

Policies and Procedures Affecting Students  
in the  
Communication Sciences and Disorders Program

Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education  
The University of Georgia

Revised April 2008

## INTRODUCTION

The CMSD Program adheres to all relevant policies and procedures established for students by The University of Georgia and by the College of Education, including those of the undergraduate and graduate admissions offices, the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Graduate School, and others. The Program also adheres to all relevant policies and procedures established for students and for training programs by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and by the State of Georgia. Students in clinical practicum are also bound by the Speech and Hearing Clinic Policies and Procedures. The policies and procedures provided in this program handbook are intended to supplement, not replace, existing university policies or policies from other controlling units; thus, this handbook is not intended to be comprehensive. Students with any questions of policy or procedure are responsible for first familiarizing themselves with all relevant University, ASHA, and other policies.

If two existing policies are found to be in conflict, the CMSD Program will abide by the stricter of the two.

**SECTION ONE:  
DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
IMPACTING ALL STUDENTS**

The policies and procedures described in this section apply to all students enrolled, or seeking to enroll, in any CMSD course. Students, faculty, staff, and persons served in the program's clinic are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner – that is, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, participation restriction, age, sexual orientation, or status as a parent. The institution and program comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and executive orders pertaining thereto.

***Diversity***

The college within which this program resides prides itself on an active respect for and understanding of cultural and individual diversity. The program's policies and procedures reflect that institutional priority in many ways, including infusing issues related to cultural and individual diversity throughout the curriculum (undergraduate and graduate); recommending graduate applicants to the university for diversity-based assistantships; tracking student clinicians' work with clients from different backgrounds and actively seeking clients and external clinical placements to increase that diversity; and policies for student clinicians that emphasize that native proficiency in English is not a prerequisite for clinical practicum.

***Accommodations***

The University of Georgia strives to provide for its students who have various disabilities every opportunity to participate fully in the educational programs and services it offers. To this end, for students with documented disabilities, the university provides reasonable accommodations for students to access information presented in the classroom, as well as means by which students knowledge can be assessed. Reasonable accommodation may come in the form of course modification, or, if necessary, course substitution.

***Transfer of Credits***

Transfer credit is determined by the student's advisors with input from the course instructor. Review of course syllabi and textbooks will usually be necessary before transfer credit is granted.

***Course Equivalency***

Course equivalency is determined by the student's advisors with input from the course instructor. Review of course syllabi and textbooks will usually be necessary before waivers of the requirement to enroll in a UGA course will be granted.

***Independent Studies***

An independent study at the undergraduate or graduate level requires prior approval of the instructor, advisor, and CMSD Program Director. Application must be made prior to registration on the appropriate form, which can be obtained from the Departmental Office.

### ***Faculty Contact***

Contact information for faculty, both regular and adjunct, are located in the syllabus for each class as well as in the main office (516 Aderhold).

### ***Course Withdrawal***

The University has specific rules for dates of course withdrawal with varying grade limitations and fee refunds. The University Bulletin or staff in the office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs can assist you with this information.

The instructor may withdraw a student registered for credit or auditing a class in case of excessive absences. The grade of WF will be assigned unless the instructor determines that there are justified reasons for the excessive absences; in this case a grade of W may be assigned.

### ***Record Access***

All students have access to their records in accordance with university procedure located at <http://www.reg.uga.edu/or.nsf/html/ferpa>.

### ***Petitions/Appeals***

To solve any problem, the student should first discuss any concerns with faculty directly involved. If the student cannot solve the problem in discussion with the faculty involved:

A. Undergraduate students address the concern to their advisor and then to the Program Director.

B. Graduate students address the concern to their assigned academic advisor and then to the Program Director if it relates to academic issues, or to the SLP or Audiology Clinic Coordinator and then the Clinic Director if it relates to clinical issues. If the problem cannot be solved satisfactorily by those persons, then it should be addressed to the Graduate Coordinator or to the Department Head.

In the event that the concerns are not solved satisfactorily, clinic and/or program policies, decisions, or requirements may be challenged by student petition for concession on a particular point. Written petitions should be used only in extreme or unusual circumstances by the student. All petitions should be in writing, addressed to the Department Head, and contain the following information: (1) name of petitioner; (2) specific rule or policy which is being challenged; (3) a complete history of the attempts made thus far to solve the problem; and (4) specific reasons why the student believes the petition should be granted.

