GUIDELINES FOR CLINICAL PRACTICUM

The hallmark of the Appalachian State University Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Health Sciences is the strong clinical training the students receive. Often when speaking to clinical educators working with Appalachian State University students in the Internship experience, they comment on how the graduate students are well-prepared for the Internship experience. This training is the direct result of the clock hours that the students receive before they go into the Internship. By the time most students complete their graduate degree, they have accumulated 500 to 600 clinical clock hours.

General
In order to be successful, graduate students in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders should be able to perform the following essential functions:

- Ability to participate in clinical activities for 2-4 hour blocks of time with 1 or 2 breaks
- Ability to move independently to, from and in academic/clinical facilities and to provide for one’s own personal hygiene
- Ability to make accurate judgments concerning an individual’s speech
- Basic writing mechanics, including an understanding of sentence structure, rules of capitalization, tense markers, transitions, spelling, use of standard grammatical structure
- Ability to write a cohesive document
- Ability to proofread for punctuation, spelling, formatting, information, and appearance
- Ability to express written ideas with clarity and conciseness.
- Ability to code switch
- Speech intelligibility
- Ability to make appropriate greetings to other people
- Ability to make contacts over the telephone
- Ability to listen effectively.
- Ability to integrate new information into existing knowledge and experiences to solve problems not previously encountered.
- Ability to resolve conflicts in a professional and mature manner
- Ability to develop cooperative relationships with others
- Ability to use time effectively to complete tasks and accomplish goals, including arriving on time for meetings and sessions, and turning in work on time.
- Emotional control, stability, and maturity.
- Ability to work in an organized manner and to demonstrate preparation in all tasks
- Ability to work as a team player
- Ability to perform in an ethical manner.
- Ability to recognize professional growth opportunities and to demonstrate interest and involvement in these opportunities
- Ability to monitor own verbal and nonverbal behavior.

Students may count only those hours for which they have taken or are currently taking the coursework appropriate to the area of the disability.
Students must be supervised a minimum of 25% for all clock hours. The North Carolina Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists requires 50% supervision for each diagnostic evaluation. Therefore every diagnostic must be supervised at the 50% level.

In accordance with North Carolina law the supervisor must be on the premises anytime a student is working with clients.

Students must meet the minimum requirements for expected outcomes at a given level in order to pass each practicum course and to progress from one level to the next in the sequencing system. Any student not meeting the minimum requirements for clinical practicum will be placed with an Appalachian State University clinical educator and a contract will be developed for that student. Failure to meet the expected outcomes of the contract will result in failure for the clinical practicum course. Failures in clinical practicum are subject to the standards governing graduate education at Appalachian State University.

Students should expect baseline levels to be low. They should have some goals on which to work during the semester. The lower scores will help to determine these goals.

**Clinical educators may elect to evaluate diagnostic and treatment skills on a separate basis, turning in two (2) evaluations forms for students.**

Students at Level 2 or higher may be supervised by persons who are not department faculty. The student must have attained a grade of B in the previous practicum experience.

Students are required to monitor their clinical performance and professional development through self-reflections and self-assessment. Clinical educators provide constructive feedback to assist the student in further development of clinical skills.

If a clinical educator has concerns about a student being able to fulfill the obligations required in a clinical setting, then the clinical educator should intercede on behalf of the client. Obligations vary from site to site. Students are responsible for knowing the requirements for a site.

The clinical educator should provide either written or verbal feedback during or after each observed session. Students may be asked to complete external assignments such as case histories, treatment planning, or review of various disorders. Clinical educators also may conduct instructional labs on an “as needed” basis to assist students in achieving better understanding of critical concepts.

Students who drop a clinical practicum course or make an unsatisfactory grade in a clinical practicum course may not count any speech-language clinical clock hours obtained during that semester.
Level 1
(CD 5564) – First semester – Performs effectively with specific instruction and demonstration from the clinical educator.

**Prerequisites** – Students must have completed or be enrolled in coursework in the appropriate disorders areas and must have completed their required 25 hours of observation.

**Responsibilities** – Students will be assigned 2 or 3 therapy cases or duties usually in the Preschool Language Classroom (PLC) or Hanen Program, speech-language screenings or a diagnostic slot, and audiologic evaluations with hearing screenings, if the schedule permits.

1. Students may work in therapy with at least 25% direct supervision for the total numbers of hours in a semester, in areas in which they have completed the required academic coursework or while taking the necessary content course.

2. Students must complete speech-language evaluations or screenings with a minimum of 50% direct supervision for each diagnostic as required for North Carolina licensure.

**Expected Outcomes** – To pass the practicum all requirements must be met. No ratings may be at level 1 or 2; 4 ratings may be at a level of 3 on the Clinical Educator Rating Scale; all other ratings must be at least 4 on the Rating Scale.

Level 2
(CD 5565) – Second semester – Performs effectively with general instruction from the clinical educator.

**Prerequisites** – Students must be regularly admitted graduate students, who have completed one semester of CD 5564 or by permission.

**Responsibilities** – Students will be assigned, on average, 3 therapy clients, and 1 speech-language diagnostic slot.

1. Students may work independently in therapy with at least 25% direct supervision for the total numbers of hours in a semester, in areas in which they have completed the required academic coursework or while taking the necessary content course.

2. Students may conduct speech-language evaluations, provided that they have completed a diagnostics course. Otherwise they will be assigned to do speech-language screenings. They must have a minimum of 50% direct supervision for each diagnostic as required for North Carolina licensure.

