

Applying to Graduate Programs in Communication Disorders

&

An Introduction to the NMSU Program in
Communication Disorders

Fall 2007



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Accredited Graduate Programs

In order to be eligible for ASHA's Certificate of
Clinical Competence in

Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP)

or

Audiology (CCC-A)

you must apply to one of the master's or entry-level
doctoral programs that are *accredited* by the
Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology
and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) of ASHA.

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Finding an Accredited Program

You may wish to explore ASHA resources on
Graduate Schools. Check out [ASHA's Higher
Education System Guide](#).

This lists all programs in speech-language
pathology and audiology in the country.

Here you will find information on faculty, admission
requirements, funding, and faculty's teaching,
clinical, and research interests.

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Competitive Admission

Over the last 5 years or so, admission into graduate
programs in communication sciences and disorders has
been very competitive.

Some colleges/universities may receive as many as 200-300
applications for 35-40 slots in speech-language pathology
and 30-40 applications for 6-10 slots in audiology.

Slots are generally limited due to factors such as: the
requirement for each student to obtain 400 clinical clock
hours, faculty resources and the size of faculty, supervisory
resources, and the size of facilities and client population
available.

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Where to Apply?

Begin by thinking about which schools you want to apply to – consider possible financial aid options, faculty areas of interest, familiarity, etc.

You should be able to picture yourself living in that environment and interacting with the faculty and staff.

It's often considered a good idea to apply to more than one school - though application fees can get expensive (\$25-50 per school).

Don't be afraid to apply to a school you don't think you'll get into – you never know!

Applying to Programs

Contact the admissions office to obtain a graduate school catalogue, applications or other information.

Contact the CD program director or chairperson to let him/her know that you plan to apply.

Arrange a visit to the university/college campus.

You may wish to contact the financial aid office as well as the CD program director to obtain information about possible funding opportunities.

Prepare your application well in advance. Have an objective person read your application. Do *not* submit an *incomplete* application or one that has errors (e.g., grammatical, spelling).

Tips/Advice for Applications

Many programs provide a checklist for your application. Be sure to follow this closely.

You may also wish to develop your own checklist to organize deadlines, required parts of applications, etc.

Many application deadlines fall in January or earlier.

Plan ahead so you don't get behind, rushed, or send LATE or INCOMPLETE application!

GPA

Each academic program has its own criteria for admission.

The criteria may vary, depending on whether you are applying for speech-language pathology or audiology.

In general, most graduate programs like to see a GPA *in the major* of 3.4 or higher.

The admissions review committee will evaluate a student's overall GPA as well as their GPA within their major and/or minor. Students that perform well in core courses such as science, mathematics, and the humanities are considered very attractive to the CD admissions review committee.

Personal Essay/Letter of Intent

Your essay letter should focus on your reasons for wanting to become a speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

It is also beneficial to talk about your interest in the scientific basis of the discipline and the attraction these professions hold for you.

This letter also serves as a sample of your writing. The review committee will likely look at this closely as it may be predictive of your written work at the graduate level.

If you had to retake a class or if you did poorly one semester due to some external factors, explain this in your letter so that the admissions review committee is aware of these extenuating circumstances that may not be indicative of your true academic performance.

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Tips/Advice on Essay or Letter

Follow instructions!

If they give a word limit, follow it!

If they ask a specific question, make sure to answer it completely!

Ask for help:

From a friend, teacher, parent, co-worker

Utilize resources:

Writing Center

Books from the Library or Online Resources

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Resume

Some CD programs require that you include a resume in your application packet.

This should take the format of a professional resume.

If you have had experiences related to the field through clinical practicum, other work, as a volunteer, as a member of local or national NSSLHA, etc., it is important to include this.

Many applicants also incorporate a work history, club membership, volunteer history, and scholarships/awards to show well-roundedness in their academic experiences.

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Letters of Recommendation

In general, these letters should be from faculty members who can speak to your potential to perform at the *graduate* level.

Faculty members that have taught you for more than one class are ideal.

If you have done research, volunteer work, or served in a leadership role (e.g., NSSLHA) a letter of recommendation from those with whom you worked closely may also strengthen your application.

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Letters of Recommendation Continued

It is important to remember that letters of recommendation are written for you *out of courtesy*.

Ask if the person will write a "favorable letter" on your behalf, and/or explain why you've asked them.

It may help to talk about your goals/reasons for applying, so the writer can tailor and personalize the letter.

You should always allow ample time for the writer to prepare.

The writer does *not* have to provide you a copy of the letter, but you may request this.

You should never *re-use* an old letter or list a person as a reference prior to seeking approval from that person.

Tips/Advice on Letters of Recommendation

Ask as early as possible!

Provide the prospective reference with

- which schools you're applying to
- the due dates for the letters
- instructions (do they give them to you OR send them directly to the school, do they have to be sealed, is there a waiver form, etc.?)
- stamps/postage
- any other info, such as your essay, resume, transcript that will help them write a GREAT letter

Send THANK_YOU NOTES!