Petitions concerning clinical policy or procedure will be referred by the Department Head to the Clinic Director who will convene a Clinical Committee to discuss the petition. The Clinic Director will then forward the vote of the Clinic Committee to the Department Head. The Clinic Director may also file a minority opinion if she or he is so disposed. The Department Head will consider the action of the Clinical Committee and report the decision in writing to the student

Petitions concerning academic policy or procedure will be referred by the Department Head to a

faculty committee to consider the petition. The Department Head will consider the action of the faculty committee and report the decision in writing to the student.

Students have the right to appeal departmental decisions to the Dean of the College of Education or to the Graduate School, and then to the University Academic Affairs Committee.

Students who wish to register a formal complaint to ASHA should do so by submitting a complaint in writing to the Chair, Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, American Speech Language-Hearing Association, 2200 Research Boulevard #310, Rockville, MD 20850. Procedures for filing a complaint are on the ASHA website at [http://www.asha.org/about/credentialing/accreditation/accredmanual/section8.htm#Complaints\\_CAA](http://www.asha.org/about/credentialing/accreditation/accredmanual/section8.htm#Complaints_CAA).

Any alterations in a student's program, whether resulting from a petition or appeal or otherwise, may require decisions to be made by a panel of faculty members that may include the Program Director, the Clinic Director, the student's academic advisor, any involved academic or clinical faculty, and any other faculty as appropriate for the situation.

### ***Safety Procedures***

***Fire Drill Procedure.*** If a person spots a fire, the person should activate the fire alarm system by using the pull station. The person should then call 9-911 from a safe location. In the event of a fire or emergency, an alarm will sound, and everyone is expected to exit by the corridors and stairways. Never use elevators during fire emergencies. If a person encounters excessive smoke while evacuating the building, she or he should remain as low to the ground as possible and crawl to the nearest exit.

***Tornado Watch.*** A tornado watch is issued to alert the public to the possibility of a tornado. This means tornados have not been sighted but conditions are favorable for spawning tornados. Normal activities will not be interrupted during a watch unless threatening skies are observed. No action is necessary except to be prepared to act appropriately if the weather status is upgraded by appropriate authorities.

***Tornado Warning.*** A tornado warning is issued by the local weather office when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Upon notification all persons in Aderhold Hall should move to the core of the building (stairwell) and down to the ground, first, and second floors. Go as close to the ground floor as possible. Remain there until directed to return to your floor or department. DO NOT EXIT THE BUILDING. Stay inside and go to one of the designated safety areas.

***Other emergencies.*** All persons who spend time in Aderhold Hall are responsible for making themselves familiar with the safety procedures in the Aderhold Hall safety manual. These procedures will be discussed in clinical practicum classes (CMSD 7041-7046) for graduate students, and all students have access to the safety manual in the department office.

## **SECTION TWO: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SPECIFIC TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

### ***Application to the Undergraduate Program***

The undergraduate program in the department is a high-demand major. Undergraduate students interested in majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders are required to apply to the major in the academic year preceding their intended entry into major courses. Thirty-five students will be admitted to the program each year. Applicants are required to have a minimum GPA of 3.2 and to meet other requirements. Further information about the application procedures and requirements is available from the department office and on the department's website.

### ***Advising***

Each undergraduate student is assigned upon admission to the major of Communication Sciences and Disorders to a single advisor. It should be noted that the standardized forms and rigid structure of the undergraduate program permit any undergraduate advisor to assist a student if necessary. Students meet with their advisors a minimum of once per semester. Students use advising appointments to register for courses, review academic progress, and determine appropriate electives to enhance their undergraduate education. Advisors provide as much information as possible, but the ultimate responsibility for being informed about and meeting university requirements rests with the student.

### ***Financial Aid***

Students may seek financial assistance from the Student Financial Aid Office located in Room 220 of the Academic Building. That office has information and applications for grants, loans, and work study programs. Applications through that office typically require 6 to 8 weeks for processing.

### ***Program Evaluation***

The program benefits greatly from student feedback. To continuously assess our program and provide the students the best education we can offer, we request that students complete program evaluations. To get an objective perception of the program, all students should complete program evaluations that address the Department's strengths and weaknesses in programmatic, academic, and clinical aspects of the program.

Undergraduate students complete a written evaluation of their programs at the University of Georgia at the end of their last semester before graduation. The undergraduate evaluation will be given in class the last semester of the program.

