

COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR 2024 APPLICANTS

For more information about our program, please go to our Departmental website: <http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd/futurestudents.htm>.



DEADLINE TO APPLY: DECEMBER 15TH 2023

All information about the process and the deadline is available at <https://portal.csdcas.org>.



**Arnold School of
Public Health**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Arnold School of Public Health

Communication Sciences and Disorders

Dear Prospective Student,

We are pleased to learn of your interest in our speech-language pathology program at the University of South Carolina (USC). The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (COMD) offers a Master of Science degree in speech-language pathology in two modalities: as a full-time residential (on-campus, face-to-face) student (MS-Res), and via distance education, part time (MS-DE). One degree, two modalities! Our program is accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

The University of South Carolina is located in Columbia, adjacent to the state capitol. It has been in this location for over two hundred years and the old section of campus (the “Horseshoe”) is widely recognized for its lasting beauty. The economic climate is good and the cost of living much lower than is usually associated with urban areas. At USC, we believe that diversity and inclusion are necessary to achieve academic and institutional excellence. The University community houses many international students and faculty, and we are ranked within the [top 3%](#) of the nation’s colleges and universities for the number of African American graduates. In particular, our program strongly encourages applications from students from underrepresented backgrounds, for whom there are current shortages in the field! We are one of the top [25 graduate speech-language pathology programs](#) in the USA, and USC is also one of a select group of universities to earn the Carnegie top-tier designation in both research activity and community engagement. We believe you will find Columbia a fine place in which to live and study, or as an educational home campus if you are a distance-education student.

Thank you for your interest in our speech-language pathology program! If you have further questions after reading this Information Package, please do not hesitate to contact our Admissions Coordinator, Ms. Teresa Boyett (803-777-3080; tboyett@mailbox.sc.edu). For questions specific to our MS-DE program, please contact the Director of Distance Education, Ms. Crystal Murphree-Holden (803-777-1170; cmholden@mailbox.sc.edu). Please also note the Frequently Asked Questions that apply specifically to the MS-DE degree, at the end of this package. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Barnes, PhD, CCC-SLP
Graduate Director

INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR 2023 APPLICANTS

For more information about our program, please go to our Departmental website:

<http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd/futurestudents.htm>.

Mission of the Department of CMD at USC

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.

Master of Science in speech-language pathology, residential modality (MS-Res)

In the residential modality, the MS degree is the traditional, on-campus degree the University has offered for more than 45 years. Students admitted to this program must be continuously enrolled on a full-time basis for two calendar years. That is, the MS degree in the residential modality cannot be earned by attending classes summers and evenings only. We admit students with an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology/communication disorders, as well as students without such a degree. For applicants with undergraduate majors in speech-language pathology (and the minimum of 25 supervised hours of guided clinical observation), the MS-Res curriculum begins in the Fall term and continues for two calendar years (including a final Summer internship). Applicants who have not completed the required prerequisite courses in speech-language pathology begin their graduate work in Summer Session I or Summer Session II, depending on previous course work completed, and then merge with the other students in the Fall.

Master of Science in speech-language pathology, distance-education modality (MS-DE)

Courses for the MS degree in the distance-education modality are taken on a part-time basis (generally six to eight semester hours of coursework each term) with three of four Summer semesters being reserved for clinical practicum experiences. As for the MS-Res students, the exact point of entry into the MS-DE curriculum is dependent on a student's previous coursework and clinical practicum. For applicants with undergraduate majors in speech-language pathology (and the minimum of 25 supervised hours of guided clinical observation experiences), the MS-DE curriculum begins Summer I and continues for three calendar years plus a final Summer internship (10 semesters). Students with undergraduate majors in other disciplines take background coursework during Fall and Spring terms prior to entry into the regular MS-DE curriculum that begins in the Summer (12 total semesters).

Tuition and Fees

With the exception of our program-specific enrichment fee, tuition and fees for our program are determined by USC.

