is to occur. If the student wishes to appeal the decision, the student files a written appeal with the Department Chair to be reviewed by the Appeals Review Committee. The Appeals Review Committee consists of the **Department Chair, the Director of Distance Education and Director of External Clinical Practicum (for MS-Res students)** and the **Department Chair, the Director of the Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and Director of External Clinical Practicum (for MS-DE students)**. The committee reviews the Department’s decision and the student is notified within 15 days from the notice of appeal of the committee’s decision. **This decision is final.**

6.15 Communicating with Faculty and Peers

Students are to communicate with faculty by phone or the USC e-mail system only. Personal e-mail accounts are never to be used to communicate with USC faculty and staff. Faculty members should always be addressed appropriately, both verbally and in written communication. Professional salutations should always be used. Examples of appropriate salutations are, for example, "Hello Dr. Barnes" versus "Hey" or "Hey Dr. B, what's up?". Also, be sure to use a professional valediction to close your e-mail message appropriately such as "Sincerely" or "Best", etc. and always include your full name. Other e-mail etiquette tips include: 1) Always include a clear, direct subject line; 2) Use exclamation points sparingly; 3) Be cautious with humor and casual language such as "What do ya think about that?" and 4) Check your e-mail messages daily and reply to them in a timely manner. Never wait longer than 24-48 hours without checking your USC e-mail.

Text messaging is only allowed by permission of the faculty member. Any communication with a faculty member should be specific to course requirements and performance, advisement, research interests or any issue that may be interfering with a student's ability to be successful in the program. It is **not appropriate to send social media friend requests to faculty members**. Interactions other than those stated above are a violation of the USC Student Code of Conduct (see 9.1) and the ASHA Code of Ethics (see 11.5), both of which students are expected to follow. Interactions among students should be supportive and conducive to a positive learning environment in the clinic, classrooms, labs, and student workspaces. We encourage students to form friendships, however, please be aware that some topics may be best for private conversations.

6.16 Assistantship Policy

It is long standing policy in the Department that all assistantship work hours are to be **scheduled around classes and practicum assignments**. Graduate students are encouraged to accept assistantships that require **no more than 10 hours of work per week**. Practicum cannot be scheduled to accommodate your assistantship. If your assistantship lacks flexibility and requires that you work specific hours that may possibly coincide with practicum times, you will be unable to keep that assistantship. If you have any questions regarding this policy, contact the Graduate Director before discussing the situation with your academic or clinical advisor. Students typically **cannot work as Teaching Assistants**, as these require a set time during the week to work.

6.17 **Advisement**

1. New students will be advised at their initial Orientation Meeting before their first academic term. At this meeting, students must fill out Advisement Forms, which include course numbers and current CRN codes. This information is provided at the meeting. Advisement forms are subject to approval by the Graduate Director {for MS-Res) and by the Director of Distance Education {for MS-DE)/ No student may register until they have completed this step and have been cleared to register.
2. **MS-DE Students:**
 - a. **MS-DE** students will have the Director of Distance Education as their **Academic Advisor**.
 - b. All **MS-DE** students **must attend a mandatory Advisement meeting** each Fall and Spring term.
 - c. “Long distance” students who live **more than 4 hours driving distance** from Columbia are not required to travel to Columbia for advisement but must participate in live advisement remotely or by phone conference with the Director of Distance Education. Advisement materials will be distributed to “long distance” **MS-DE** students after the live advisement meeting.
 - d. Pending unknown circumstances, students will be notified at each advisement of the next 1-2 advisement dates, to facilitate advance planning and scheduling. Attempts are always made to provide advisement dates to **MS-DE** students 6 months to 1 year in advance whenever possible to avoid personal conflicts.
 - e. **MS-DE clinical advisement** may take place concurrently with each term’s scheduled academic advisement or virtually in preparation for scheduled practicum semesters. Juliana Miller, Director of External Clinical Practicum, serves as clinical advisor to **MS-DE** students following completion of the first Summer practicum / speech camp. Crystal Murphree-Holden, Director of Distance Education, serves as clinical administrator and makes arrangements for the first Summer clinical practicum / speech camp experiences for **MS-DE** students.
 - f. The following information is reviewed and forms are completed during each **MS-DE** advisement meeting:
 - i. Review of Policies and Procedures, especially those that impact students’ progression in the program (grades, formative assessment. academic and clinical remediation, etc.);
 - ii. Review of any new, or policy and procedure changes;
 - iii. Review of protocol for site observations, practicum conduct, communicating with faculty, etc.;
 - iv. Review of any changes to course sequence (order), if any;
 - v. Elicit group feedback and individual feedback (via completed form) on COMD program via distance education;
 - vi. Academic advisement sheets signed for course and practicum registration;
 - vii. **MS-DE** student contact update forms completed to maintain current student information;
 - viii. Clinical advisement overview by Director of External Clinical Practicum for groups with exception of students in background classes and first year core courses. The Director of Distance Education provides clinical advisement overview for first year **MS-DE** students;
 - g. Students are to schedule their **end of the term vacation** not based solely on their academic course and exam schedule but also on their clinical schedule.

3. **MS-Res Students:**
 - a. Every **MS-Res** student admitted to a degree program is assigned to an **Academic Advisor** (**MS-Res** students will be provided information about advisor assignment or advisement procedures by the Graduate Director).
 - b. Academic Advisement occurs twice a year, once in the Spring term (for Summer and Fall terms) and once in the Fall term (for Spring term). Students will be notified when the meetings will take place.
 - c. Students are also assigned a **Clinical Advisor**. Clinical advisement may occur anytime throughout the term as needed. Students are encouraged to make appointments for any questions or issues that may arise concerning their clinical practicum performance.
 - d. Students are to schedule their **end of the term vacation** based not only on their academic course and exam schedule but also on their **clinical advisement schedule** which takes place **the week after the official last day of classes**. The day and time vary, depending on other department functions. Students are notified of the clinical advisement schedule two weeks prior to the end of classes.
4. **"Non-Degree students"** are not assigned to advisors but may consult the Department Graduate Director for both specific and general information.

6.18 Computer Requirements in COMD

All graduate students admitted into the COMD program are required to have daily home access to the Internet with a secure, high speed broadband connection and to a computer that can be used at any time, controlled and configured as required.

- **MS-Res** students must have a laptop computer that meets technology requirements.
- **MS-DE** students must have a laptop or desktop computer that meets technology requirements.

Technology requirements specified within this document are the minimum requirements specified by the department. The following technology requirements are needed for students to securely upload and submit required documentation, health records and assignments, to access resources, USC e-mail, *BlackBoard*, media, web-based course information, streaming video, participate in web-conferencing, and participate in secure, proctored online testing as scheduled. It is always the student's responsibility to ensure their computer is running efficiently, has current virus protection installed, updated and is malware & virus free, is securely connected to the Internet via broadband connection, and that all necessary hardware, software and security systems are updated, including the current version of the Windows or Mac operating system.

Internet connectivity through work or other computers that are not under the student's personal control often present access problems. Firewalls, software download policies, and other security precautions can cause problems for access to required software (e.g., the University's course management system *BlackBoard*, etc.), access to library sites, *Respondus Monitor* for secure online testing, and other online resources, software downloads, and communication required for course participation. This is often the case in school or work settings.

Technology requirements must meet the following MINIMUM specifications found here:

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/end_user_services/computer_minimum_requirements/

6.18.1 Software Requirements

- **Antivirus software:** Virus protection software is required for all Windows and Mac users communicating with faculty in the USC system and for all computers that connect to the USC Wi-Fi service on campus. Windows 8, 8.1 and Windows 10 users already have Windows Defender installed. It is free to all students: [Antivirus software](#)
 - PC or Mac users can also download anti-virus software from the University's site. To install software, go to the following web site and follow directions provided: https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/services/student/software/security.php.
- **Microsoft Office Suite 365:** Microsoft Office 365 is available for free to all COMD students. Students have access to the latest versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, and much more. You can install Office 365 on up to five compatible PCs and Macs, plus five tablets (including iPad). All work can be saved online in OneDrive, so it can be accessed no matter which device is being used. You can use this Office 365 subscription for as long as you are a student at the University of South Carolina. Students are eligible to download the complete Microsoft Office 365 Suite through their USC e-mail account for **FREE** from Division of Information Technology. Software may be downloaded and accessed by current USC students only at [Information for Students](#).
- **Adobe Acrobat Reader DC or higher** (free download): <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>
- Other software may be required by certain courses and should be included in syllabi.

6.18.2 Internet Requirements

- **Internet and Software Requirements:** You must have broadband or high-speed internet such as DSL, a corporate LAN or cable modem.
- **Web Browsers:** You must have the latest version of Windows Media Player software installed on your computer. This is a free player download. Is your browser software up to date?
 - **Windows Users:** Make sure that you have the latest version of your web browser: Google Chrome, or Mozilla Firefox.
 - **Mac Users:** Mac users may use VLC Media Player to view the course lectures. The free player is available at <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-macosx.html> . Please select the correct version for your operating system.

