

THE FIELD

Professionals in the field of speech-language pathology and audiology are responsible for the evaluation and treatment of individuals with disorders affecting speech, language, hearing, swallowing, and balance. Clinicians work with children and adults in the education and healthcare systems, including schools, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (asha.org), which establishes the national standards for professional practice, requires graduate-level degrees (a master's-level degree in speech-language pathology or a doctor of audiology degree) for entry into the professions.

Undergraduate preparation at UMass Amherst consists of education in the building blocks of the profession: natural sciences, cognitive science, public health, and linguistics. In addition, students complete coursework in the normal processes of communication, the nature of communication disorders, and the basic processes of evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and counseling. Clinical skills are developed mainly in graduate school through coursework and practicum experiences.

The profession also engages in research designed to improve understanding of communication disorders and the efficacy of treatments. Research is conducted in clinics, universities, and other settings. Individuals who work in university settings often combine research with academic and/or clinical teaching.

There is no minor available in communication disorders.

THE MAJOR

The curriculum leading to a bachelor's degree in communication disorders provides a broad introductory background to the normal process of speech, hearing, language, and related functions, as well as a basic understanding of communication pathologies and familiarization with the various approaches to their assessment and treatment. The academic coursework prepares students for future study in speech language pathology or audiology.

Students are strongly advised to consult with their academic advisors about the content and sequence of their curriculum, especially where the choice and sequencing of electives are concerned.

In addition to the curriculum requirements, all students must have their speech and hearing evaluated. The purpose of this speech and hearing evaluation is to familiarize students with clinical skills and procedures from the perspective of the client. Evaluation results do not affect the student's status as a communication disorders major.

HONORS

Contact the departmental honors coordinator for information on how to pursue honors opportunities within the major.

STUDY ABROAD

Majors may choose to study abroad if it supports their academic and career goals. Students should contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo) and work closely with their academic advisor to choose the appropriate courses in preparation.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Those students who pursue graduate study in the field choose speech-language pathology, audiology, or research/teaching in communication sciences and disorders as their careers. Students who do not pursue graduate study can use the expertise provided by the major to qualify for a support position as a speech-language pathology assistant, an audiology assistant, applied behavioral analysis or floortime therapist, or special education paraprofessional.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

The School of Public Health and Health Sciences encompasses four undergraduate majors—communication disorders, human nutrition, kinesiology, and public health sciences—all of which focus on enhancing the health and well-being of the public. Students examine nutrition, speech pathology, muscle physiology and mechanics, as well as fitness and wellness. The curriculum provides grounding in the sciences of the human body and takes an interdisciplinary approach to apply that knowledge to the health needs of our communities. Graduates work as researchers, consultants, administrators, therapists, trainers, community health workers, fitness trainers, and other careers related to improving the public's health. Many students pursue graduate work in exercise psychology and biomechanics, speech pathology, audiology, preventive medicine, physical therapy, and other fields.

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