Please see the following website for tuition and fee information:

https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/apply/graduate_applicants/tuition_fees/index.php

Applying to the Master's Program

Applicants for the MS-Res and the MS-DE modalities are only accepted through the **CSDCAS** centralized application system: <https://portal.csdcas.org>. You must apply online through this system. There is no additional University application to complete outside of CSDCAS. All information about this process and the **firm application deadline (December 15th)** is available on the CSDCAS website. Please note that there are two listings, so you must carefully choose whether you are applying for the MS-Res or the MS-DE pathway; **you may not apply to both modalities**. Submission of GRE scores is optional (see below), but information regarding the location and dates for GRE testing may be obtained by visiting the GRE website (www.gre.org/ttindex.html) or calling (800) 967-1100 or (609) 771-7670. When sending scores, **please use DI code 5821**, which will ensure your code is sent to CSDCAS.

Required materials for application

Your application package should include:

- Your college transcripts
- A personal statement, addressing why you are applying to our program at UofSC in particular plus one or more other questions (see instructions in the [CSDCAS portal](#)).
- Three letters of reference, including at least two from academic advisors/professors, unless you have not taken college-level classes within the past 10 years. See Letters of Reference.

Prerequisite coursework – general education

ASHA's 2020 Standards for Certification of Clinical Competence require that applicants' transcripts reflect course credit for each of the following four areas:

- Statistics
- A biological science
- Chemistry or physics
- A behavioral/social science

Please see ASHA's website for more detailed information on what courses are considered eligible:

<https://www.asha.org/Certification/Course-Content-Areas-for-SLP-Standards/>

Most of you will have met these requirements as part of your undergraduate education. However, just to be sure, please examine your transcript and, if you have any questions, call or email our Graduate Admissions Coordinator, Ms. Teresa Boyett (803-777-3080; tboyett@mailbox.sc.edu). Neither the MS-Res nor MS-DE degree modalities have room in their curricula for additional coursework to be taken. **Thus, it is essential that you have met these requirements prior to entering the master's program in COMD at the University of South Carolina.** In case you have not yet taken your prerequisite coursework at the time of your application, you will need to indicate when and where you will be taking these courses, so that their acceptability can be assessed.

Background coursework in communication sciences and disorders

To begin your graduate program as a student 'with a background in COMD', you must have accumulated a minimum of 25 clock hours of supervised clinical observation (see information below) plus completed either (1) an undergraduate degree in Speech-Language Pathology/Communication Sciences and Disorders, or (2) the following coursework (each for **3 term hours credit**), having earned a **B or higher** in each course:

- Anatomy of the Speech & Hearing Mechanism
- Phonetics (including transcription of disordered speech)
- Normal Language Development
- Articulation Disorders (including disorders in children and adults)

The Admissions Committee will look specifically for these four courses on your transcript. If you believe you have taken these courses, but under a different title, you may be asked to supply a course syllabus and/or letter from your course instructor describing the course content. An undergraduate course that includes information on one or more of these subjects along with other topics **does not** satisfy the requirement. For example, some universities offer courses entitled "Disorders of Speech", which includes articulation, stuttering, voice, etc. This is not the equivalent of a 3-hour course that deals solely with disorders of articulation. Do not be alarmed if you have not taken all of these courses; it will not determine whether or not you are admitted into the program; only **when** you will begin.

These courses will need to have been taken **by the application deadline**, for you to be considered a student with a background in COMD. If you do not have an undergraduate degree in SLP/COMD, you have not taken these background courses by that time, or if you earned grades lower than a B for any of these courses, you apply as a student without a background and (re)take the missing courses with us, before proceeding in the program to the core master's degree coursework. In that case, you would be starting in the Summer for MS-Res and Fall/Spring for MS-DE (depending on the courses that need to be taken). Note that you cannot continue in the MS program if you earn a below-B grade in any of the background courses taken with us.

Minimum GPA and GRE requirements

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders uses the Graduate School's minimum undergraduate grade point average (GPA) for admission (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). We take a holistic view of your application package, so we do not only focus on academics. However, this is an academically rigorous program, and we have to make sure our students are prepared for this. To give you an idea of our admission standards regarding academic grades, the mean GPA for students admitted into our program across the last five years (2018-2022) was 3.73. In 2022, the average GPA of our admitted students was 3.76, and 25% of our admitted students had GPAs higher than 3.9, while 25% of our admitted students had GPAs below 3.6. If you have had one particularly poor term (or year, for that matter), you should explain the situation leading to this performance in your personal statement.