6.18.3 USC Email account

- You must have DAILY access to the USC email account and the Internet.
- Students are responsible for configuring their email programs for the proper submission of assignments and class communication.
- COMD students MUST use their USC e-mail account to communicate with COMD faculty and staff. DO NOT set up your USC e-mail to be forwarded to your personal e-mail account. Doing so will submit all replies to faculty and staff from your personal e-mail account which is not permitted.
- DO NOT set up your personal e-mail account as the primary or default e-mail address in the University system and for *BlackBoard*. This will prohibit you from receiving important messages sent out by COMD administrators through Student Community *BlackBoard*.

6.18.4 BlackBoard

The link to the *BlackBoard* portal with login and information on supported browsers and operating systems is <https://blackboard.sc.edu/>. If you need help with *BlackBoard*, call (803) 777-1800 or

e-mail bbsupport@sc.edu for assistance. **DO NOT contact course instructors or outside computer technicians about BlackBoard issues.** Please contact *BlackBoard* Support for assistance AFTER you have confirmed that you are in compliance with all computer/technology requirements listed in this document.

Students are automatically added to the Department's Student *BlackBoard* Community page. This page provides information about Department policies, the Student Manual, elective courses, course advisement, etc., and is also used for communicating with students via announcements and emails.

6.18.5 University Technology Services

The office of UTS is located at 1244 Blossom Street (at the corner of Blossom and Sumter) and is open from 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/index.php- Link to information on USC standards, computer protection, legal issues, software purchase, and more.
- https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/security/sc_technologies/mfa.php - information about Multifactor Authentication
- <https://ssb.onecarolina.sc.edu/> - Self Service Carolina (SSC)

6.18.6 Improved SPAM Filter for Students

Effective October 2017, students view email messages previously flagged as SPAM in a new way. The university has implemented FireEye Email Threat Prevention (ETP) to student email accounts. ETP protects against advanced email attacks by filtering inbound email and their attachments for SPAM viruses, phishing, policy violations, and other advanced threats. Students do not need to take any action to install the new ETP program.

6.18.7 Important Instructions about Online Testing

COMD requires the use of secure proctoring for online tests and exams. **MS-Res students, taking online exams, connect to COMD's secure Wi-Fi and must be proctored in the classroom throughout the exam by the course instructor. MS-DE students must be proctored through a secure, online proctoring system. USC COMD currently uses the Respondus Lockdown Browser available for testing in BlackBoard.**

Before signing on to take online quizzes and tests, students with laptops and personal computers on wireless internet connections are required to connect to the internet using a **wired internet connection**. This reduces the possibility of interference and the chance of getting disconnected due to limited, weak and fluctuating wireless connections. Students must connect the laptop or personal computer directly to their network's router or network modem via an ethernet cable (adaptor required for Mac) or use an existing desktop PC that is already part of a wired internet connection. **Only MS-Res students will complete online testing wirelessly while proctored in an on-campus classroom by the instructor.**

Before taking online quizzes, tests and exams, students must close all open programs (including e-mail programs, Outlook, Facebook, etc.), open browser windows, etc. other than the window accessing the online test or exam. This minimizes interference and additional computer resource load, and is required for ALL online testing, to optimize test-taking security.

MS-DE students who take online tests and exams via a secure, on-line proctoring system must follow all directions provided by COMD and by *Respondus* to complete the additional steps required for this process. A webcam and microphone are requirements for secure online testing via *Respondus*. *Respondus* is free to all USC students.

6.19 Feedback and Evaluations

Information exchange is a vital component of the master's degree program in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. On-going communication and student feedback are not only encouraged but are expected with all students. The information will be used to help monitor, track, and trouble-shoot issues and concerns specific to the program. **MS-Res** students may provide feedback at any time via a suggestion box available outside the student workroom. Specific feedback from **MS-DE** students is elicited at each on-campus **MS-DE** advisement during Fall and Spring terms. Students complete feedback forms anonymously -- the only identifying information collected is the graduating class (cohort) of the students. This information helps monitor, track, and trouble-shoot issues and concerns specific to the graduating class, curriculum, etc. while they are progressing through the program. Information from class feedback has been effectively utilized in decisions that have impacted later changes in the program and curriculum.

6.20 Complaints, Grievances, and Student Support

6.20.1 Academic Student Complaints

Occasionally, students may encounter an issue related to an academic course or practicum assignment which they wish to petition or grieve. For **MS-Res** students, the first step is to discuss the situation with the course instructor or supervisor. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved in the student's view, the next step is to discuss the issue with the student's academic advisor (academic issue) or clinical advisor (clinical issue). If the issue continues to be of concern, the student should submit in writing the petition/grievance to the Graduate Program Director (academic issue) or the Clinic Director (clinical issue). If the issue continues to be of concern, the student may submit in writing the petition/grievance to the Department Chair. The Chair will take the issue to the COMD faculty and respond with the faculty's decision to the student in writing. For **MS-DE** students, the first step is to discuss the situation with the course instructor or supervisor. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved in the student's view, the next step is to discuss the issue with the student's academic advisor (Director of Distance Education) or clinical advisor (Director of Distance Education for Speech Camp OR Director of External Clinical Practicum for all other practicum placements). If the issue continues to be of concern, the student should submit in writing the petition/grievance to the Graduate Program Director. If the issue continues to be of concern, the student may submit in writing the petition/grievance to the Department Chair. The Chair will take the issue to the COMD faculty and respond with the faculty's decision to the student in writing.

If the concern is with an external, off-site clinical supervisor at a clinical placement off-campus, the first step regarding a clinical issue is to discuss the situation with the on-site clinical supervisor. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved in the student's view, **MS-Res** students should next approach the Director of External Clinical Practicum. **MS-DE** students should next approach the

Director of Distance Education (first summer) or Director of External Clinical Practicum (optional, second summer, final spring, internship). If the issue is not resolved, then the student may submit in writing the petition/grievance to the Department Chair, who will take the issue to the COMD faculty and then respond with the faculty's decision.

If a student contacts an administrator via email, and does not receive a response, please follow-up with a phone call. If you still receive no response, please call or email Lara McEachern at COMD (803-777-5048, mcconnal@mailbox.sc.edu), who will make contact with the administrator to secure a response.

In all situations, should the issue remain a concern after receiving the decision by the Department Chair, the student then should follow the guidelines set forth by the Graduate School: https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/graduate-studies/academic-appeals/index.php. Additionally, a student can review University policies and procedures or get assistance navigating an issue by contacting the Office of Student Advocacy: https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/student-services/academic_success/ombuds_services/index.php If the decision at the School level is not to the student's expectations, the student may complete the *Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Form* on the Graduate School website (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-GAP.pdf>), following the directions and procedures outlined on the form and the site.

***Other Student Complaints and Concerns: If a student wishes to communicate a concern or other non-grievance complaint to the department, they may contact any administrator that they believe can best respond to their concern. There is also a Virtual Suggestion Box linked in the Student Community Blackboard page. Suggestions made here go directly to the department chair.

6.20.2 Non-Academic Student Complaints

Non-Academic Student Complaints must be initiated within 30 calendar days from the date of the alleged violation: <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf627.pdf>

6.20.3 Student Rights under FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their education records:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the University receives a request for access.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the student believes are inaccurate or misleading.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the University of South Carolina to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

More information about student rights under FERPA is found here:

http://registrar.sc.edu/html/students/stud_rights.stm

6.20.4 The Office of Student Advocacy

The Student Advocacy Center can guide students to resources, programs, and explanations of university processes so that students can solve their problems and make informed choices about

their academic career.

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/student-services/academic_success/ombuds_services/index.php

6.20.5 CAA standards

The Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) accredits the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. If the grievance remains unresolved after all levels within the university have been exhausted, graduate students may file a complaint with the CAA addressing concerns regarding either academic coursework/knowledge standards and/or clinical skill development. Complaints may be directed to accreditation@asha.org.

6.20.6 Student Understanding and Compliance

It is COMD policy that students need to understand the Grievance Procedures and the chain of command which are explained in this student manual and posted on the COMD web page under "[current students](#)" - *COMD Grievance Policy*.

6.20.7 Social Media Policy Statement

As a graduate student in speech-language pathology, your online presence reflects directly on you, your university, and the profession. Adhering to the ASHA Code of Ethics is paramount. Therefore, maintain professional boundaries, ensure client confidentiality, and represent your knowledge and skills accurately. Avoid posting anything that could be perceived as derogatory, factually false, or that could harm the reputation of individuals or the profession. Remember that even on personal accounts, your professional identity is always present.