**SECTION THREE:  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SPECIFIC TO  
GRADUATE STUDENTS**

***Financial Aid***

1. Students may seek financial assistance from the Student Financial Aid Office located in Room 220 of the Academic Building. That office has information and applications for grants, loans, and work study programs. Applications through that office typically require 6 to 8 weeks for processing.
2. The Department may nominate a limited number of applicants each year for graduate assistantships funded by the Graduate School. These assistantships require high grades, high Graduate Record Examination scores, and an outstanding record in academic, research, and/or clinical areas.
3. Very limited funding is available through the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education or through grants held by individual faculty members in the Communication Sciences and Disorders program. Any student who wishes to be considered for departmental or program financial assistance must submit an “Application for Departmental Financial Assistance: Communication Sciences & Disorders.” A copy of this application form can be obtained from the CSSE departmental office or on the department’s website. Ph.D. students are given preference for funding and typically receive three years of funding (excluding Summers). Master’s students may be funded on a semester-by-semester basis when funds are available.
4. Master’s students in CMSD may be eligible for service-cancelable loans from the State Direct Student Loan Section of the Georgia Student Finance Authority: (770) 414-3000.
5. During the graduate hospital/clinic internship experience, a few students may be funded by the center where the student is working. Graduate advisors and intern supervisors have information on such funding.
6. A very limited number of out-of-state tuition waivers are awarded by the university to students who are not legal residents of the state of Georgia. The Graduate Coordinator must nominate students for out-of-state tuition waivers, and the number of nominees is limited by the Graduate School.
7. The Graduate School and the College of Education often have competitive funding available to help support graduate students who travel for the purpose of presenting a paper at regional or national meetings. Guidelines used in considering all requests for graduate student travel are available to interested students.
8. The College of Education offers several competitive scholarships that are appropriate for CMSD students, including scholarships for the student teaching (internship) semester.

CMSD students have been relatively successful in the past in winning these scholarships, and students are encouraged to apply for them. Information is available through the COE Student Services Office, 122 Aderhold.

### ***Advising***

Each graduate student is assigned at admission to a single member of the academic faculty, who serves as that student's academic advisor throughout the graduate program, although the standardized content and structure of advisement folders allows any advisor to assist a student if necessary. Students meet with their advisors every semester, to review academic progress (using the advisement folder and up-to-date transcripts) and to register for the next semester's courses. Students have access to their advisement folders through their advisor at any time, and are provided written plans of the program courses. All master's students in each emphasis area take the same courses, in the same sequence, with limited room for elective course work. This design ensures that all students are completing a program of courses that is designed to result in their earning the master's degree and satisfying ASHA certification, Georgia licensure, and Georgia teacher certification requirements. It should also be noted that, while advisors provide as much information as possible, the ultimate responsibility for being informed about and meeting university, state and national requirements rests with the student.

### ***Speech-Language Competence of Students***

The procedures described in this section were adopted by the faculty to help assure that students exhibit speech-language skills adequate for satisfactory performance as professionals working with people with speech, language, or hearing disorders.

Graduate students enrolled in the Program of Communication Sciences and Disorders will be screened for speech, oral language, and hearing difficulties. Students identified by this screening or by individual faculty members as having speech, language or hearing problems will be referred to the department's Speech and Hearing Clinic for a full speech-language or hearing evaluation and, if recommended, subsequent intervention. Students with recognizable disorders of speech, language, or hearing are not necessarily excluded from clinical practice on the basis of that disorder. Students with disabilities or who have been enrolled in therapy as a result of the foregoing process must be approved by a committee of three CSD faculty members for admission into course work involving clinical practice. Should a student be admitted by the committee to practicum course work prior to full completion of his or her own therapy, committee approval must be obtained until completion of therapy for each subsequent enrollment in a clinical practice course.

Students identified during the screening or by individual faculty members as presenting non-disordered oral or written language patterns which may nonetheless interfere with the clinical aspects of training will be alerted by their advisor. Tutoring will be provided through the Speech and Hearing Clinic at the request of the student. Even though the student will not be required to participate in tutoring in the Clinic, the student will be responsible for exhibiting adequate clinical speech-language skills. If the Clinical Review Committee decides that the student's skills will

interfere in providing appropriate clinical practice, the committee will provide in writing specific recommendations for the student to fulfill.

