

Guidelines for Externship Experiences in Speech-Language Pathology

Ithaca College
Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
School of Health Sciences and Human Performance
Ithaca, NY 14850

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SLPG-665 Professional Externship in Speech-Language Pathology
(4-5 credit hours, may be repeated)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Final clinical experience in speech-language pathology. A full-time, off-campus clinical placement of 8-10 weeks in duration designed to complete a student's graduate education. Specific duties and responsibilities vary with the placement site. Site assignments are made in accordance with the student's interests and needs.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this experience, students should:

1. understand the nature and organizational structure of the rehabilitative or educational environment in which they practice,
2. demonstrate knowledge of the nature of speech, language, hearing, and communication disorders and differences and swallowing disorders at the placement, including their etiologies, characteristics, anatomical/physiological, acoustic, psychological, developmental, linguistic and cultural correlates,
3. be able to administer and interpret a variety of assessment instruments appropriate to the environment(s) in which the experience is gained; and to:
 - conduct screening and prevention procedures, collect case history information and integrate information from clients/patients, family, caregivers, teachers, relevant others, and other professionals
 - select and administer appropriate evaluation procedures, such as behavioral observations, non-standardized and standardized tests, and instrumental procedures
 - adapt evaluation procedures to meet client/patient needs
 - interpret, integrate, and synthesize all information to develop diagnoses and make appropriate recommendations for intervention
 - complete administrative and reporting functions necessary to support evaluation
 - refer clients/patients for appropriate services
4. be able to develop setting-appropriate intervention plans with measurable and achievable goals that meet clients'/patients' needs, including the ability to:
 - collaborate with clients/patients and relevant others in the planning process
 - implement intervention plans (involve clients/patients and relevant others in the intervention process)
 - select (or develop) and use appropriate materials and instrumentation for prevention and intervention
 - measure and evaluate clients'/patients' performance and progress

- modify intervention plans, strategies, materials, or instrumentation as appropriate to meet the needs of clients/patients
 - complete administrative functions and documentation necessary to support intervention
 - identify need for other services and refer clients/patients appropriately
5. show appropriate interaction and personal qualities:
- communicate effectively, recognizing the needs, values, preferred mode of communication, and cultural/linguistic background of the client/patient, family, caregivers, and relevant others
 - collaborate with other professionals in case management
 - provide counseling regarding communication and swallowing disorders to clients/patients, family, caregivers, and relevant others
 - adhere to the ASHA Code of Ethics and behave professionally
6. have exposure to different philosophies and theories affecting the provision of therapeutic programs in the work environment,
7. understand the broad range of professional responsibilities and competencies required to function within the practicum environment.

GRADING

A grade for the experience is determined collaboratively by college faculty and the site supervisor(s). This grade is based on accurate and thorough completion of requirements, professional growth, clinical performance and professional behavior over the course of the practicum experience. Students are encouraged to call their college supervisor or course instructor immediately should questions or concerns arise.

COLLEGE COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The SLP Clinic Director is the faculty member assigned to oversee the placement of graduate students on clinical externship. Responsibilities include to:

1. arrange placements with appropriate agencies in accordance with prescribed procedures,
2. ensure that contractual arrangements are in place through the Office of Experiential Learning and appropriate communication is established among the student, college and affiliate,
3. coordinate all written and oral communication before, during and after the placement

COLLEGE SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The college supervisor serves as a liaison to the college for both the student and the cooperating speech-language pathologist. Responsibilities include to:

1. maintain close liaison with the agency supervisor and student and be accessible for consultation as needed;
2. supervise the work of the student in the cooperating agency. When distance does not preclude on-site visitations, the supervisor will visit the agency to observe the student's work and to confer with the student and with the agency supervisor regarding the student's performance and progress made toward fulfilling learning objectives. (The latter function will be conducted over the phone whenever site visitations are not feasible);
3. assign a final grade to the student based on established criteria.

NATURE OF PLACEMENTS

Students can complete a clinical affiliation in most environments which employ licensed, ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists. Appropriate affiliation sites include hospitals and acute care environments, sub-acute or rehabilitation programs, private and public schools, specialized preschools, educational programs, long-term care facilities or private practices. A student must complete a minimum of 8 weeks full-time clinical experience to qualify as an external placement, but may stay within a placement for up to 20 weeks.

SELECTION OF COOPERATING SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

Individuals who possess their Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology may serve as the primary supervisor for a graduate student on affiliation. In some cases, students may have more than one supervisor during the clinical experience. Supervision guidelines include those specified by the Council of Academic Accreditation (see sections on Externship Requirements for Supervisors and Role of the Cooperating Speech-Language pathologists).