Here are some important considerations for social media use:

- **Respectful Communication:** Engage in respectful communication with colleagues, faculty, and supervisors. Avoid posting anything that could be perceived as bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
- **Self-Reflection:** Regularly reflect on your social media use and how it aligns with expected professional behavior and ethical obligations.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Avoid engaging in personal relationships with faculty, supervisors, or clients on social media. Maintain clear professional boundaries in all online interactions.
- **Privacy Settings:** Be mindful of your privacy settings and who can see your posts. Remember that anything you post online can be shared and potentially viewed by a wider audience, which includes other students who are in professional training and potential future employers.
- **Confidentiality:** Never post any information about clients or their families, even if you don't use their names or initials. This includes case details, photos, or videos. Grade penalties, with the possibility of termination of practicum will apply for any violation of this policy.
- In cases where the USC_COMD department social media accounts post about clients, that is done exclusively with permission and signed photo release(s). Those permissions and signed photo releases are for departmental use only and do not extend to students' personal social media accounts.
- Your overall aim is to ensure that your social media presence reflects positively on you, the COMD department, the university, and the speech-language pathology profession. Please review additional information in the links below to the ASHA Code of Ethics and

NSSLHA Pre-Professional Guidelines:

- Adhering to the ASHA Code of Ethics is paramount.
<https://www.asha.org/policy/code-of-ethics/>
- NSSLHA members are also bound by NSSLHA's Pre-Professional Guidelines.
<https://www.nsslha.org/Membership/Pre-Professional-Guidelines/>

6.20.8 Attendance at COMD Faculty/Student Meetings

Completing a graduate degree requires that students be able to independently discuss their issues with COMD faculty members. Thus, it is COMD policy that other individuals associated with COMD students (i.e., parents, significant others, friends) will not be included in meetings between COMD students and COMD faculty members. Any exception to this policy must first be obtained in writing between the student and faculty member prior to scheduling any such meeting and remains fully within the discretion of the faculty member.

6.20.9 Travel Funds

Travel funds are available to support students who are presenting their work at conferences. Students who are first author on an oral or poster presentation at an international, national, or state conference are eligible to receive travel funds.

COMD students may be supported with departmental travel funds. Students are eligible for these funds on an annual basis (July 1 – June 30). Funding is for students who are the first author. The stipend amount is \$800 for ASHA (or similar national / international conference) and \$600 for SCSHA (specific to SCSHA, to incentivize participation at the state level). Note: the SCSHA amount will be reduced to only cover registration when SCSHA is hosted locally. Funding is typically available for one national / international conference and the SCSHA conference each year. All student travel support is based on the availability of funds. Please email Carrie Hendrix for student travel funding assistance and copy the Department Chair, Dr. Jean Neils-Strunjas, the Doctoral Program Director

Funding is available through the Dean's Office of the Arnold School of Public Health (ASPH) with a commitment of matching funds from your mentor or the department. Please see the ASPH website for details. Matching funds are required.

https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/internal/current_students/student_travel_funding/

The Graduate School also offers travel funding. Please see the Graduate School website for details. https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/tuition-funding/travel_grants/ Matching funds from your mentor or department are preferred.

6.20.10 Student Support Services

There are University-based support services that COMD graduate students can utilize, such as 1) documentation of excused student absences, 2) academic service supports, and 3) Ombuds services. Please visit the website for the Office of Student Advocacy Resources to explore the options provided by this office:

https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/student-services/academic_success/ombuds_services/index.php

COMD MS students also have access to:

Writing Center

https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/english_language_and_literature/beyond_classroom/writing_center/our_services/index.php

University Library Resources

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_libraries/index.php

Counseling Services/Mental Health Services

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student-health-well-being/index.php

7 Distance Learning in COMD at USC (MS-DE students)

7.1 *What it is and what it is not*

Courses in the **MS-DE** degree curriculum are provided via distance learning and are supplemented with web-based instruction. COMD courses offered for distance education are delivered in hybrid formats, incorporating streaming video that is heavily supplemented with web-based instructional supports and with direct communication with your course instructors. Regular access to a secure, high-speed internet connection is required for viewing via streaming video through web-based programs such as *BlackBoard*. Live class meetings, student conferences, office hours, student advisement, etc. may be held online via Zoom, Adobe Connect, etc. to incorporate live audio, audio/video class meetings and/or web conferencing to enhance class participation opportunities with course instructors. However, students should always be available and reachable by e-mail and phone for individual communication with COMD faculty and staff throughout each term. Additionally, there may also be a Saturday on-campus class meeting, or a weekday evening or weekend “virtual class” planned by an instructor while you are in the program. Know that attempts for on-campus class meetings are always made to coordinate the class meeting with on-campus advisement in late Fall and mid-Spring terms.

It is important to understand that the **MS-DE** modality is **NOT an online degree program** and it is **NOT self-paced**. In addition to the academic requirements, there are four (4) terms of required clinical practicum during which **MS-DE** graduate clinicians complete a **minimum** total of 400 clinical hours of supervised, direct intervention with patients. **MS-DE** students are closely tracked throughout the time they are in the program. They also follow the same academic calendar as the on-campus **MS-Res** students in Communication Sciences and Disorders. The academic calendar is university wide.

7.2 *Scheduling Personal Events as an MS-DE Student*

Personal events in our lives are always exciting. During your time as a graduate student, it is expected that you will have some unexpected surprises in your life. It is the scheduling of these special events that need careful planning so you do not put your graduate student responsibilities in jeopardy. **MS-DE** students are not “free” to schedule week-long family vacations, personal trips, weddings, honeymoons, etc. that occur during dates of regular academic terms (Fall, Spring, Summer) while enrolled in the program. These personal vacations, activities and events should always be scheduled in-between terms where there can be no conflict with course responsibilities. In addition to online quizzes and tests, courses may also have a physically proctored test or exam scheduled and being away from a proctored test site (if needed for that exam) would make the physically proctored assessment unavailable. Of course, your weekends (except for advisement Saturdays twice a year) are yours. The only exceptions include the ongoing need to keep up with course requirements, quizzes, assigned readings, mid-term exams, assignments, final exams, class projects, study time, etc. Students must always remember the importance of study and time management in distance learning. Procrastination will never be a good friend in distance learning. Remember, **DO NOT** plan or schedule personal vacations, weddings, honeymoons, etc. during the dates of regular academic terms while you are enrolled in the program as an **MS-DE** student. Instead, plan for these types of extended activities between terms when there is no conflict with graduate school, course and/or practicum responsibilities.

7.3 **Distance Education Students Living Out of State**

7.3.1 **Residency While Participating in the Program**

Students working toward the **MS-DE** degree in COMD through distance education often live in different states throughout the US. As a non-South-Carolina resident, the student continues to reside in their home state while enrolled in academic courses. However, current federal regulations and state legislation pertaining to distance education may impact our Program's ability to provide distance learning and clinical practicum (experiential learning) opportunities in some states. At this time, **residents from all states may apply to our MS-DE degree**. All states except California participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). However, USC has an agreement with CA for both distance learning (DL) and experiential learning (EL) at this time.

7.3.2 **State Licensure for States other than South Carolina**

Each state has its own licensing board with its own speech-language pathology licensure requirements. Consequently, although the master's degree program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of South Carolina is fully accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, thereby making its graduates eligible for national certification (CCC-SLP) and professional licensure in the state of South Carolina, **we cannot guarantee that the program meets the requirements for professional licensure in other states**. For applicants not living in South Carolina, the following link provides information regarding state licensure specific to individual states:

<http://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/>

Current students who are non-South-Carolina residents are referred to the same [web link](#) for up-to-date access to licensure information for states throughout the US. If a current student is considering relocating to another state after being admitted into the program, the student must contact the Director of Distance Education to discuss how the move may impact their ability to participate in distance education involving academic courses (distance learning) and clinical practicum (experiential learning) opportunities in a different state.

The master's degree program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of South Carolina is accredited in the United States, and trains students to meet the knowledge outcomes and skills competencies, including academic and clinical requirements, for certification from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Applicants must understand that, while in the program, situations such as relocating, personal choices, life decisions including leave requests, etc., may impact the student's eligibility for *continuous* academic program progression (distance learning) and/or participation in clinical practicum (experiential learning), which may delay graduation.

7.4 **Clinical Practicum for MS-DE students**

Clinical practicum experiences for **MS-DE** students are obtained primarily during the Summer months. The 1st Summer of practicum is a pediatric clinical experience, sometimes referred to as "speech camp". These are arranged at different public school and/or private practice locations in South Carolina. The 2nd Summer of practicum, final Spring term practicum and last Summer clinical internship are arranged by our Department at an approved site. Every effort is made to schedule such experiences within commuting distance of the student's city of residence. However, practicum site availability will be limited for students who live in specific types of areas, including:

1. Rural areas with limited potential placement sites
2. Areas with significant numbers of students from other COMD programs, or

3. Metropolitan areas with longer overall commute times.
4. Areas outside of the United States.

In situations such as these, scheduled practicum sites will be further than one hour from the student's city of residence. Such students should plan to travel or relocate in order to complete all practicum experiences. International students should plan to come to the United States for all practicum experiences.

