

Pre-Speech Pathology Guidelines

Mercer University undergraduate students who plan to pursue a career as a Speech Pathologist may follow these guidelines to pursue their chosen path.

Licensure as a Speech Pathologist varies by state. You can find Georgia's licensing requirements here: <https://sos.ga.gov/index.php/licensing/plb/49>. More information on certification, as well as other states' licensing requirements, can be found here: <https://www.asha.org/certification/> and here: <https://www.asha.org/Certification/2020-SLP-Certification-Standards/>. It is recommended that you consider graduate programs that are accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Council of Academic Association (ASHA-CAS). More information about the field speech pathology can be found at <https://www.asha.org/Students/Speech-Language-Pathology/>.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median income of Speech-Language Pathologists in 2018 was over \$77,000 and there is a positive outlook for the field: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm>.

Mercer does not have a Speech Pathology undergraduate program, so Mercer students will earn a bachelor's degree in a field of their choice before matriculating into a graduate program. Students may choose to take graduate school prerequisite courses elsewhere, perhaps as a transient student or part of a "level up" program.

The Ideal Speech Pathology Graduate School Candidate. Students must plan ahead carefully in order to create a competitive application "portfolio" during their undergraduate years. This means taking the appropriate coursework, performing well academically, and participating in appropriate extracurricular activities that will develop the skills and characteristics required of a successful graduate school applicant.

Students should bear in mind that graduate schools in this field are looking for individuals with the following characteristics:

- a strong academic background with a firm foundation in the sciences (high GPA's in rigorous coursework);
- good reasoning ability and strong critical thinking skills;
- strong interpersonal skills, able to connect well with people from various backgrounds;
- compassion and a commitment to service;
- excellent communication skills (both written and oral);
- strong leadership skills but with the ability to work well on a team;
- a good base of knowledge about occupational therapy and the health care field in general;
- integrity and high ethical standards;
- a positive attitude, able to function effectively under stress; and
- competitive Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores.

Developing a Back-Up Plan. Because graduate studies in Speech Pathology is challenging and graduate schools are so selective, students should develop an alternative plan to implement in the event that adequate progress is not made or acceptance to graduate school is not achieved.

An effective back-up plan is one that addresses any perceived "weak spots" in an applicant's portfolio. For example, it would be appropriate for a student with GPA's below 3.4 to take more classes (such as those on the prerequisite coursework list) and earn high grades before applying again to graduate schools, while a student with high grades and very little extracurricular experience should spend more time working or volunteering in a relevant setting before applying again. Another back up plan worth considering is that of a Speech Pathologist's Assistant. More information here: <https://www.ashaassistants.org/pathways-speech-language-pathology-assistant>.

Students without a strong desire to follow this career path should consider a complete change of career goals; they may investigate other options and consult with advisors in the Center for Career & Professional Development (Mercer-Macon) and the Pre-Graduate School Advisor in the Office of Academic & Advising Services.