ADMISSION TO CLINICAL EXTERNSHIP

Students must have successfully completed Graduate Clinical Practicum I, II, III and IV to be eligible for clinical externship, and must be in good academic standing. These prerequisites may be waived under special circumstances as determined by the SLPClinic Director.

TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING DURING GRADUATE EXTERNSHIP

Transportation: Each graduate student will be required to furnish his/her own transportation to the placement. Many cooperating speech-language pathologists work in more than one location. For this reason, it is essential for students to have reliable transportation during a placement.

Housing: The individual graduate student is responsible for arranging housing during his/her externship. Students placed more than thirty miles from campus are encouraged to live in the community in which they are working.

VACATIONS, ABSENCES AND CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Vacations: Students during externships will follow the same work calendar and schedule that their cooperating speech-language pathologists have. These will not always coincide with Ithaca College vacations.

Graduate Student Absences: Student absences due to illness must be reported to the cooperating speech-language pathologist and college supervisor. Absences due to reasons other than illness must be requested and approved by the college supervisor in advance. Absences due to illness which exceed two days must be made up. Procedures for making up absences exceeding two consecutive days are to be negotiated with the college supervisor and the cooperating speech-language pathologist.

Cooperating Speech-Language Pathologist Absences: When a cooperating speech-language pathologist is absent, arrangements should be made for a graduate student intern to work with another therapist or professional at the facility, if that arrangement is possible. Students must always have access to an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist while engaged in therapy. Should an ASHA-certified therapist be out of the building, it is imperative that another supervisor or mentor be accessible on location for assistance, if the student maintains client contact.

Conference Attendance: The department encourages continued professional growth of both students and cooperating speech-language pathologists. However, students interested in attending conferences need to receive prior permission from the college supervisor and externship supervisor. Generally, if the cooperating speech-language pathologist is attending the conference, the student's request will be approved. If the cooperating speech-language pathologist is not attending, then the college supervisor will consult with the cooperating speech-language pathologist before deciding whether to grant permission. Students should make up the days missed for attendance at the conference.

THE ROLE OF THE COOPERATING SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

Building Confidence

The beginning graduate student is likely to be a little anxious and apprehensive. Instilling self-confidence in the student should be an ongoing objective of the cooperating speech-language pathologist. Prior to the fieldwork experience, the student has had practicum experience with a variety of clients within the Ewing Clinic and off-campus placements associated with Ithaca College. The first full-time placement may, however, be the student's first full-time fieldwork experience. This experience represents an opportunity for the student to integrate academic and theoretical aspects of therapy into real world clinical practice with a greater number and variety of clients. Suggestions to ease the transition into this new experience and build confidence follow.

1. On the first day, spend time orienting the student to the clinical setting by getting him/her acquainted with the physical surroundings and other personnel. Be sure the student is oriented to safety procedures of the facility.
2. Be specific and clear in outlining the expectations and responsibilities you have established for the student. Topics should include: therapy, assessment procedures, reports, materials, meetings, and resources. Many cooperating speech-language pathologists have found it helpful to provide the student with a written outline or checklist.
3. Provide the student with some opportunity to observe you doing therapy to acquaint him/her with the clinical program. The extent of this observation will depend upon your personal preference and/or style of instruction.
4. Suggest readings in texts or journals when appropriate to facilitate better understanding of the nature of specific disorders or therapeutic approaches.
5. Give positive feedback and encouragement for work well done as well as suggestions for improvement.

Teaching Skills/Strategies/Approaches

Your approach to teaching the student will vary according to your own preference and style, setting and caseload. Cooperating speech-language pathologists are encouraged to be flexible in meeting the needs of individual students. While all students who receive a graduate externship placement must meet the standards of the college to do so, there is a wide range of ability among students and some will need more guidance and support than others.

It is desirable to expose the student to a variety of therapeutic approaches and strategies whenever possible. Assignment of appropriate reading in texts or journals is left to your discretion.

Many cooperating speech-language pathologists have found it worthwhile to give the student responsibility for two or three therapy sessions initially and to gradually increase responsibility for the entire caseload, if appropriate.

If at any time during the externship, you as supervisor think that you or the student needs assistance in making the externship a positive learning experience, contact the college supervisor as soon as possible.

Providing Feedback

It is essential for the cooperating speech-language pathologist to observe the graduate student frequently and provide written and/or oral feedback regarding the quality of the therapy interaction. Strengths and weaknesses of clinical skills should be specified.