Student supervision, authorization, approval of clinical hours and documentation of all clinical observation and practicum experiences must always be provided by an ASHA- certified speech-language pathologist who holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP) or Audiology (CCC-AUD). Supervisors must have at least 9 months of experience after earning their CCC, and complete at least 2 hours of supervisory training. There are minimum requirements for the amount of clinical supervision that must be provided for the graduate student clinician in training.

For **students without a background in speech-language pathology**, clinical observation requirements are incorporated into the program through the year until the first Summer practicum at the end of the second year. Approximate timelines for Summer practicum are:

1st Summer of clinical practicum	5-6 weeks (<i>after a 1st Summer of academic courses</i>)
2nd Summer of clinical practicum	6-8 weeks
3rd Spring	10 earned practicum hours (minimum) but no maximum
3rd Summer of clinical internship	8-10 weeks

NOTE: Additional practicum may be necessary to obtain the required clinical practicum experiences.

The 5-6 week period for the first Summer speech camp/Summer practicum is required for all **MS-DE** students and **must take place at an assigned location in South Carolina**. There are **no exceptions** to this "in South Carolina" requirement.

7.5 Proctored Testing Policy

COMD requires the use of secure proctoring for online tests and exams. **MS-DE** students must be proctored through a secure, online proctoring system. COMD courses will use the Respondus Lockdown Browser that is available in *BlackBoard*. Students must follow all directions provided by COMD and by *Respondus* to complete the additional steps required for this process. A webcam and microphone are requirements for secure online testing via *Respondus Monitor*

8 General Information and Requirements for Graduate Students at USC

8.1 General Information for Graduate Students

1. Your full name and **VIP ID** should appear on all correspondence. **DO NOT** provide your Social Security Number (SSN) as your student ID.
2. Notify the Graduate School, the registrar, Distance Ed (**MS-DE**), and COMD *immediately* of any name and/or address changes. **DO NOT** use your new name on departmental paperwork until it has been officially changed with the University system.
3. Courses at the master's level must be completed within a six (6) year period. USC courses that are out-of-date must be revalidated by the Graduate School before graduation.
4. Transfer work applicable to a master's degree must be within the six (6) years prior to your degree completion if you wish to apply it towards your degree. The acceptability of specific credits is subject to other provisions:
 - a. judged appropriate by the student's academic committee
 - b. listed on an approved program of study
 - c. at least a grade of "B"
 - d. official transcript from the awarding institution

8.2 Verification of Citizenship and Residency

8.2.1 Proof of Citizenship or Legal Residency

The state of South Carolina requires **verification of US citizenship or legal residency** for each incoming student. Students must provide proof of citizenship or legal residency before being allowed to enroll in classes at the University. **You will not be allowed to register until you do this.** For more information and forms, visit:

- <http://gradschool.sc.edu/students/rescitizen.asp>
- <http://registrar.sc.edu>

8.2.2 SC Legal Residency for In-State Tuition

Proof of legal **South Carolina residency** is required to receive in-state tuition. (Note: Students with **assistantships** usually qualify for in-state tuition and do not need to submit a form. If you wish, you can still elect to submit the form to have for your own records.)

Submitting your SC Residency Certification Form is simple:

- Go to <http://my.sc.edu>
- Sign in to Self Service Carolina using your VIP ID and password
- Complete the SC Residency Certification Form
 - In order to complete the form you will need the following:
 - SC Driver's License Number
 - SC Car Registration Information
 - SC Tax information
- Questions? Contact the Office of SC Residency at (803) 777-4060 or resident@mailbox.sc.edu.

8.3 *Registration*

1. Students may register for classes over the Internet via Self-Service Carolina. For more information, visit <http://www.sc.edu/sschelp/studentpage.html>
From this link you will find help with information about general registration, (Office of the Registrar), student accounts (Office of the Bursar) and Financial Aid.
2. If you need directions, go to the Registrar's webpage at <http://registrar.sc.edu>
3. **Please observe deadline dates for both registration and payment of fees.** Late registration or fee payment is a complicated and time-consuming ordeal and involves the work of many people, so you DO NOT want to allow this to occur.
4. Students should plan to pay term fees at least one week in advance to allow for unforeseen problems. This way you will have time to obtain the assistance needed before being dropped from classes and falling behind in course work.
5. **Returning graduate students**, who have not enrolled during the twelve (12) months prior to returning term, must become eligible again before registration. Contact the Graduate School (777-4243) to avoid computer-registration rejection.
6. **Non-degree graduate students** are approved for a specific number of credit hours depending on the purpose of an individual's enrollment and the policy of the recommended academic department. Eligibility must be authorized by the Graduate School (777-4243) to avoid computer-registration rejection.
7. **Graduate Assistants** are required to enroll for at least six graduate hours during the Fall and Spring terms and three credit hours during the Summer term. Out of state graduate assistants receive the in-state rate for tuition. If you have any question concerning the regulations of graduate assistantships at the University, please refer your questions to the Graduate School at (777-4243).

8.4 *Paying Tuition and Fees*

1. Information about fees, including due dates for the upcoming term, may be obtained from the Bursar's Office at <http://www.sc.edu/bursar/>
2. For information about Financial Aid, go to <http://sc.edu/financialaid/>
3. Payment for tuition and fees **must be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. on the first day of classes** each term, or earlier when notified by the University of the date fees must be paid. If you do not pay your tuition and fees by this deadline, you will be **dropped from your classes**, including COMD 772 Clinical Practicum in Speech- Language Pathology/Audiology. In the latter case, **you cannot see patients or accumulate hours at any practicum site** if you are not officially enrolled in a clinical practicum course.
4. **Reminder:** Pay fees at least one week in advance of the start of the term, or by the due date provided by the University. You are always advised to get registered for the next term's classes within one (1) week after receiving advisement information and CRN codes in Fall and Spring terms.

8.5 *Learning Disabilities and Differences*

Students with documented learning disabilities should make direct contact with USC's **Student Disability Resource Center** to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations. Students who are already registered need to request new accommodations every semester. Students must indicate which academic course instructors should receive their accommodations with the SDRC. Accommodations can also be integrated into clinical practicum experience by forwarding your accommodations to Angela McLeod (for practicum within the Montgomery Clinic), Crystal

Murphree-Holden (for DE Speech Camp Practicum) and Juliana Miller and Joanna Scoggins (for all other outside practicum experiences). Accommodations must be forwarded to the relevant clinical practicum advisor(s) for each semester that the student is enrolled in clinical practicum.

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_disability_resource_center/ or call 803-777-6142 (TDD 803-777-6744). The Student Disability Resource Center is located in the same building as COMD at 1705 College Street, Close-Hipp Ste 102, Columbia, SC 29208.

8.6 Student Assistance Programs

Counseling and Human Development Center: The CHDC provides psychological counseling, education, and consultation to the University community (students, faculty, and staff). Their team offers services “that promote social, emotional, physical, and cognitive well-being for people facing developmental or unplanned challenges”. The Center is located on the 7th floor of the Byrnes Building (on Sumter Street across from The Horseshoe). Hours are 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday and Sunday 2:00. – 8:00 p.m. (Fall and Spring terms) and 8:30-4:30 (Summer term). Call 777-5223 for an appointment. Walk-ins are available.

Student Health Services: SHS provide a holistic approach to health through comprehensive primary healthcare, disease prevention and wellness programs, and mental health and violence prevention services. For more information, visit <https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/>

Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention: SAVIP contributes to a Healthy Carolina in a variety of ways, including but not limited to encouraging bystander accountability through the Stand Up Carolina initiative, raising awareness of interpersonal violence issues, promoting healthy relationships, and advocating for survivors of interpersonal violence. For information on how to support survivors, additional on and off-campus resources or to report an act of interpersonal violence, visit <http://www.sc.edu/stopsexualassault>.

If you wish to speak with someone in the Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention (SAVIP) office, please call 803-777-8248 or walk in during business hours. After hours, call the USC Police Department at 803-777-4215, and they will get you in touch with a Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention (SAVIP) advocate.

Travel Support for Student Research: The Arnold School of Public Health’s student travel is sponsored by the Dean’s Office and is designed to provide opportunities and support for student research presentations at professional/scientific conferences. Details can be found here: https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/internal/current_students/student_travel_funding/index.php

8.7 Considerations for Graduating Students

8.7.1 The University Placement Office

The University Placement Office is located on the sixth floor of the College of Business Administration. The Placement Office issues a handbook (available upon request) that explains the many services that are provided to students. One of the services of the Placement Office is to assist candidates in securing employment. A portion of this service is to aid students in the development of a personal file. The Department highly encourages each graduate student to develop and maintain a personal file with the Placement Office. This ultimately saves time for both the students and the faculty members.