All Master's level Communication Sciences and Disorders (CMSD) students must demonstrate communication skills sufficient to achieve effective clinical and professional interactions with their clients and relevant others. Individuals educated in foreign countries must meet the criteria required by the International Commission of Healthcare Professions (ICHP) in order to meet this standard (2005 SLP ASHA CCC Standards, IV-B).

For oral communication, speech and language skills in English must be, at a minimum, consistent with ASHA's most current position statement on students and professionals who speak English with accents and nonstandard dialects (1998). This requires that a student demonstrate speech and language skills in English so that if modeling is necessary, the student is able to model the target phoneme, grammatical feature, or other aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client's problem. For written communication, the student must be able to write and comprehend technical reports, diagnostic and treatment reports, treatment plans, and professional correspondence.

### ***Student Demeanor and Dress***

The Communication Sciences and Disorders faculty is committed to instilling a professional attitude and demeanor in their students. This professionalism is intended to allow and facilitate individual growth and the development of clinical and academic skills in all students; ensure quality service to all people with communicative disorders; and provide for the future of the program, the Clinic, the department, and the University by promoting positive impressions in the Athens area and in the extended academic and professional community.

Suggested standards of professional dress and behavior do not rise to the level of being official policy, but written suggestions are provided to students and are expected to be followed. In general, behavior or dress will not be tolerated if it brings undue attention to itself, reflects poorly on the professionalism of the program or the department, or in any way detracts from the clinical and academic missions of the program, the Clinic, the department, and the University of Georgia.

### ***Clinic Overload***

Unless prohibited by university regulations, clinic courses may be taken as an overload when necessary in order to complete ASHA clock hour requirements. The department will adhere to any university regulations regarding minimum and maximum course loads for students.

### ***Practicum Enrollment by Non-Degree Candidates***

Occasionally non-degree candidates take courses in the Department. However, practicum experiences are unique and require substantial prior course work in our planned curriculum; therefore, only students admitted to degree candidacy in our program and following the planned program for graduation will be admitted to practicum courses.

### ***Clock Hours***

Since students move through several clinical assignments, the student can best review his or her own clinical clock hour needs for certification. The clinical supervisor, advisors and materials provided in courses will guide clock hour accumulation. It is the responsibility of the student to account for clock hour needs in planning specific internship and other clinical experiences.

An unsatisfactory grade in clinic will prevent the accumulation of clinic hours with the clients involved. Supervisors, therefore, will not sign clock hours if the clinician's performance is not satisfactory.

Please refer to the Clinical Practicum Handbook for specific clinical competencies and additional clinical requirements.

### ***Course Grades and Grade Point Average***

Graduate students at The University of Georgia must maintain a 3.0 grade point average in their graduate-level (6000 and above) courses, and The University of Georgia will not grant a graduate degree to a student who does not have a 3.0 cumulative graduate average. A graduate student whose cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0 for one semester will receive an official warning from the Graduate School. If the cumulative graduate GPA remains below 3.0 after the next semester in which the student is enrolled, the student will be placed on formal academic probation by the Graduate School. Students on probation who earn below 3.0 in any single semester will be dismissed from the university by the Graduate School.

In addition to the requirement of a 3.0 cumulative graduate GPA, the CMSD program further requires that all graduate students must earn a grade of "C" or better in all required courses. A student who has earned the grade "D" or "F" in a required course must retake that course at a time when it is regularly scheduled; students are reminded that this will often be a full year later and will probably slow their overall progress in clinic and toward the degree. For instance, students will not be assigned clinical work in the academic area where an unacceptable grade was earned. Courses may be retaken only once, for a total of only two attempts; the student who fails to earn a "C" or higher in the second attempt at a required course will be dismissed from the program, regardless of other grades or status.

For graduate students taking undergraduate prerequisite courses, (including 3000-, 4000- and 5000-level courses, and courses taken outside the department) students must earn a "B-" or better due to the nature of the courses. If a student earns below a "B-" in a prerequisite course, the student will meet with her/his advisor. If a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade below B- is earned, a full faculty review will take place for consideration of dismissal. During the undergraduate prerequisite courses, students must also complete 25 observation hours. If a graduate student has not completed the 25 observation hours prior to the first day of clinic, the student will drop CMSD 7041 by the end of drop/add.