You may devise your own format for evaluating the graduate student or follow the outline of the college forms. You are requested to complete a minimum of two comprehensive written evaluations on the forms provided by the college (midterm and final) and submit them to the college coordinator. Prior to sending the form to the coordinator, please go over the evaluation with the graduate student.

1. The content of feedback and supervision often progress in a three step sequence.
2. The cooperating speech-language pathologist gives the student specific suggestions for changes in the therapy program or assessment procedures .
3. The cooperating speech-language pathologist assists the student extern in program- solving and self-evaluation.
4. The student extern problem-solves more independently and self-evaluates therapy
5. and assessment performance, with a steadily decreasing level of assistance from the cooperating speech-language pathologist.

On the final evaluation, you are asked to recommend a letter grade for the student's overall performance during the placement. Additional written comments elaborating on progress, strengths, weaknesses, etc would be helpful to the college supervisor. The final grade assigned to the student by the college supervisor takes into consideration the following:

1. The cooperating speech-language pathologist's grade recommendation based on clinical performance.
2. The quality of the completed assignments required during the placement.
3. The student intern's overall growth and level of professionalism.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF THE GRADUATE EXTERNSHIP

1. Before initiating independent therapy, the graduate student should observe the site supervisor as appropriate. The rate at which the student assumes responsibility for new clients will depend on the student's readiness and past experience with similar cases. Progress/SOAP notes should be completed following each therapy session.
2. Before independently administering a diagnostic test, it is recommended that the graduate student should observe the site supervisor giving the test at least once. The student is expected to become familiar with procedures for test administration and interpretation.
3. The graduate student should take full advantage of all diagnostic opportunities as determined appropriate by the site supervisor. A written summary is required for each test administered. Participation in comprehensive diagnostic evaluations and reporting is expected.
4. The graduate student will write a comprehensive care plan for at least one of the clients/patients evaluated while at the placement, or, at sites where evaluation opportunities are limited, write a comprehensive plan for a new client/patient entering the site during the student's placement.
5. The graduate student is responsible for writing at least three functional or curriculum-based objectives for each of a minimum of three clients/patients receiving services from the graduate student.
6. The graduate student will read and write summaries for at least two (2) articles, book chapters, or other material related to disorders seen at the placement site. The site supervisor will guide the student in making an appropriate selection regarding these readings.
7. The graduate student is encouraged to attend all team, interdisciplinary, etc. meetings related to clients/patients receiving therapy from the student.
8. The graduate student is encouraged to take full advantage of collaborative programming with other professionals and should observe at least one session of the following: adaptive physical education, special education, reading, occupational therapy, regular education class. The student should write a short description of this observation.
9. The graduate student is responsible for following all procedures required for legal documentation of clients seen and all personnel policies appropriate for professionals on site at the externship placement.

***PLEASE NOTE: Neither the site nor the site supervisor is responsible for guaranteeing that the student will obtain his/her minimum number of clock hours for ASHA certification; however a minimum of 100-120 hours direct client contact time per 8- to 10-week experience is expected.

The graduate student is expected to show increased independence over the course of the experience. He/she should assume as many responsibilities of the cooperating speech-language pathologist position as is appropriate, relative to the experience and competence level the student has demonstrated. Student externs are not expected to function at the same level of competence as a licensed, certified speech-language pathologist. By the completion of the second externship, students should be prepared for a clinical fellowship year, as demonstrated by having fulfilled all requirements on ASHA's Knowledge and Skills Acquisition (KASA) form.

EXTERNSHIP REQUIREMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SITE SUPERVISION

Requirements

Ithaca College is accredited by the American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) . The following requirements meet both the CAA standards and Ithaca College's Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology standards for supervision of graduate students:

1. An ASHA certified individual (CCC-SLP) must be on site or available for consultation 100% of the time while the student clinician is engaged in direct client contact.
2. A minimum of 25% of direct client contact time by the student must be directly observed in real time by the supervisor.
3. A minimum of 50% of the student's evaluation/diagnostic sessions is encouraged.
4. The student clinician is expected to obtain a minimum of 100-120 hours of client contact time for each 8-week externship.
5. Ithaca College requires that the graduate student be formally evaluated/graded by the site supervisor a minimum of two times while the graduate student is at the placement, once at midterm and once as a final grade. The appropriate evaluation forms should be submitted to the Ithaca College Clinic Director when completed. Programs are encouraged to use evaluation devices specific to their work site.
6. The supervisor should become familiar with the minimum requirements the student is expected to complete over the course of the placement and act as a facilitator and advocate in helping the student complete his/her requirements. Additional requirements at each location are at the discretion of the site/supervisor.