8.7.2 Career Development Services

Career Development Services is located on the sixth floor of the School of Business Administration and works in conjunction with the Placement Office in developing student resumes. This office provides students with information on writing resumes, cover letters, etc. Additionally, much useful information on interview procedures can be obtained through the [Career Center](#).

8.7.3 Letters of Recommendation

The faculty are pleased to write letters of recommendation upon request for graduating students seeking employment. Clinical faculty will consider writing letters of recommendation for those students who have been under their recent supervision (i.e., during the previous two terms, not including externship). The faculty reserve the right to retract a verbal commitment to writing a letter should the student's performance or behavior change at any time after the verbal commitment. The faculty also reserve the right to limit the number of unique recommendation letters requested by one individual. With this in mind, the Department strongly encourages the development of a placement file to prevent the demand for different letters to many prospective employers. Students are strongly encouraged to obtain letters of recommendation from outside practicum supervisors upon completion of those practica.

8.7.4 Application for Degrees

1. All candidates for degrees and certificates file formal applications with the Dean of the Graduate School during the last academic term before graduation. Applications are to be filed by the third week of the Fall or Spring term in which the degree is to be awarded, or within the first ten days of the first Summer session. Applications submitted after the announced filing deadline will be accepted if supported by a letter from the student's Graduate Director and accompanied by a special processing fee. The graduate student is responsible for contacting the Graduate School to determine this cost. The cost increases by a particular amount each additional month after the initial deadline. If the student is not enrolled during the first Summer session, the application is filed within the first week of the second Summer session in order for the student to graduate at the Summer commencement. Deadlines are indicated in the Master Schedule for each term. Any application received after the deadline, which lacks the supporting letter or processing fee, will be regarded automatically as having been submitted for the following term.
2. Diplomas will not be awarded retroactively.
3. To pursue further study after completion of a graduate degree, a student submits a new application to the Graduate School since the previous admission was specifically for the degree program.

8.7.5 Graduation

1. Students should discuss any Graduate School and Department requirements with their academic advisor in the Department. **It is the responsibility of the student to see that all requirements for graduation are met.**
2. In **May**, all students who are graduating in August are invited (and encouraged) to participate in the Arnold School of Public Health's **Hooding Ceremony**. This event occurs in advance of your graduation, but is a very special occasion for COMD graduates and their families. During this service, the **MS-Res** and **MS-DE** graduating classes will enter the auditorium together. You will wear your cap and gown and carry your hood. During the ceremony each department will bring its students forward for Hooding. As you walk across the stage, your name will be announced, and the Department Chair will place your hood

over your head. Following the service, the Arnold School of Public Health has a reception for graduates and their families. Traditionally, this ceremony is held in the Koger Center for the Arts.

3. Students also may choose to participate in the USC Graduation Ceremony at the Colonial Center. However, Summer commencement ceremonies are no longer being held in August. August graduates may “walk” in a graduation ceremony (May or December) but the graduation period is still August. Please note that [graduation application](#) deadlines are firm.
4. Prior to graduating, in late July or early August, all graduating students are required to complete information for final **closeouts and exit surveys**. Before closeouts, each student must have completed their final internship and it must be verified that all ASHA requirements for clinical practicum experiences have been met. Completion of additional eligibility requirements are also verified prior to close out and exit surveys. At the time of close outs, graduating students are provided with information and documentation for ASHA and licensure requirements. All students also will complete an exit survey. If any components are incomplete at the time of close out, the verification form is not signed until all requirements are completed.
5. After graduation in August, **the Registrar’s Office will take several weeks** to process the final transcript that verifies the awarding of your Master’s degree.
6. **Educator Certification:** You will need to complete requests to have your transcripts forwarded to the SC State Department of Education, Office of Educator Services, and to Labor License, Review (LLR) Board. The SC State Department of Education’s Office of Educator Services will issue you a new Advanced Level Educator Certificate as Speech-Language Therapist at the Masters + 30 level classification after they receive your official transcript. Your school district will NOT increase your pay scale until they have your new educator certificate. Some districts will provide retro-active pay reflecting the increase from the beginning of the school year for August graduates, although this will be subject to the protocol determined by each individual school district. Anyone accepting employment, may NOT begin working until they have received their license from LLR.

9 Academic Integrity

9.1 *The Carolinian Creed and USC Honor Code*

Academic ethical behavior is essential for an institution dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and learning. The University of South Carolina is committed to fostering a university environment which exemplifies the values embodied in the *Carolinian Creed* (see also <https://www.sa.sc.edu/creed/>):

The community of scholars at the University of South Carolina is dedicated to personal and academic excellence. Choosing to join the community obligates each member to a code of civilized behavior.

As a Carolinian ...

I will practice personal and academic integrity;

I will respect the dignity of all persons;

I will respect the rights and property of others;

I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions;

I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for conditions which support their work and development.

All members of the University Community have a responsibility to uphold and maintain the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction, and evaluation; as well as adhering to the **Honor Code**. The USC *Honor Code* is the University's policy regarding incidents involving academic integrity. It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this *Honor Code* or who knowingly assists another to violate this *Honor Code* shall be subject to discipline.

University policy regarding academic responsibility and the University of South Carolina Honor Code (Student Affairs Policy STAF 6.25) states:

The Honor Code is a set of principles established by the university to promote honesty and integrity in all aspects of a student's academic career. It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty in connection with any academic program. A student who violates, or assists another in violating the Honor Code, will be subject to university sanctions.

<http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf>

You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in academic penalty review by the instructor, and will result in additional disciplinary measures including referring you to the Office of Academic Integrity. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to improper citation of sources, using another student's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. For more information, please see the [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) website.

Remember that the first tenet of the Carolinian Creed is, "I will practice personal and academic integrity."

Every student has a role in maintaining the academic reputation of the university. It is imperative that you refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, falsifying your work and/or assisting other students in violating the Honor Code.

Two important components of the Honor Code:

- Faculty members are required to report potential violations of the Honor Code to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
- When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate the Honor Code, it is their responsibility to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member.

9.2 Plagiarism and Cheating

For students, both graduate and undergraduate, plagiarism, i.e., improper citation of sources, improper use of another person's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation, is **the most common violation**. Passing off the work of others as your own is a serious academic offense prohibited by USC. The Academic Responsibility Code in the *Carolina Community: USC Columbia Student Handbook and Policy Guide* prohibits “unauthorized use of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of source”. **This not only includes copying information from journal articles and books but also from other student’s papers and exams, including take-home exams**. Note that use of social media platforms to collaborate on assignments, or to share and get feedback on course assignments is also considered cheating. The penalties for plagiarism and cheating are serious and can include receiving an “F” on the assignment in question, an “F” for the course, an “X” on the transcript before a grade denoting an Honor Code Violation, a written reprimand or letter of warning from the Dean that becomes a part of your permanent record, and/or suspension or expulsion from USC.

Every student is responsible for understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

More information on what constitutes plagiarism can be found at the following web address: <http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/pages/liblink/plagiarism.shtml> .

The website of USC’s Office of Academic Integrity provides further information about procedures and sanctions: <https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity>

10 Library and Information Services

The Thomas Cooper Library, located next to the Russell House on Greene Street, houses the reference tools most useful to graduate and doctoral students in the Department of COMD. In addition to the main campus holdings, students may arrange to use the facilities of the South Carolina State Library, which contains the State's ERIC System (Educational Resources Information Center), the Veterans Administration Library, the School of Medicine Library, and the Richland Memorial Hospital Library.

Periodicals for all departments in the Arnold School of Public Health are located primarily in the Science Library (Level 5) of the Thomas Cooper Library.

The [Cooper Technology Lounge](#) in the Thomas Cooper Library strives to enhance the learning experience for its users (currently enrolled students, faculty, and staff) through innovative and effective use of technology. The mission of the Lounge is to create an environment that supports the educational pursuits and a wide variety of professional and personal needs of its users. To ensure that these goals are met, the lab provides quality state of the art software and hardware resources.

Study rooms in the library can be booked at: <http://libcal.library.sc.edu/>

Online computer searches are available from a number of electronic indexes. For a master list, go to: <http://library.sc.edu/p/Research/ResourcesOverview>.

Other **electronic resources** allow access to **encyclopedias, dictionaries and newspapers**. Periodicals specifically ordered for COMD are listed below. Please note that several are not located in the Science Library but are located in the Education Collection (Level 5).