Typical Admission Requirements:

Requirements may vary to some degree, most programs will request the following:

- Completed application
- Letters of recommendation
- GRE Scores
- Official transcripts
- Personal letter or essay about your interest in pursuing a career in CD
- A resume (may not be required by all programs)
- Individual or group interviews (may not be required by all programs)

GRE

The majority of graduate programs in CD require the GRE.

One of the reasons is that the GRE is often required for admission into the university/college (not just the program or department).

Contact the universities/colleges to which you are interested in applying to obtain information about the minimum GRE score required for admissions.

Studying for the GRE

There are many review courses for the GRE (books, online courses, KAPLAN courses).

It may be useful for you to take one of these courses, especially if you have not done well on standardized tests in the past.

Many find it helpful to simply “practice” taking these sorts of tests for improving “familiarity” with the format. It may also be helpful to you to identify areas of weakness (e.g., vocabulary, etc.).

Make sure you plan ahead so your official scores are reported/sent by a school’s deadline!

NMSU’s Graduate Program in Communication Disorders

Our **graduate degree program** is a two-year program that provides students with the coursework and clinical training with all age groups and disorders that is needed for **national certification** by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) as well as **state licensure** in New Mexico and surrounding states.

Students in the NMSU Program

We have approximately **42 graduate students** (1st and 2nd year students) who are completing coursework for the Masters degree.

We also do offer an **extended masters program** (generally 3 years) to students who desire a bit slower pace due to work, family, or other commitments.

Applying to NMSU’s Program in CD

Application to our program requires

- completion of a written application
- completion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)
- 3 letters of recommendation
- a professional resume, and a
- personal statement.

Applicants are reviewed in **February** of each year in preparation for admission in the following Fall semester.

Applying to NMSU's Program in CD Continued

Applicants are reviewed in February of each year in preparation for admission in the following Fall semester.

Many of our graduate students receive their degrees from our undergraduate program, however we often admit 2-3 per graduate students per year from **other programs and states**.

The number of graduate program applicants generally exceeds the number of spaces available in our graduate program. This is primarily due to the significant **clinical-training demands** of the profession.

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NMSU's Graduate Leveling Students

We have a particular history here at NMSU of having very strong applicants from outside of our program who enter the graduate program as **leveling students**.

We generally have **5-6** of these in a given year and these students are often some of the top graduate students in our program.

This is a 1-year/30 credit sequence of undergraduate courses for students who do not already have an undergraduate degree in communication disorders. These students then complete the 2 or 3 year Master's degree sequence.

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NMSU's CD Coursework

The Council for Clinical Certification of ASHA (CFCC) requires that each student complete coursework in areas of study that addresses the knowledge and skills in the field that are consistent with our **scope of practice**.

Our graduate program is a **52-credit program** that is designed to meet the requirements for certification.

Students must also then complete a post-masters **clinical fellowship** and **pass a national examination** to meet national certification and state licensure requirements.

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NMSU's Clinical Training

The Council for Clinical Certification ASHA (CFCC) also requires that a student obtain **400 clock hours** of **supervised clinical experience** in the practice of speech-language pathology.

Twenty-five of these hours must be spent in clinical observation, and 375 hours must be spent in direct client/patient contact.

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NMSU's On Campus Practicum

Our **first-year graduate students** complete 1 full year and one full summer of **on-campus practicum** in the NMSU Speech and Hearing Center that contributes to meeting their 400 clock-hour requirement.

During these supervised practicum experiences students provide services to **clients of all ages with various types and severities of communication and/or related disorders, differences, and disabilities.**

Clinical clock hours are obtained through direct contact with a client or the client's family in **assessment, management, and/or counseling** for communication disorders.

Direct supervision of clinical service is provided by a qualified clinical supervisor who holds current ASHA certification in the appropriate practice area.

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NMSU's Externship/Training

Our **second-year graduate students** complete the remainder of their required 400 clock hours in **two externships in off-campus settings.**

These placements occur in schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, private practice settings, and with community agencies in the Las Cruces/El Paso area.

Clinical clock hours are obtained through direct contact with a client/patient or the client's/patient's family in **assessment, management, and/or counseling** for communication disorders.

Direct supervision of clinical service is provided by a qualified clinical supervisor who is employed in the externship setting and who holds current ASHA certification in the appropriate practice area.

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NMSU Contact Information

If you would like further information, or if you are planning to visit the campus, please contact me to schedule an appointment by calling 505.646.7831 or TDD to 505.646.3140.

Be sure to check out our websites:
<http://web.nmsu.edu/~nmsucd> and
<http://web.nmsu.edu/~nsslha>.

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Resources Used for This Presentation

The American Speech Language Hearing Association website and materials.

The National Student-Speech-Language-Hearing Association website and materials.

The New Mexico State University Program in Communication Disorders website and materials.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison – power point presentation and suggestions on applying to Graduate Programs in the Communication Sciences and Disorders.

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