Submission of **Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores is optional**. If you do submit your GRE scores, we will take these into account when assessing your academic potential, but not submitting scores will not count against you. In 2019, when submission of GRE scores was still required, students admitted into the master's program had a mean Verbal GRE score in the 51st percentile, a mean Quantitative GRE score in the 35th percentile, and a mean Written GRE score in the 63rd percentile. The Educational Testing Service (<http://www.ets.org/gre/>) has a lot of information to prepare you for the GRE test.

Letters of Reference

At least two of your letters of reference must be from academic advisors/professors*. If you wish, a third letter may come from an employer or clinical mentor, so long as it is in a **professionally related** area. Letters from individuals other than these provide little insight as to what type of graduate student you would be and, consequently, are not given much or any weight.

**The only exception to this requirement is for students who have not taken college-level classes within the past 10 years. Such students may send up to three letters from clinical advisors and/or employers that can speak to their relevant professional development and skills.*

Clinical Observation Hours

Whether or not you have accrued 25 or more supervised observation hours determines when you begin the program (not whether you are admitted). There are only two situations in which we will give you credit for the observation hours obtained prior to enrollment in our program: they must have been obtained as either 1) part of the requirements of a course in speech-language pathology or 2) a requirement for an undergraduate major or post baccalaureate program in speech-language pathology. If the 25 minimum observation hours were not obtained as part of a course, the mechanism by which they were obtained and guided must be specified on departmental letterhead stationery and signed by a faculty member who was responsible for monitoring student observation. All observation hours must be both **guided and supervised** by a professional with a current certificate of clinical competence (CCC) awarded by ASHA. Observation hours that students obtain on their own (for example, while doing volunteer work or "shadowing" a speech-language pathologist) do not count towards meeting this requirement.

Applicants without a background in speech-language-pathology

The Admissions Committee is seeking to select the 35 most outstanding applicants for each degree modality (MS-Res and MS-DE), so having a background in speech-language pathology is not a prerequisite to being admitted! Not all students know their ultimate career choice when they enroll in college and many students change majors while in school. In fact, most colleges do not even have an undergraduate major in speech-language pathology. However, what you have done to prepare yourself for this career choice is important. There are numerous avenues for non-speech-language-pathology majors to show evidence that they have investigated the profession thoroughly and educated themselves about our graduate program. It is smart to address this in your personal statement, and to make sure your relevant experiences show up on your curriculum vitae. Each year, as many as half of all applicants admitted to our master's program majored in something other than speech-language pathology as undergraduates.

Practicum Sites

Currently, both master's degree pathways (MS-Res and MS-DE) use many practicum sites for student training, throughout the USA. In addition to our own *USC Montgomery Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic*, these sites include hospitals,

rehabilitation centers, nursing and assisted living facilities, community clinics, public schools, and private practices. Housed within the *Montgomery Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic* are a variety of specialty clinics and support groups, including the Cochlear Implant Program, Child Phonology Clinic, Preschool Language Groups, Stroke and Aphasia Support Groups, and Parent Training and Support Groups. In addition, the Clinic provides a full scope of voice, stuttering, head injury, stroke, aural (re)habilitation, and augmentative communication services. Due to the various locations of practicum sites that may involve a commute of 60-90 minutes, it is essential that each student have access to a car. Residential students should plan on completing one semester with this type of commute. You should not count on public transportation or car-pooling to serve your practicum travel needs. Practicum site availability will be limited 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.

Please be advised that the vast majority of our clinical partner sites mandate COVID-19 vaccinations. For that reason, you will be required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination. Note that the granting of religious or other exemptions is at the discretion of clinical practicum sites, not the Department of COMD.

Special Interest Groups

Additional and unique specialization experiences are available to a small number of new residential students each year. Students apply for these opportunities after the Fall term of their first year, so **after** admission to the program.