Periodical holdings in the Thomas Cooper Library for the Department of COMD:

American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology; Aphasiology; Audiology; Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics; Communication Disorders Quarterly; Ear and Hearing; The Hearing Journal; The Journal of Medical Speech-Language Pathology; Journal of Speech-Language-Hearing Research (Education Collection - Level 5); Journal of Voice; Language, Speech, & Hearing Services in the Schools (Education Collection - Level 5); Seminars in Speech and Language; Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation; Topics in Language Disorders; Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*

*only through 1990

NOTE: The library offers [assistance](#) to assist students with the **development of research ideas**, accessing **search tools**, and **writing research papers**. Students are encouraged to make use of these and other available resources at the Thomas Cooper Library!

11 Clinical Practicum in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

11.1 Definition of Practicum

A professional program of study in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology requires the acquisition of clinical skills in the management of disorders of communication. Subsequent to completion of certain core course work and an “observation” prerequisite, the graduate clinician must gain experiences in 1) evaluation and diagnosing a communication disorder, 2) writing a program of treatment, and 3) carrying out individual therapy sessions. ASHA also requires the acquisition of certain skills in audiology. These experiences constitute “clinical practicum”. An effective program of practicum will include opportunities for interprofessional/collaborative practice, evaluation and treatment of communicative and swallowing disorders of varying severity, across the lifespan, with varied multicultural aspects, and linguistic diversity.

11.2 ASHA Certification Requirements

Applicants for certification must complete a minimum of 25 hours of observation. These observations must be supervised and signed by an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist, and they must concern the evaluation and treatment of children and adults with disorders of speech, language, or hearing. Most importantly, clinical observations must be a guided experience, under the direction of the student’s training program.

Students with background from background classes only but *without* an observation course or guided clinical observations **obtained as part of their undergraduate program requirements** are required to complete this experience during the first three terms as a graduate student. There are **no exceptions**. **Students may never “freelance” observation experiences and will not be allowed credit for such experiences by this Department.**

For students without an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology/communication sciences and disorders, these observation requirements have been built into the curriculum. Guided clinical observation experiences are completed in various clinical settings and will be completed during 3 terms.

USC requires students to follow ASHA guidelines of a minimum of 375 clinical clock hours in diagnostics and therapy (400 clinical clock hours including 25 hours of observation) for graduation. A minimum of 325 hours of practicum in speech-language pathology (involving direct client contact) must be obtained at the graduate level. Up to 50 hours of undergraduate experience may be added to the graduate work to reach the grand total of 375 clinical hours. Students typically graduate with far more than 375 hours. Your goal is to get as much clinical experience as possible, never limiting yourself to the minimum number of required hours. USC COMD also expects its students to **obtain clinical skills in each of the speech disorder categories**: Speech sound production, fluency, voice, language, hearing, swallowing, cognition, social aspects of communication, and communication modalities. First-year students must provide documentation of all undergraduate observation and clinical practicum hours to the Director of External Clinical Practicum by the end of Fall term. **The hours must include the ASHA certified supervisor’s signatures and ASHA numbers.** If you have difficulty obtaining this documentation, please contact the Director of External Clinical Practicum.

11.3 Standards and Implementation for the Certificate of Clinical Competence

11.3.1 Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA)

The Council on Academic Accreditation accredits the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. The CAA's accreditation standards, and the accreditation program, are designed to: promote excellence in preparing students to enter the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology, protect and inform the public by recognizing programs that meet or exceed accreditation standards; and stimulate improvement of programs' educational activities by means of self-study and evaluation. To obtain more information on CAA, its purpose and mission, please refer to the following web link:

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

Graduate students **may file a complaint** with the CAA if they have **concerns regarding either academic coursework/knowledge standards and/or clinical skill development**. Complaints may be directed to accreditation@asha.org. However, if the complaint pertains to a student grievance, the student **must first follow and exhaust** all steps of the grievance policies of COMD, available at <http://sph.sc.edu/comd/grievance.htm>, and the Arnold School of Public Health and USC grievance procedures, available at <http://sph.sc.edu/comd/grievance.htm>

11.3.2 Council for Clinical Certification (CFCC)

The Council for Clinical Certification (CFCC) developed the current standards for clinical certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The current standards, effective January 1, 2020, combine process and outcome measures of academic knowledge and clinical skills. Process standards specify the experiences, such as course work or practicum hours, that are intended to result in target learning outcomes. Evidence of achievement of learning outcomes regarding specific knowledge and skills is maintained throughout your program.

A professional program of study in Speech-Language Pathology requires the acquisition of **knowledge** and **skill outcomes** not only in the actual management of communication disorders but in: **1) oral and written communication** and **2) interaction and personal qualities** (incorporating professional and ethical behavior) sufficient for entry into the profession. Subsequent to completion of certain core course work, the graduate student must gain skill outcomes in **prevention** (including speech, language, and hearing screenings), **assessment** and **intervention** in nine (9) areas with patient/patient populations across the life span and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These nine (9) areas include **articulation, fluency, voice/resonance, receptive and expressive language, hearing, dysphagia, cognitive aspects of communication, social aspects of communication, and communication modalities**. Skill outcomes in the writing of diagnostic reports and treatment programs, planning/implementing individual or group therapy sessions, and successful achievement of professional/ethical behavior are also required. These skill outcomes are obtained primarily through "clinical practicum". **If a student fails to achieve any one or more of the knowledge and skills outcomes by the date of graduation, the Chair of the Department will be unable to sign the verification form required by ASHA for eligibility of the Certificate of Clinical Competence (see section 11.3.3.2).**

11.3.3 Formative and Summative Assessment / Remediation Plans

The Council for Clinical Certification (CFCC) requires that an applicant for certification must demonstrate both knowledge and skills outcomes in a number of areas during their graduate program. Programs are required to monitor student learning throughout their program of study as well as to assess learning at the end of their program of study.

11.3.3.1 Formative Assessment

The monitoring of learning throughout the learning period is referred to as **formative assessment** and provides immediate, on-going evidence of student learning in a course, including clinical practicum courses. All knowledge outcomes are listed on course syllabi as applicable to that course. The process of formative assessment is documented in CALIPSO, an online practicum documentation system. As students progress through the program, clinical supervisors will rate each student's progress toward clinical competence by rating specific skills. The average of each of these ratings is automatically populated in an area of CALIPSO entitled "Cumulative Evaluation".

11.3.3.2 Remediation

If a student fails to achieve the knowledge outcomes for a particular course or skills outcomes in clinical practicum, remediation will be completed through a **Remediation Plan (in academic coursework) or a Clinical Coaching Plan (in clinical practicum)**. This remediation plan or clinical coaching plan is intended to allow the graduate student additional time and opportunity to achieve the specific knowledge and/or skills outcome(s). Successful remediation of skills does not affect the grade originally assigned.

Academic Remediation Plans

The **criteria for remediation of knowledge outcomes in Academic Coursework** are one or both of the following:

1. a grade of C or lower; students who do not achieve a B or better on quizzes, examinations, papers, projects, or lab/homework assignments must undergo remediation in order to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge outcomes;
2. if a student misses a quiz or examination question specific to a knowledge outcome but still earns a grade of a B or better the instructor may require remediation on that particular question, regardless of the student's overall grade.

If a student scores below a B on an assignment with required knowledge outcomes, a remediation plan will be initiated by the course instructor and will include a remediation activity of the instructor's choice. Upon successful completion of the remediation, the student and instructor will sign the remediation form, which should be emailed to the Graduate Director to be kept securely in the student's file. The completed remediation plan does not alter the original assignment grade or the final course grade, and all remediations plans must be completed by the end of the following academic semester.

Clinical Coaching Plans

The **criteria for remediation of skill outcomes in Clinical Practicum** are one or both of the following:

1. a grade of C or lower; students who do not achieve a B or better in their overall clinical practicum;
2. if a student fails to achieve a skill outcome at a rating of 3.5 or higher, based on multiple opportunities to exhibit the skill competency.

In the case that a clinical coaching plan should be developed, the clinical faculty will meet with a

student who is not complying with expectations and is having significant difficulty learning a skill. While many plans of this nature are initiated by the supervising clinical faculty, note that a clinical faculty administrator may initiate a clinical coaching plan. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the concern(s) and create a plan of action to support the student's skill development. Written expectations, the criteria for attaining desired outcomes, and target completion date will be included in the plan.

The plan will be signed by the student and the supervising faculty member or clinical administrator and retained in the student's clinic file. The completed clinical coaching plan does not alter the final course grade, and all remediations/clinical coaching plans must be completed by the end of the following academic semester. All completed clinical coaching plans should be sent to the Director of External Practicum. All signed, completed plans will be kept securely in the student's clinical file.