Because the University of Georgia will not grant a degree to a student whose cumulative graduate GPA is below 3.0, students who have cumulative graduate GPAs below 3.0 at the beginning of the second to last semester of on-campus coursework (currently Fall of Year 2, for 2-year students)

may or may not be allowed to plan to take Comprehensive Examinations, at the faculty's discretion (see the relevant section of these policies; the GPA must be 3.0 or better at the beginning of the last semester of coursework for students to be allowed to take comprehensive exams at that time). If the GPA is so low that it cannot reasonably be expected to move above 3.0 by the beginning of the semester in which Comprehensive Examinations are regularly scheduled to be taken (currently Spring of Year 2, for 2-year students), the student will be required to improve the cumulative graduate GPA to above 3.0 before comprehensive examinations may be taken. Students need to be aware that comprehensive examinations are offered once per year, in the early summer. A student who does not qualify to take the comprehensive examinations in a given year will need to wait one full year for another opportunity. Students who complete the standard required courses for the degree on academic warning or probation status, or with a cumulative graduate GPA of less than 3.0, will not be permitted to begin a clinical internship (see the relevant section of these policies) until after the GPA has been raised, regardless of whether comprehensive examinations have been attempted or completed. The GPA will usually be raised by retaking required CMSD courses in which a grade lower than "A" was earned. In some cases, the student may seek and be granted the faculty's permission to raise the GPA by taking additional graduate-level courses that are approved by the student's advisor and by the faculty as having some relevance to the student's program of study.

### ***Faculty Review of Student Progress***

The faculty is required by the University of Georgia and by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association to monitor students' overall progress toward their intended degrees. The intent of the Student Review is to make sure that students clearly understand any academic, clinical, or professional concerns the faculty might have as early as possible, so that they know what skills and professional behaviors they need to improve. Therefore, the entire program faculty reviews all graduate students two times each year, addressing academic, clinical, and professional development. If a student shows problems calling for special attention, the student is informed of the problems in writing by the assigned academic advisor. The letter will address the specific areas of concern, the expected changes, and the time line to implement the changes. The letter will delineate the consequences if the expected changes are not achieved, and will be signed by the student's advisor and the Program Director.

Students who perform well in the academic program, but have difficulty with the clinical program or are failing in clinical practica, may be advised to discontinue the clinical component of the program. That student may finish the academic Master's degree, but will not be eligible for licensure, credentialing, or certification as a speech-language pathologist. Students who have clinical problems, but whom the faculty believe can successfully move to internships after extra time and effort in supervised on-campus clinical practicum, may be required to stay for additional on-campus clinic and/or independent reading to achieve very specific clinical competencies before beginning an internship (see the policies regarding internships).

The intent of student reviews is to assist students to complete their degrees, but the faculty reserves the right to dismiss any graduate student from the program who is not meeting clinical or academic standards or who exhibits unprofessional behavior that is inconsistent with the Code of

Ethics of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, with the academic honesty policies of The University of Georgia, or with other relevant codes or policies.

### ***Transition from On-campus Practicum to Internships***

Students are judged to be ready for internships by the entire faculty, based on an array of factors including performance on comprehensive exams, clinical competencies, professional behavior and judgment, academic performance, and other extenuating circumstances (e.g., program slowed down for personal reasons). At a minimum, students must meet the following criteria to be allowed to begin the first of the two required internships:

1. completed all required coursework for the degree with a 3.0 cumulative graduate GPA and with a “C” or better in each course;
2. attempted comprehensive examinations; and
3. rated as a minimum 3.0 on the CF 405 Practicum Evaluation and satisfactory performance in competency areas.

In addition, to be allowed to begin the second of the two required internships, students must meet at least the following additional criteria:

1. passed comprehensive examinations; and
2. successfully completed the first internship.

If the faculty judges the student not ready to begin the first clinical internship, the student will stay on campus for an extra time period to be determined by the faculty, during which the student must meet specific requirements and/or develop specific competencies that will be described in writing and discussed with the student. Substantial additional information about clinical competencies and internships is provided in the Clinical Practicum manual.

A student is considered to have the requisite knowledge and skills to be eligible for ASHA certification if he or she has: (1) maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better, (2) earned a grade of “C”, “S”, or better in all required coursework (academic and clinical), (3) successfully completed two required (full) internships, and (4) passed comprehensive examinations or successfully completed and defended a Master’s thesis.