Auditory-Verbal Therapy (AVT)

Our department offers a program that is unique perhaps across the nation. A limited number of MS-Res students receive specialized training in therapy techniques for individuals with hearing loss and cochlear implants (CIs). Students pursuing this additional training have the opportunity to participate in a working Cochlear Implant Team, they attend monthly meetings involving guest speakers and other specialized events, they enroll in specialized coursework, and they complete a 10-week internship geared toward children and adults with hearing loss. These select students may witness a parent seeing their child respond to sound for the first time, or be present as an adult hears their loved ones' voices for the first time in years! Students graduate with a certificate that reflects their additional training and expertise. Further, participation can be a stepping stone for those wanting to pursue international certification in AVT. Interested students apply to this AVT special-interest program at the end of their first term, so after they enter the program.

Neurogenics

COMD has a unique opportunity for students to expand their experiences in preparation for hospital and rehabilitation employment. The Department has active research in neurogenic disorders and maintains clinical affiliations with area medical centers. There is an opportunity for a limited number of MS-Res students to receive extra training in all aspects of brain dysfunction: stroke, head injury, dementia, and progressive diseases. Students pursuing this additional training attend monthly meetings to discuss and learn through the use of guest speakers, films, and presentations. Students also work with stroke support groups, attend workshops and other special events, and complete practicum assignments and clinical internships in neurogenic medical and rehabilitation sites. Students who complete these additional neurogenic coursework and practicum experiences emerge with a certificate that reflects their additional training and expertise. Interested students apply to this Neurogenics special-interest program at the end of their first term, so after they enter the program.

Scholarships, Fellowships, and Financial Aid

We encourage you to search online for available scholarship opportunities (see the websites listed under contact information in this package). There are many websites that allow you to set up a profile to receive timely notices of scholarship offerings. Additionally, if you visit the USC Financial Aid and Scholarships web page at www.sc.edu/financialaid, you may find other links to scholarship opportunities. The Department of COMD has additional information about financial aid and scholarships on our website that you may want to read as well (under 'Future Students' – 'Financial Aid'). Please understand that our Department is not responsible for student financial aid.

There are various ad hoc awards and scholarships at the University, School and Department level, such as the Sharon Webber Scholarship (COMD) and the Cecil Scott Fellowship (Graduate School), for which we nominate our graduate students as much as we can! In addition, the Department offers two Breaking Barriers Fellowships to students from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the field of speech-language pathology in the USA. These fellowships consist of a Graduate Assistantship in our Clinic or in a research lab, partial tuition coverage, and in-state tuition rates for out of state students. Offers will be made upon admission, based on student's files, so no specific application to these fellowships is necessary. The Department is actively committed to increasing the diversity of its student population and ultimately the speech-language pathology community, and we hope students from all backgrounds will join us!

Graduate Assistantships

A graduate assistant works part-time in a variety of capacities, depending on the nature of the funding. The student may be hired by a faculty member to perform research related to a grant-funded project, by the Department to assist in various clerical duties, or by the Clinic. Graduate assistants must be full-time students and typically work 10 hours per week. Given the extensive scheduling of clinical practicum in the MS-Res program, COMD students are discouraged from pursuing assistantships of more than 10 hours. However, some flexibility exists, for example if the assistantship permits work to be completed during weekends. Importantly, while the amount of money paid by an assistantship varies slightly depending on the source of funding, all assistantships of 10 hours per week allow students to pay in-state tuition rates, regardless of their residency.

Students who are interested in receiving a Graduate Assistantship offer upon admission are encouraged to indicate their research or clinical area of interest in their personal statement. Assistantships are offered based on merit as well as on Clinic and faculty need. In many cases, Graduate Assistantships can also be obtained after students have started the program, based on their interests and on changing faculty needs.

Visiting our Graduate Program

Our program organizes an Open House for prospective applicants in October, during which you can meet faculty, tour our facilities, and get a good feel for our academic and clinical environment. The exact date and time will be posted on our website well in advance. In addition, we host a monthly **Virtual Open House** between April and November, during which you can ask questions via a chat room. Information about dates and registration for these events is available on our website as well (<http://www.sph.sc.edu/comd/futurestudents.htm>). Due to busy clinic schedules and high numbers of interested students, our availability for individual visits outside of these organized events is very limited, and we cannot guarantee that you will have the chance to meet other faculty or tour the facilities.