Graduate students are permitted **no more than two remediation attempts** for the same skills, regardless of when those attempts occur in the program (i.e., consecutive or nonconsecutive semesters). **Failure to satisfactorily complete the second clinical coaching plan for the same skill(s) will result in dismissal from the program.**

11.3.3.3 Summative Assessment

The **summative assessment** is a comprehensive exam that covers your graduate coursework. The summative assessment takes place in your final Spring term. All students must take the exam to graduate, and they must pass the exam as one requirement for the ASHA verification form to be signed by the department chair. Part A is a written exam created by the COMD faculty. Part B is an oral exam. A passing performance in all areas of Part A will exempt a student from Part B. The summative assessment meets the Graduate School's requirement that all candidates for a Master's degree complete a comprehensive assessment in the major field of study that is distinct from program course requirements. The summative assessment also is part of the CAA standards. Receiving a passing score on it is required to be eligible for the ASHA CCC according to ASHA CFCC standards.

11.4 *Council for Clinical Certification (CFCC) Requirements for Clinical Practicum*

1. The applicant for certification in speech-language pathology is to complete a minimum of 400 clock hours of supervised clinical experience in the practice of speech- language pathology (375 direct patient contact hours; 25 observation hours).
2. Observation hours precede direct contact with patients, but are not a prerequisite to beginning direct patient/patient contact under the new guidelines for certification, however, the Department requires that every student complete a **minimum of 25 hours** of observation before direct patient contact may begin. These observation hours are to be accrued under and signed by an individual holding a current Certificate of Clinical Competence. The individual's ASHA certification number is to be included on all documentation for verification purposes.
3. All observation and clinical experiences are to be done within the scope of practice for a speech-language pathologist.
4. At least 325 of the 400 clinical clock hours are to be completed while the applicant is engaged in graduate student in a program accredited in speech-language pathology.
5. Supervision is to be provided individuals who hold the Certificate of Clinical Competence in the appropriate area of practice.
6. Only 50 clinical clock hours from a student's undergraduate program may be applied

towards the 400 clinical clock hours at the graduate level. All hours from a student's undergraduate program must be accrued and signed by someone holding a current Certificate of Clinical Competence. The individual's ASHA number must be present on all documentation for verification purposes.

7. Up to 75 clinical simulation hours may be utilized toward the 400 clinical clockhours.
8. Up to 125 telepractice hours may be utilized within the 400 clinical clockhours.
9. Practicum assignment with specific disorders are only assigned if the graduate student has taken or is concurrently taking the appropriate coursework in preparation of that clinical experience. Practicum monitoring is maintained by the student, the Director of Distance Education (for **MS-DE** students), the clinical advisor, or the practicum administrator via use of CALIPSO.
10. **MS-DE Students:** A *Course and Practicum Sequencing Checklist* is maintained by the Director of Distance Education as your Academic Advisor to ensure compliance with academic and practicum enrollment to monitor progression in the program.

11.5 Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology

The Legislative Council of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association approved a comprehensive Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology in 2016. All Graduate Students are required to read this document thoroughly as part of their professional development while in this program. As members of the National Student Speech-Language and Hearing Association (NSSHLA), Graduate Students may access the current ASHA Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology at the following web address: <http://www.asha.org/policy/SP2016-00343/> (you must be a student member of ASHA (NSSLHA) to access this information). Graduate students are also expected to adhere to the **ASHA Code of Ethics**, which can be found here: <http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/ET2016-00342.pdf#search=%22code%22>

SCSHA Code of Ethics (South Carolina Speech-Language Hearing Association): [SCSHA Code of Ethics](#)

11.6 Department Policies for Clinical Practicum

1. All tuition and fees for courses, including COMD 772 – Clinical Practicum, must be paid no later than the due date provided by the University or you will not be allowed to see patients [or accumulate hours] either at the Clinic or at an off-site facility due to insurance coverage policies.
2. Students must earn a total of 375 clock hours in order to be eligible for ASHA Certification. In addition, the student must demonstrate skills across nine (9) disorders and across the lifespan. Skills must further reflect a range of experiences with culturally diverse clients and severity of disorders. Further information on this process is presented during orientation week.
3. All clinical clock hours are entered into CALIPSO, a web-based program for tracking clinical practicum hours and skills (and much more), by the graduate student. Information regarding CALIPSO is provided to students prior to beginning their first term of clinical practicum (for **MS-Res** students, during **Clinic orientation**).
4. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is responsible for the clinical education and training that students receive while registered at the University of South Carolina. As a result, all clinical activities in speech-language pathology and audiology must be coordinated through the Department. **Students are not allowed to arrange practica on their own and/or receive direct reimbursement for the provision of services.** If an outside clinical site approaches a student and offers reimbursement for

services, the student must refer them to the practicum administrator who arranged for the practicum experience.

5. In order for clinical practicum courses to be considered “complete”, the student must meet minimum standards for attendance and participation, as outlined in the syllabus.
6. The final internship is a capstone experience meant to prepare students for clinical fellowship through ASHA and entry into the workforce as a speech-language pathologist. It is completed after all academic classes are successfully completed.
7. Clinical practicum sites mandate a variety of onboarding requirements, such as background checks and immunizations. Most medical sites and sites serving medically fragile patients require COVID-19 vaccinations. Note, granting exemptions is at the discretion of practicum site administrators, and not the Department of COMD. If you believe you have grounds for a medical or religious exemption in lieu of a vaccination, there is no guarantee that practicum sites will accept your request. Unvaccinated students who choose not to complete onboarding requirements required to participate in practicum should expect delays in their progress through the curriculum. Graduation for such students cannot be guaranteed, as practicum is a required part of the curriculum.
8. **Students without Baccalaureate Training in Speech-Language Pathology** seeking a Master of Science (either modality) acquire a minimum of 25 hours of guided clinical observation prior to the first term of assigned clinical practicum (see section 11.6.1).
 - a. **MS-Res students without background course work** in speech-language pathology/communication sciences and disorders enter the program in the Summer. They will register for COMD 560 during their first Summer term and begin their observations immediately.
 - b. **MS-DE students without background course work** in speech-language pathology/communication sciences and disorders enter the program in the Fall term. These students will register for COMD 560 during three (3) terms: 1) first Spring term; 2) first Summer term; and 3) second Spring term. However, students will begin conducting their supervised observation experiences during their first term of enrollment in COMD 560.

Students with Baccalaureate Training in Speech-Language Pathology enter the **MS- Res** program in the Fall, or the **MS-DE** degree program in the Summer. These students are to submit documentation of all observation hours and as well as clinical practicum hours accrued under and signed by an individual with a current Certificate of Clinical Competency. The individual’s ASHA certification number needs to be present on all documentation for verification. Documentation is to be submitted to the Graduate Admissions Counselor on or before the Department Orientation held in May/June for all incoming graduate students for that year

- a. **MS-Res students:** The first practicum for **MS-Res** students is assigned during their first Fall term. A student who anticipates a delay in beginning practicum, for whatever reason, should discuss this with the Director of Montgomery Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic.
- b. **MS-DE students:** The first clinical practicum for **MS-DE** students is not assigned until their second Summer term of the core **MS-DE** curriculum. A student who anticipates a delay in beginning practicum, for whatever reason, should discuss this with the Director of Distance Education as well as the Director of External Clinical Practicum.

11.6.1 Guided Observation Documentation

A minimum of 25 hours of supervised observations with diagnostics and therapy integrated must be completed prior to participation in the first clinical practicum. Many students obtained these hours as part of their undergraduate degree in Speech-Language Pathology. Documentation of those hours must be submitted at the initial **MS-Res/MS-DE** orientation. These observation logs

must include the signature and ASHA number of all ASHA certified supervisors. If these forms cannot be located, the graduate student should contact the Speech-Language Pathology department at his/her undergraduate university. A letter from the department chair verifying that at least 25 hours of required clinical observation were completed by the student will be accepted as a substitute for the summary log. **This letter must be on university letterhead and must include the program chair's ASHA number.**

In the event that a student does not have appropriate verification of a guided, observation experience, or cannot provide appropriate documentation of observation hours from the undergraduate degree program, the student will be required to register for the observation course modules (just like students without BA training in SLP).

MS-DE students should notify the Director of Distance Education that they must complete the observation requirement at the time of **MS-DE** orientation. Failure to do so can result in delayed practicum participation. Without this observation requirement being completed, you will not be permitted to participate in practicum.

Always check to make sure that the speech-language pathologist you are observing has an ASHA number and holds **current** ASHA certification as a CCC-SLP. If his/her certification is not current, then **your observation hours will not count.**

See the separate **MS-Res** and **MS-DE Therapy Guides** for forms that should be used to document observation experiences. For students enrolled in COMD 560: Observation in Speech-Language Pathology, these forms will be provided as course documents. Electronic versions of the forms are available as electronic documents that can be completed electronically.