### ***Students Opting for an M.A. Degree***

Graduate students may choose to complete a master’s thesis, rather than taking comprehensive examinations. Students who complete an approved program of study including the satisfactory defense of a thesis will earn the degree Master of Arts. Students considering a thesis are encouraged to discuss this option with their assigned advisor, with any of their instructors, or with any other faculty member. The CMSD faculty encourages students to consider the thesis option and will work with the student to identify an appropriate thesis advisor, topic, and specific project. This process should start as early in the graduate program as possible.

Thesis students complete all of the coursework and clinical practicum, on the same schedule, that students taking comprehensive examinations complete, with the exception that appropriate programmatic changes may be available to accommodate the research and writing needs of thesis

students. Academic advisors and thesis advisors will assist individual students in determining their programs.

The CMSD Program usually requires the thesis student to develop a written proposal that should include a comprehensive review of the literature, specific research questions, and a complete description of the methods proposed to answer those questions. Unless other arrangements are unanimously accepted by the committee for specific and exceptional circumstances, the written proposal must be approved by the student's thesis committee prior to data collection.

Development of the proposal, data collection, analysis, and writing are conducted by the student with the supervision and guidance of the advisor, and students should expect to work on several drafts of each piece of the thesis with corrections and suggestions from the advisor. A complete thesis that has been tentatively approved by the thesis advisor must be provided to the entire committee at least two weeks prior to the final defense. After the defense, the committee may recommend changes or additional analyses. A final document is then required to be submitted to the Graduate School prior to graduation. To graduate with an M.A., the student must pass the written and oral defense of the thesis as specified by the Graduate School and meet all other requirements specified by the Graduate School. **Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves early in the process with the Graduate School's deadlines for the semester in which they would like to graduate, and for determining what procedures and documentation are needed for each deadline. Failure to do so can result in delaying graduation.**

#### *Students Opting for an Academic-Only or Nonclinical Master's Degree*

The initial assumption within the CMSD graduate program is that master's degree students desire to complete both the academic coursework and the clinical practicum portions of the program. Students seeking to complete only the academic coursework, without completing the clinical practicum, may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis. Students earning this academic-only or nonclinical master's degree will not be prepared or eligible to practice speech-language pathology in any setting and will not be eligible for certification, credentialing, or licensure. The UGA CMSD program does not train SLP aides or any other assistant-level practitioners.

#### *Ed.S. and Ph.D. Students*

The relevant policies in this handbook apply to Ed.S. and Ph.D. students, as to all other graduate students. Ed.S. and Ph.D. students are also referred to the information about those programs available on the department's website, from the Graduate School, and from their own advisors.

#### *Program Evaluation*

The program benefits greatly from student feedback. To continuously assess our program and provide the students the best education we can offer, we request that students complete program evaluations. To get an objective perception of the program, all students should complete program evaluations that address the Department's strengths and weaknesses in programmatic, academic, and clinical aspects of the program.

Graduate students in the Master's program will complete an evaluation of the program at the end

of the last semester. This evaluation is due to the speech-language clinic director at the final clinic check out.

Graduates will also be asked to complete the *Master's Degree Graduate One Year Follow-Up* survey one year after graduation to give us additional feedback for continuous program improvement. Additionally, with your knowledge and permission, we will send a brief survey to your employer.

**SECTION FOUR:  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS  
FOR STUDENTS SEEKING THE M.ED. DEGREE WITH AN EMPHASIS IN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY**

*Format, Expectations, and Grading Policies (Approved 8/99, revised 8/2003, 8/2006, 1/2008)*

I. Prerequisites: Students seeking the M.Ed. must complete written comprehensive examinations near the end of their graduate program. Comprehensive examinations in CMSD are intended to be integrative across all coursework, providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to combine and apply their knowledge at a professional level. Comprehensive examinations are offered once per year, usually immediately before the beginning of the spring semester in early January.

Comprehensive examinations are open only to students who have completed all academic coursework required for the master's degree, with a grade of "C" or better in each course officially recorded on the UGA transcript by the registrar's office and with a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 showing on the official UGA transcript as of the date of the examination. All other variations are unacceptable and do not constitute satisfaction of this requirement (i.e., grades of "Incomplete" are unacceptable, grades of "C-" are unacceptable, and it is the *cumulative graduate GPA* as officially calculated by the university that must be at least 3.0).

Students who do not meet these criteria may be allowed, in exceptional cases and at the faculty's discretion, to take the comprehensive exams. Students seeking such special consideration must provide a written petition to the Graduate Coordinator not later than the midpoint of the semester prior to that in which exams would be taken (i.e., during the Fall semester of the second year, for 2-year students). The petition must include (a) the student's proposed plan for meeting all of these criteria, and (b) the student's explanation as to why previous performance should be overridden in the faculty's consideration of future performance. The faculty's decision and plan may or may not accept the student's plan or explanation, and may or may not use the student's proposed plan. Students are also referred to relevant policies on "Course Grades and Grade Point Averages" and on internship requirements and procedures elsewhere in this document and in the Clinic Handbook.

II. Nature of comprehensive examinations:

A. Comprehensive exams will typically include two integrative, essay-type, questions. No *a priori* content areas will be formed; regardless of the particular format in a given year, integration across all SLP coursework and experiences will be required.

B. Comprehensive examinations are administered as a sequence of two examination dates, one initial written examination and one follow-up oral examination. Both the initial written comprehensive examination and the follow-up oral comprehensive examination are completed by the student in person at UGA.

C. The initial comprehensive written examinations are administered in one full day, usually administered in a UGA computer lab so that students may type their answers. If a computer lab is not available in a given year, the department faculty will make every effort to make sufficient computers available. If sufficient computers are not available, comprehensive

examinations will be written in blue books provided by the department.

D. For in-house written comprehensive examinations, students are provided with all necessary questions at the beginning of the day and may pace themselves as they choose during the day. No assistive resources or materials of any kind are allowed during in-house comprehensive examinations; students should plan to bring nothing to the examinations.

E. Information about possible question types, and some sample questions, will be provided to students by a faculty member designated as the Coordinator for Comprehensive Exams during the semester before comprehensive exams (i.e., usually during Fall semester). Questions provided to students as sample questions will not be used in the actual comprehensive exams.

G. Each written question will be developed and graded by a team of two or more SLP faculty, with no faculty member serving on more than one team in a given year. In the case of two-member teams, a third SLP faculty member (who is not serving on the team for any another question) will serve as a deciding vote in case of disagreement between the first two team members regarding question development or scoring (see below re: scoring).

### III. Exam dates and time allotted

Exam dates will be determined annually. Written examinations will occur immediately before the beginning of the first semester in which students are enrolled in the culminating off-campus clinical externships. Oral examinations will occur during that semester. Students need to plan to be available from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on all examination dates. The department will inform internship supervisors of this date ahead of time (students who do not need to complete the oral examination will attend their internship that day as regularly scheduled). Dates will be selected that do not conflict with known religious observances.

### IV. Special Circumstances

A. Documented physical, learning, or other disabilities will be appropriately accommodated by the department for comprehensive exams as for any other course or activity. Affected students should speak with the Graduate Coordinator at least one full semester before they intend to take comprehensive examinations.

B. Academic honesty regulations apply to comprehensive examinations as to any other course or activity. Students should be aware that the department faculty will take academic honesty extremely seriously for comprehensive examinations. If academic dishonesty is suspected in connection with comprehensive exams, the penalty that the department will suggest in facilitated discussions and in formal hearings (see the UGA Academic Honesty Policies) will be failure of the comprehensive exams and therefore immediate expulsion from the program without an earned degree. In such a situation, the department would be unable to recommend a student for any clinical certification, credential, or licensure.

### V. Grading of Initial Written Examinations

A. Each written answer will be read by at least two faculty team members, at least one of whom will have specific expertise or specialty knowledge in relevant areas, blind as to the other's rating. In the case of disagreement concerning "pass" or "fail," a qualified faculty member not on any

other team (see above) will be called upon to serve as the third reader and cast the deciding vote.

B. Each written answer will be graded as either "Pass" or "Fail."

C. Passing or failure is determined first for each question individually. A "Pass" for a given question results from 2 positive votes (either 2/2 on initial vote, or 2/3 if 3rd reader required). All questions must be passed to pass comprehensive exams. A failure on any one or more questions constitutes failure of the exam as a whole.