After admission

Once admitted to our program, you will receive an admission letter, along with a specific set of instructions. If you are admitted starting in the Fall term, you will be given until **April 15th** to submit a signed "Letter of Intent", along with a non-refundable deposit for \$1,025. If you are to start in the Summer term, you must respond to us by **March 15th**. Your deposit reserves your place in the incoming class and is applied to the \$1,425 Graduate Enrichment Fee, which is required of all incoming students. The remaining \$400 is added to your first term's tuition (Summer or Fall, depending on when you begin your program). Receipt of these letters and deposits lets us know who is definitely planning to enroll and, therefore, how many more applicants we are able to admit. Because so many applicants are waiting to hear from us regarding their application status, we are unable to grant additional time for receipt of your deposit. No portion of your \$1,425 enrichment fee will be reimbursed should you withdraw from the University. We will hold an additional Open House for newly-admitted students prior to our required date for acceptance of admission. The purpose of this **non-mandatory** meeting is to allow students who are considering joining our program to have an additional opportunity to review our program and ask questions. Newly admitted MS-DE students are required to attend a full day orientation, typically held the third Friday in May.

Final advice regarding your application

The Admissions Committee considers several criteria when reviewing an application. Each application is individually reviewed, and the Committee aims to gain an integrated view of the candidate. Each candidate's academic credentials,

skills, and experiences are considered during this process. Based on feedback from past applicants, the Committee suggests that applicants adhere to the following:

- Explore the COMD website to familiarize yourself with the unique aspects of our program (research, opportunities for specialized training, diverse clinical experiences, focus on developing clinical scientists, etc.).
- Read and review instructions, adhering to stated guidelines. Note deadlines and make a plan prior to beginning the application process.
- Start early, allowing time to revise as needed. Because the firm application deadline for completed applications is **December 15th**, it is our recommendation that prospective students begin their application as soon as the CSDCAS Portal opens. Note that official transcripts are required from all colleges and universities attended. Students should request their transcripts allowing sufficient time for them to be received by the application due date. An application without the required transcripts received by the due date will be considered incomplete. University offices are typically closed from early December through the first or second week of January. Thus, it is unlikely that students who wait until December to start the application process will meet the December 15th deadline. The Committee will not review applications that are incomplete or not submitted by December 15th.
- Have several people provide feedback on your application. Request feedback on the content, as well as the organization and conventions of writing (grammar, spelling, etc.).
- Do not send your application materials to faculty and staff at USC COMD prior to the application deadline, as we will be unable to give you pre-admission feedback on your application. You ARE permitted to ask GENERAL questions about the program and admissions process.
- Be yourself rather than trying to present what you think the Committee would like to hear; we value applicants' authenticity and diversity.

CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET

Applying to the Master of Science degree program

Internet: <https://portal.csdcas.org>

Applications for the Master of Science program are only accepted through the CSDCAS centralized application system. You **must** apply online through this system. All information about the process and the deadline (**December 15th 2023**) are available at the site (<https://portal.csdcas.org>). Please note there are two listings so you must carefully choose whether you are applying for the MS-Res or the MS-DE degree. **You may not apply to both degree paths.**

Admissions Coordinator: Ms. Teresa Boyett (803-777-3080; tboyett@mailbox.sc.edu)

Your primary contact for all questions related to admissions and prerequisites.

Director of Distance Education: Ms. Crystal Murphree-Holden (803-777-1170; cmholden@mailbox.sc.edu). Your contact for all questions that are specific to the MS-DE curriculum.

University of South Carolina

Internet: www.sc.edu/

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Internet: www.sph.sc.edu/comd/

The Graduate School

Internet: www.gradschool.sc.edu

Fee Schedule

Internet: www.sph.sc.edu/comd/fees.htm

Bursar's Office

Internet: www.sc.edu/bursar/

Registrar

Internet: <http://registrar.sc.edu>

Student Financial Aid and Scholarships

Internet: www.sc.edu/financialaid/; <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>; www.finaid.org/; www.fastweb.com

Legal Residency for Fee and Tuition Purposes

Internet: www.sc.edu/bursar/residency.shtml

Student Health Services (Immunizations, Student Health Insurance, etc.)