Suggestions

1. The graduate student should be given a **comprehensive orientation** to his/her placement. This should include a discussion of expectations, roles and responsibilities of the student and supervisor as well as other professionals and staff at the placement. It is helpful for graduate students to be provided with a tour of the site and to be given copies of any written policies or procedures which must be followed.
2. Before independently administering a diagnostic test, the graduate student should observe the site supervisor giving the test at least once. The first time the student administers a test, it is often helpful for both supervisor and student to separately record data and obtain results. The student and site supervisor's results can then be compared and feedback provided to the graduate student.
3. Verbal and/or written feedback should generally be provided by the site supervisor each time the graduate student is observed. Supervisors are encouraged to consider the student's level of experience with specific disorder types in making judgments regarding clinical performance.

4. It may be helpful for the graduate student and site supervisor to meet once per week for approximately one hour to discuss the student's progress and areas needing improvement. Discussions should include observations regarding therapeutic, diagnostic and interpersonal skills as well as writing abilities.
5. It is recommended that the graduate student and site supervisor establish at least two measureable goals per week for the graduate student to accomplish.

ACTION PLANS

The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology is committed to training competent and caring practitioners. As required by the Council of Academic Accreditation and the Council for Clinical Certification, students must demonstrate knowledge and skills in prevention, assessment and intervention across the professional scope of practice. By the completion of the graduate program and the second fulltime fieldwork experience, students should demonstrate clinical performance, including technical skills and generic professional abilities, which are appropriate for entry into the profession.

In order to assist students in the development of these competencies, an Action Plan may be implemented at any point during the clinical sequence, including professional externships or student teaching experiences, should student performance not meet expectations. The Action Plan documents skills requiring continued work, indicates both goals and procedures to facilitate acquisition of the skills or professional behavior requiring assistance and the date of expected completion.

Typically, the Action Plan is initiated by the clinical supervisor in consultation with the SLP Clinic Director, Clinic Coordinator, and/or College Supervisor, and is a formative process involving active engagement with the student clinician.

Signs that an action plan may be necessary include, but are not limited to:

- Difficulty on the student's part with complying with clearly-stated rules and expectations of the site or the supervisor
- Little or no improvement in a clinical or professional area, despite guidance from the supervisor
- Situations where a student demonstrates a lack of a particular skill set, and needs remedial work in order to be effective in a specific area

Proactive contact with the college supervisor is encouraged any time the supervisor feels that extra attention is needed for a problem.

EXTERNSHIP TIME LINE

The following is a suggested timeline to assist the graduate student and cooperating speech-language pathologist. Call Ms. Cecconi, Speech-Language Pathology Clinic Director (607-274-3714) or college supervisor immediately with questions and concerns.

First Week:

- An approximate daily schedule, including contact information for the student and supervisor, must be sent to the college supervisor.
- The graduate student and supervisor should discuss expectations for the experience (e.g. How will the number of people served change from week to week? How will feedback be given: written, oral, both? Dress code? Hours expected to work? Amount of written documentation to be completed? etc.)
- All relevant policies and procedures should be reviewed. Students are encouraged to become aware of the weekly routine and organizational climate/structure of the affiliation.
- Students are encouraged to plan times to visit/observe other types of therapies in addition to observing the cooperating SLP.
- The graduate student should review frequently used tests and read examples of written documentation.
- Students should become familiar with daily documentation, including Progress/SOAP notes. Even if the site does not require specific session documentation, the supervisor and student are encouraged to develop a system of written session notes that will meet the needs of the student, the supervisor, and the client.

Mid-Term: (4th or 5th week)

- Students and supervisors should determine whether there are any unresolved issues between the student and supervisor. Use chain of command, but resolve any issues.
- The graduate student should be continuously assuming greater responsibility for the caseload.
- Observations of on-site supervisor and other professionals should continue. The student should be engaged in some independent therapy and diagnostic assessment.
- Written documentation should be progressing.
- At least two contacts with college supervisor should have been completed.
- Both the student and supervisor should discuss status of the placement with the college supervisor. A mid-term review must be completed and sent to the college supervisor.
- A review of requirements should be completed to determine remaining needs.

Final: (8th or 10th week)

- A third contact with the college supervisor should have been completed.
- All requirements should be finished.
- A final review between supervisor and graduate students should be completed with a recommended grade provided. Clock hours should be signed.
- Written documentation including progress reports from the site must be completed to ease transition for supervisor back into their full-time caseload.
- The following must be sent to the clinic coordinator: clock hours, requirements checklist and final student evaluation.