12 National Examination in Speech-Language Pathology

12.1 General Information

According to ASHA, “the Praxis Examination in Speech-Language Pathology (5331) is an integral component of ASHA certification standards. The development of the exam is commissioned by ASHA and facilitated by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to provide a system of thorough, fair, and carefully validated assessments”. Additionally, “the Praxis exam is owned and administered by ETS as part of The Praxis II ®: Subject Assessments; however, ASHA's Council for Clinical Certification in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CFCC) makes a final determination for the passing score”. **Beginning September 2014**, the newly regenerated exam 5331 is available **via computer only**. All COMD students must take the new computer-based exam. The passing score for purposes of ASHA certification is 162 on a scale of 100–200. For more information go to: <http://www.asha.org/Certification/praxis/About-the-Speech-Language-Pathology-Praxis-Exam/#sthash.fc3xcbzr.dpuf>

Contact information for ETS Corporate Headquarters can be found at: <https://www.ets.org/contact/offices.html>.

The exam is comprehensive and contains questions covering 1) Foundations and Professional Practice; 2) Screening, Assessment, Evaluation, and Diagnosis and 3) Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation of Treatment. To pass the exam, “students must be able synthesize information” from multiple sources and “understand the subject as a whole”. The Speech-Language Pathology Test at a Glance [PDF] is available for students to “familiarize themselves with exam content” and structure prior to the taking the Praxis.

The current Praxis Bulletin is available at: <http://www.ets.org/praxis/about/bulletin/>

12.2 The Praxis and ASHA Certification/Passing Score

According to ASHA, “individuals are eligible to apply for certification once they have completed all graduate-level academic course work and clinical practicum and been judged by the graduate program as having acquired all of the knowledge and skills mandated by the current standards. Once certification has been applied for, applicants have two years in which to complete the certification process, which includes passing the Praxis exam. For additional information on certification go to:

<http://www.asha.org/Certification/praxis/About-the-Speech-Language-Pathology-Praxis-Exam/#sthash.9psKoVEh.dpuf>

12.3 Requirement to Take the Praxis Exam as a Graduate Student

All USC-COMD students are required to take the PRAXIS examination prior to graduation **as a graduate student**. The Department cannot accept your scores taken as undergraduates - even if you received a passing score as determined for ASHA certification. You must take the test as a graduate student and we must have that score on your record.

As part of the annual review document that the Department is required to submit to the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA), our Department must report the percentage of graduating students who passed the Praxis exam **that year** (i.e., the year in which they graduated). CAA uses the passing rate as a way of assessing the quality of a university's training program (and evidence for the continuation/discontinuation of accreditation). CAA does not consider a student's performance on the Praxis, taken at the end of undergraduate school, a measure of what that student has learned while pursuing a master's degree. Thus, your passing score on the Praxis is a reflection of the knowledge you acquired as a student at your undergraduate college, but says nothing about what you learned here as a graduate student at USC.

It is important to understand that ASHA and CAA are two different entities that have two different functions, and consequently two different uses of the Praxis. ASHA grants board certification to speech-language pathologists (i.e. the CCC-SLP) and uses the Praxis to determine which individuals are eligible to receive such certification. In contrast, CAA grants accreditation to graduate training programs and uses the Praxis to determine whether a program is doing an adequate job of preparing speech-language pathologists. This is why all of our students must take the Praxis in the year they graduate. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders requires students to take the Praxis near the end of Fall term (November or December) of their last year in the program.

12.4 PRAXIS contact information and Testing Center locations

The following website contains all contact information (phone, fax, email, mail) for the *Praxis*® program and *The Praxis Series*®:

<https://www.ets.org/praxis/contact>

To locate a **Testing Center** near you, you may use the following web link:

<https://praxis.ets.org/test-takers/test-day-test-center.html>

12.5 Score Recipient Codes

There are some important score recipient codes that students need to include when they register for the Praxis II exam. Recipient Codes for Praxis II (5331) scores that are very important for COMD graduate students:

- **RA0274** – Audiology / Speech-Language Pathology / Attending Institution / Recipient Codes for graduate students in Communication Sciences & Disorders - REQUIRED for all COMD students to send score reports.
 - **NEVER** use 5818 as the attending institution code because this will send your Praxis scores to the College of Education instead of to COMD as your training program. **ONLY USE RA0274** as your attending institution / recipient code.
- **R5031** - American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Recipient Code – REQUIRED for all COMD students
- **R8064** – SC State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology/Audiology Recipient Code
 - *This is part of LLR where you will apply for your license after you graduate **IF** you plan to be practicing in the state of South Carolina.*
- **R8108** – SC Department of Education (SCDE) recipient code – **ONLY** if the Praxis II exam will **NOT** be taken in South Carolina. Otherwise, your scores will be automatically sent to the SCDE if you take the exam in SC.

NOTES:

DO NOT send your scores to the Office of Student Affairs in the College of Education. These scores will be provided from COMD for graduating students each year during the time applications are being processed in the Spring term.

***IF** you will be taking the PRAXIS exam outside the state of SC, then you must submit your Praxis II scores to the SC Department of Education (SCDE) to complete the recommended process for initial application for teacher certification/educator licensure in South Carolina to obtain the “Masters + 30” credential. R8108 is the Recipient Code for the SC Department of Education.*

12.6 Reporting Scores

Reporting scores is **free of charge if done before or at the time of the test**

“Exam results must be sent directly from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to ASHA in order to be applicable toward certification. When you register to take the exam, request that your score be reported directly to ASHA. ETS charges an additional fee to report scores after the examination has been taken. Your score will be sent to the ASHA National Office within 8 weeks of the examination date. The National Office is able to automatically match scores with individuals only if your application for certification is on file with the Certification office at the time the score is received and if the computer record has been established for you. To assist the National Office in processing your examination information, it will be helpful if you submit a copy of the report sent to you by the testing service when you submit your application for certification. However, please note that this copy will not be used as official verification of completion of the examination requirement.”

Students are also required to request that a copy of their exam score be sent directly to the Department. Please select UofSC/COMD as a score recipient when you take the exam (code

provided in your PRAXIS Prep packet). (retrieved from <http://www.asha.org>, May, 2014).

Note: You should also request a copy be sent to the State Department of Education in the state where you will be employed. See your PRAXIS Prep course packet for this code).

SAVE YOUR EXAM SCORE:

“The ETS retains an examination score for five years only. Therefore, **you must keep your exam score in a secure place** with other important documents. If in the future you apply for certification or state licensure and are unable to provide a copy of your examination score, you may be required to take the exam again and obtain a passing score. The **ASHA National Office is not responsible for maintaining examination scores** after certification is awarded.”

12.7 Preparation for the National Examination

To help you prepare for the test, a Department-sponsored *mandatory* “PRAXIS Prep Workshop” is offered early in the Fall term (typically late August or early September) of the second year of graduate school. Additionally, ETS offers study guides for the examination, which can be ordered directly from ETS on-line for a small fee. The study guide contains the content outline for the examination, sample questions, helpful suggestions for test taking, and a practice test. To order “A Guide to the NTE Speech-Language Pathology Specialty Area Test” (Test Code 5331) from ETS go to <http://www.ets.org> and follow these instructions: 1) under *Tests and Products* click on the link to *Praxis Series Tests*; 2) find the Quick Link *Prepare for a Test* and 3) select either by profession (speech-language pathology) or by number (0330). From there, follow the link to the e-book study guide for purchase.

Additional information concerning preparation materials for the Praxis (5331) exam for speech-language pathology are available at the ETS web site via the following web link:

<http://www.ets.org/praxis/prepare/materials/5331>

How to Qualify for Certification in South Carolina: Information can be located at the following website: <http://www.ets.org/praxis/sc>

12.8 Applicants Who Live Overseas

“Applicants who live on or near a U.S. military base in a foreign country may be able to make special arrangements to take the examination by contacting the education office on the military base or by contacting: Sandra Winborne, Examination and Certification Programs Division, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) 6490 Saufley Field Road Pensacola, FL 32509-5243. Phone: DSN: 922-1111 (plus extension), CML: (850) 452-1111 (plus extension).

12.9 Individuals With Disabilities

Individuals with a disability that may impair their ability “to take the examination under standard conditions” should review the information provided by ETS at:

http://www.ets.org/praxis/register/disabilities?WT.ac=praxishome_disabilities_121126.

Students also may contact ETS directly to arrange for necessary accommodations. Contact ETS Disability Services at the following:

Phone: 1-609-771-7780

Phone: 1-866-387-8602 (Toll free for test takers in the United States, U.S. Territories* and Canada) *Includes American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands).

TTY: 1-609-771-7714

Fax: 1-609-771-7165

E-mail: stassd@ets.org

Mail: ETS Disability Services; PO Box 6054; Princeton, NJ 08541-6054; USA

“Applicants requesting nonstandard testing considerations must complete and submit the following items to ETS: *Exam Registration Form*, *Eligibility Questionnaire*, *Certification of Documentation Form*. All forms and information regarding the requirements for nonstandard testing considerations may be found in the examination "Registration Bulletin.