Internet: www.sa.sc.edu/shs/

GRE (Graduate Record Exam)

USC CSDCAS: 5821; Internet: www.gre.org

FACULTY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

FACULTY	RESEARCH INTEREST
Charles F. Adams* , Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 2002 (Co-Coordinator of Neurogenics Track)	Adult Neurogenic Disorders, Stuttering, Accent Modification
Suzanne M. Adlof , Ph.D., University of Kansas, 2009 (Doctoral Program Coordinator)	Child Language and Reading Development and Disorders
Jamy Claire Archer* , M.S., Purdue University, 2006 (Co-Coordinator of Auditory Verbal Therapy Track)	Dysphagia, Cochlear Implants
Meisam K. Arjmandi , Ph.D., Michigan State University, 2019 Implants	Speech Science, Language Development, Hearing Loss, Cochlear
Elizabeth F. Barnes* , Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 2003 (Graduate Director)	Child Speech and Language, Traumatic Brain Injury
Roozbeh Behroozmand , Ph.D., Northwestern University, 2011 Control	Sensory-Motor Integration Mechanisms of Speech Production & Motor
H. Nicole Burrows¹ , Au.D., University of Florida, 2003	Pediatrics, Cochlear Implants
Gina Crosby-Quinatoa* , M.S.P., University of South Carolina, 2001 (Co-Coordinator of Auditory Verbal Therapy Track)	Bilingual Language Evaluation and Interpretation
Dirk-Bart den Ouden , Ph.D., University of Groningen, 2002	Linguistics, Neurolinguistics, Aphasia
Lisa Fitton* , Ph.D., Florida State University, 2018	Bilingual Language and Literacy Development & Disorders
Julius Fridriksson , Ph.D., University of Arizona, 2001	Adult Neurogenic Disorders, Neuroimaging in Aphasia
Abigail Hogan , Ph.D., Northwestern University, 2016	Autism Spectrum Disorder, Fragile X Syndrome in Children
Jessica Klusek* , Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2012	Autism, Fragile X Syndrome, Neurodevelopmental Disorders
William Matchin , Ph.D., University of California, Irvine, 2014	Sign Language, Language Acquisition, Aphasia
Beth I. McCall¹ , Au.D., James Madison University, 2015 (Coordinator of Cochlear Implant Program)	Pediatric and Adult Cochlear Implants, Adult Hearing Aids
Angela N. McLeod* , Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 2004	Child Language, Literacy, Cultural & Linguistic Diversity
Caryn F. Melvin* , Ph.D., University of South Carolina, 1994	Laryngectomy, Dysphagia, Counseling in Speech-Language Pathology
Juliana Miller* , M.S., Baylor University, 1996 (Director of External Clinical Practicum)	Clinical Education
Allen A. Montgomery* , Ph.D., Purdue University, 1967	Speechreading, Speech Perception, Stuttering
Crystal A. Murphree-Holden* , MA, University of Tennessee, 1980; (Director of Distance Education)	Social Pragmatic Communication Disorders, Ethical Practice, Clinical Supervision
Jean Neils-Strunjas* , Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University, 1984 (Department Chair)	Cognition and Communication across the Age Span
Joanna Scoggins* , M.Ed., University of Georgia, 2001 (Assistant Director of External Clinical Practicum)	Language and Literacy, Augmentative and Alternative Communication
Erin Smolak , Ph.D., San Diego State University & University of California San Diego, 2019	Child Language Disorders, Linguistic and Cognitive Development
Elizabeth Will , Ph.D., Colorado State University, 2017	Autism, Down Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, Neurogenic Disorders

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

REGARDING THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE OFFERED THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION (MS-DE)

What is difference between the MS-Res and MS-DE modalities?