3. Students who have had at least one semester with a particular communication disorder may have a participant observer.
4. Students may have an off-campus placement provided they have the approval of the Clinical Issues Committee.

**Expected Outcomes** – To pass the practicum all requirements must be met. No ratings may be at level 1 or 2; 3 ratings may be at a level of 3 on the Clinical Educator Rating Scale; all other ratings must be at least 4 on the Rating Scale.

**Level 3**
(CD 5566) – Third semester – Performs effectively with guidance from the clinical educator and in identifying resources of information related to a client’s needs and appropriate treatment programs.

**Prerequisites** – Students must be regularly admitted graduate students, who have completed CD 5565 or by permission.

**Responsibilities**

1. Students may work independently in therapy with at least 25% direct supervision for the total numbers of hours in a semester, in areas in which they have completed the required academic coursework or while taking the necessary content course.

2. Students may have a participant observer with any client.

3. Students must complete speech-language evaluations independently, with a minimum of 50% direct supervision for each diagnostic as required for North Carolina licensure.

4. Students may have an off-campus placement provided they have completed the required 25 hours of observation and the approval of the Clinical Issues Committee.

**Expected Outcomes** – To pass the practicum all requirements must be met. No ratings may be at level 1 or 2; 2 ratings may be at a level of 3 on the Clinical Educator Rating Scale; all other ratings must be at least 4 on the Rating Scale.

**Level 4**
(CD 5900) – Internship – Performs independently, taking initiative to make changes when appropriate to implement effective treatment programs.

**Prerequisites** – Students must have completed all required academic course work with a GPA of 3.00 or higher, and have attained a B average over the previous clinical practicum placements. In addition, they must have obtained at least 200 hours of supervised clinical practicum. Finally, they must have the approval of the majority of the department faculty for internship placement. These apply to both school and non-school placements.
Responsibilities – Students are expected to be at the worksite fulltime during the Internship. They are to be assigned client contact time and other appropriate duties in accord with the staff policies of the Internship site.

The amount of direct supervision must be at least the ASHA minimum (25% of treatment for the total numbers of hours in a semester), but can be increased as deemed necessary by the on-site clinical educator. Even in areas where the student has less experience, more than 50% direct supervision of therapy should not be necessary, unless required by the policies of the site. Students must be supervised at least 50% of each diagnostic as required by North Carolina licensure law.

Expected Outcomes – To pass the practicum all requirements must be met. All ratings must be at a level of 4 or better on the Clinical Educator Rating Scale.

Level 3 or 4
(CD 5569) – Practicum in the Schools – The course that satisfies the State Department of Public Instruction requirement for school licensure.

Prerequisites – Students must be regularly admitted graduate students, who have completed at least one semester of CD 5565, its equivalent, or by permission.

Responsibilities

1. Students may work independently in therapy with at least 25% direct supervision for the total numbers of hours in a semester, in areas in which they have completed the required academic coursework or while taking the necessary content course.

2. Students must complete speech-language evaluations independently, with a minimum of 50% direct supervision for each diagnostic as required for North Carolina licensure.

3. Students spend halftime (3 days a week) in the schools.

Expected Outcomes – To pass the practicum all requirements must be met. Other grading is based on the level replaced by this course.

Students who have problems in the Clinical Practicum

If a clinical educator recognizes that a student is having difficulty in the clinical practicum, then the clinical educator should meet with the student and outline the problem(s). The clinical educator needs to be specific about the problem, citing examples when possible. Notify the Clinic Director of any problems.

If the problem(s) continue, then a meeting should be scheduled with the student. The participants may include the clinical educator involved with the problem, the Clinic Director, the Chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, when applicable, the academic advisor, and the student.
At the meeting a contract outlining the problems and solutions should be developed. The criteria outcomes will be specified in the contract. Other meetings may be scheduled during the semester to determine the student’s progress.

At the end of the semester a final meeting should be held to determine the outcome of the contract. Outcomes include:

- Completion of the practicum with a passing grade
- Completion of the practicum with a failing grade
- Additional contract for the next placement

Each case is considered on an individual basis, so problems can be handled taking into consideration all factors involved.
CLINICAL PERFORMANCE GRADE DETERMINATION

GOAL ESTABLISHMENT

1. Using the Baseline/Final Grade form, each clinical educator is to complete a practicum rating form for each student supervisee during the first two weeks of each semester. Care should be taken to objectively rate each skill or behavior. The ratings reflect typical performance by the student on a scale, which ranges from total dependence on the clinical educator (1), to essentially independent functioning (5). These ratings constitute the baseline measurement for performance goal setting for the semester.

2. Based on the baseline measurement as well as the Clinical Outcomes Agreement form, each clinical educator may establish semester goals (therapy and diagnostic). Goals should be based on clinical skills and behaviors rated below 4.00 on the evaluation scale.

3. Goals should address fairly broad skill or behavior areas, such as planning or report writing. These goals will assist the student in pinpointing the areas of concern.

4. Semester performance evaluation is conducted during the final two weeks of the clinical term. Dates are provided to both student clinicians and clinical educators at the beginning of each semester. As with the initial evaluation, care should be taken to rate targeted skills and behaviors as objectively as possible.

5. Student clinicians and clinical educators are to sign and date all evaluation and planning forms, and to retain copies of them. Originals are to be returned to the Clinic office for filing according to the dates outlined at the beginning of each semester.