D. Given the integrative nature of the questions, the grade of "Fail" for a written question will often arise from any of three broad causes:

1. A severe (defined as a definite and unacceptably strong) weakness in content of one specific curricular area that formed part of the integrative question, despite acceptable knowledge of other aspects of the question;

2. Moderate to severe weakness in content from more than one curricular area contained in the question (thus preventing meaningful integration);

3. Presentation of a series of accurate but disconnected facts without appropriate integration.

E. Students who fail one or more of the initial written questions will be required to meet for a follow-up oral examination for each question failed with a committee of at least three faculty members. At least one member of the oral examinations committee for each question will have served as a reader for the relevant written question, but all members of the oral examination committee will not necessarily be the same as the faculty members who served as readers for the initial question. Students who fail only one question will meet with one faculty team for one oral examination based on that question. Students who fail two or more questions will meet with two or more faculty teams for separate oral examinations based on each question that was not passed. No follow-up oral examination is required for any written question that was graded as "Pass" by at least 2/3 readers.

F. The nature of the oral examination will be dictated by the nature of the "Fail" and will be determined for each student individually by the faculty team. The following general guidelines will be used to develop questions for the oral examination:

1. If part of the problem was a focal content weakness, the defense will usually address that specific content area in depth.

2. If part of the problem was weak content across more than one content area, or lack of integration of generally accurate content, the defense will usually cover those content areas and focus on their integration and will address different aspects of those same content areas.

3. Defense questions may also expand on the initial questions or ask about related or complementary areas.

G. At the completion of the Oral Examination, the student will leave the room and the committee will within 5 minutes make a determination of either “Immediate Pass” or “Discussion Required.” This decision will be communicated orally to the student immediately.

H. In the event that the committee’s decision is “Discussion Required,” the following steps will be completed.

1. The faculty committee that conducted each oral examination will discuss the student’s answers for that question and any other relevant information and will then grade each student as “Pass,” “Remediation Required,” or “Final Failure” for each question. This decision will be communicated to the Comprehensive Examinations Coordinator within 24 hours.

2. If the decision for the single question addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Pass,” or if the decision for all of the two or more questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Pass,” then the student has passed comprehensive examinations.

3. If the decision for any one or more of the questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations is “Final Failure,” whether that failure is for the single question that was addressed or for as few as one of the two or more questions that were addressed, the Comprehensive Examinations Coordinator will convene a meeting of the SLP faculty within one week to discuss the case. Unless the faculty by a majority vote of those present finds compelling reasons to overturn the finding of “Final Failure,” the decision will stand and the student will be reported to the graduate school as having failed to complete requirements for the graduate degree. This outcome can occur for any one question and therefore for the comprehensive examinations as a whole regardless of the outcome of any other question. The student will be removed immediately from any clinical externship placement and dismissed from the program. No degree will be earned, and the department will be unable to recommend that student for any certification or licensure.

4. If the decision for one or more questions addressed at the stage of Oral Examinations by any one student is “Remediation Required,” and if the student received no grades of “Final Fail” for any answer at the stage of Oral Examinations, then one team of at least 3 SLP faculty members will develop one Comprehensive Remediation Plan for that student. If the student is judged to require remediation based on the oral examinations associated with two or more initial written questions, the team to develop the remediation plan will include at least one faculty member from each initial written question. The Plan will specify (a) those activities that the faculty will require the student to complete to be able to earn a "Pass" for comprehensive examinations; and (b) a timeline within which those activities must be completed. Remediation activities may include retaking for a grade or auditing one or more courses when those courses are regularly scheduled; retaking comprehensive examinations at their next regularly scheduled administration a year later; and/or other activities that will

generally substantially delay a student's graduation from the program. Students with Comprehensive Remediation Plans in place will be removed immediately from their externship placements unless the committee and all relevant clinical supervisors agree to the continuation of that externship. **Failure to complete all activities on the Comprehensive Remediation Plan by the date specified will result in failure to pass graduate comprehensive examinations, and therefore failure to obtain a Master's degree in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Program.**

V. Feedback to students following each examination stage:

A. At each stage, students will be informed in writing of all decisions. Written feedback about the reasons for all decisions other than "Pass" will also be provided. No results will be given over the phone or by email.

B. In the event of a "Fail" on any one or more questions from the **initial written examination**, the SLP Comprehensives Coordinator (one of the team members) or another faculty team member will assign an oral defense exam date. Students will also be provided with written feedback from at least two readers about the reasons for the "Fail" decision at this stage.

C. In the event that the decision of "Final Fail" is let stand by the SLP faculty after the **oral examination**, the letter to the student will also include a brief narrative (written by the SLP Comprehensives Coordinator and approved by all SLP academic faculty) summarizing the reasons for the committee's decision.