Answer: The distance-education version of the Master of Science degree (MS-DE) degree was established in 1992 (the degree was then called the Master of Communication Disorders). Its curriculum, academic rigor, and clinical standards are the same as those of our on-campus MS-Res degree, so the only differences are in the way in which course material is delivered (part-time, via distance education) and how clinical practical experiences are organized. Upon receipt of the MS degree through either the distance-education or residential modality, graduates will have acquired the same competencies, are eligible for the same credentials, and thus are prepared to work in any setting where speech-language services are provided.

Who is eligible to apply for the MS-DE degree in speech-language pathology?

Answer: As with the MS-Res modality, the MS-DE degree is available to any qualified applicant, irrespective of his/her academic background, undergraduate major, or previous work experience. The Admissions Committee is interested in those individuals whose academic performance suggests they would make the best speech-language pathologists.

How do students pursue their degree through distance education?

Answer: The term “distance education” means different things to different people. Although students pursuing the MS-DE degree are provided with online support (interactive message boards and chat rooms, along with the ability to download PowerPoint slides from class and other course materials), this is not a self-paced, online degree, where students pursue their studies at their leisure as their schedules permit. The MS-DE curriculum follows the regular university calendar, which means courses each term have beginning and ending dates, and assignment, exams and papers have specific due dates.

How much flexibility will I have as a part-time graduate student?

Answer: The curriculum leading towards the MS-DE degree is fairly rigid, and requires that students be enrolled six to eight term hours each Fall and Spring term (typically two three-hour courses, as specified by the curriculum), and participate in clinical practicum during the Summer term. All courses must be taken in their proper sequence and students are not permitted to “freelance” the curriculum. Thus, pursuing the MS-DE degree on a part-time basis merely reduces the amount of course work you are required to enroll in each term.

How does the admissions process for the two degrees (MS-Res and MS-DE) work? Am I more likely to be accepted to one degree versus the other?

Answer: The minimum entrance requirements for the MS-Res and MS-DE modalities are the same. The Admissions Committee reviews application materials for both degrees and utilizes the same set of standards regarding academics, letters of recommendation, the applicant’s personal statement, etc. For each cohort (MS-Res, MS-DE, with versus without a background in speech pathology), admission is based on the relative merit of the applicant’s file compared to the

other applicants in the same cohort.

If, at some time during my master's program, my situation changes, can I transfer from one degree to the other (i.e., MS-Res to MS-DE or MS-DE to MS-Res)?

Answer: Unfortunately, you cannot transfer between the degrees without re-applying to the program. Because the MS-Res is full-time and the MS-DE is part-time, the course sequencing for the two curricula is set up differently. There is no time during the MS-DE course of study where a student would be able to transition into the MS-Res curricula, and vice versa. Do not apply to one degree with the notion of switching to the other as your circumstances change. Once enrolled, you are expected to complete the degree to which you were admitted.

Many students pursuing the MS-DE degree have full-time jobs and families. Are any special accommodations made for our other commitments?

Answer: No special accommodations are made, beyond the regular ones for exceptional medical circumstances or family bereavement. If the responsibilities and obligations you have to your family and/or employer have the potential of interfering or conflicting with the requirements of the curriculum, you should not apply to this program. Students who choose to pursue the MS-DE or MS-Res degree do so knowing what our requirements and expectations are and what their present obligations entail. You are encouraged to have serious discussions with your partner and/or other family members to determine the degree of support you will need and receive as you embark upon this rigorous endeavor. While many of you have waited a long time for this opportunity, rather than jumping at the first opportunity, you should ask yourself, "Given my present situation, is this the best time for me to make the commitment to pursue a graduate degree?". If "Yes", then we welcome your participation in the program. If the answer is "No", we will be just as happy to see you in a few years when the timing is perhaps better. Whatever your decision, be advised that when you enroll, you do so with the understanding of the commitment we expect from you.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

Arnold School of Public Health
University of South Carolina
1705 College Street
Columbia, SC 29208
Phone: 803-777-3643
Fax: 803-777-3081
Email: COMD@mailbox.sc.edu

www.sph.sc.edu/comd



**Arnold School of
Public Health**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



The University of South Carolina does not discriminate in educational or employment opportunities on the basis of race, sex, gender, gender identity, transgender status, age, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, genetics, protected veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions.