

Graduate Admission Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Department of Communication Disorders

Brigham Young University

Revision: February 8, 2008

The intent of this document is to establish policies, procedures, and guidelines for the admission of graduate students into the Master of Science degree in Communication Disorders. These guidelines were developed by the faculty of the Communication Disorders department (ComD) and agreed upon following a series of meetings.¹

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to delineate policies, procedures, and guidelines in the graduate admission process for the M.S. degree in ComD. These policies, procedures, and guidelines have been developed as a means of stabilizing this activity and creating a process that protects and is fair to the applicant, the faculty, the program, and the university. It is realized that from time-to-time adjustments may be necessary to this document; however, such adjustments are to be made with the consent of the ComD faculty in open meetings and discussions. It is important that the procedure, guidelines, and policies are transparent to all stake holders.

Changes to Procedures and Guidelines

Changes to this document, and hence to the policies, procedures, and guidelines, may only occur following the current admission's cycle (e.g., after all graduate positions have been filled and accepted by those applicants receiving offers) and prior to the first meeting of a new admission's cycle (e.g., the meeting where the number of graduate admission offers are determined). This is interpreted as February 1st of each year. An exception to this policy may occur if any current policy places the program or university "at-risk" or is not within policies or guidelines of the university. In such cases, the faculty will determine whether such action is to occur and what action constitutes a reasonable adjustment. The faculty has the right to examine such "at-risk" claims to determine their face validity.

Admission Committee

Graduate admissions are primarily the responsibility of the Graduate Faculty within the ComD department. However, it is fully recognized by the faculty-at-large as well as the Graduate Faculty that graduate admissions impacts a broad area of activity within the department including undergraduate education. Therefore, all full-time and part-time contracted faculty members are considered members of the Admission Committee. Individuals not wishing to participate may withdraw from the Admission Committee. It is expected that those participating on the Admission Committee will be present, or have a designated representative from within the Admission Committee present, throughout the entire process.

¹ See faculty meeting minutes dated: January 11, 2007; January 18, 2007; April 19, 2007; November 29, 2007; January 31, 2008; February 5, 2008.

Timeline

The timeline may be adjusted based upon seasonal considerations and the University calendar. Adjustments to the timeline are to occur during the first meeting of the Admission Committee.

Preliminary Admission Activity

Emails will be generated to remind the applicant of deadlines once an application has been opened.

1. The applicant will be notified that February 1st is the deadline for completed applications.
2. After February 1st (within three days) a second email will be sent to applicants whose applications are not complete informing them that incomplete applications after February 15th may not be considered for admissions. However, incomplete applications may be included in the review process. Once the review process has begun, the applications become closed to additional material.
3. The applicant's file is to consist of official materials required and disclosed to the applicant. Disclosure is defined, for the purposes of this subheading, as materials included in the file, but such materials are not necessarily available for the applicant's review. Faculty and others may NOT add unsolicited notes, letters, or other documents without consent of the applicant. Official documents would include, however, any items requested by the Admission Committee in completing its evaluation (i.e., summaries of interviews, writing samples, etc.). Such documents do not have to be specifically disclosed to the applicant. (proposed addition 2/13/2008)

1st Admissions Meeting

The initial meeting of the committee will occur not later than February 1st of each year. The agenda for this meeting includes:

1. A review of the current document to determine if any changes, additions, clarifications, etc. are required.
2. Establish the final timeline for the admission cycle.
3. Establish the specific date where we will not accept additional items for the applicant's file (see "Preliminary Admission Activity no. 2, above).
4. The deadline for acceptance response from the applicant is not to be less than **four** weeks from the date of the offer letter. The date will be specified to the applicant in the offer letter.
5. The number of applicants to be admitted will be determined at this meeting and must occur prior to February 15th of each year **or** prior to the time the students' applications become available to the faculty for review; whichever occurs first. The number of total matriculated students may not exceed 50.
6. An additional 10% (rounded up to the next whole number) will be added to secure the final number of offers for admission.
7. The number of students on an alternate list will be determined (the list will be constructed based on the rank order of the applicant).

Following this meeting, the admissions policies, procedures, and guidelines are "locked" for the remainder of the current admission cycle.

2nd Admissions Meeting

At least 5 working days prior to this meeting completed applications will be made available to each faculty member for review. During this meeting each faculty member votes as to whether-or-not an applicant is to be invited for an interview:

1. This is determined by a “Yes” or “No” vote.
2. Any individual faculty member may request that a particular student receive an interview and veto a majority “No” vote.
3. No individual faculty member may veto a “Yes” vote.
4. Those applicants not selected for interviews will be sent a letter of non-acceptance.
5. The time period for the interviews will be established.
6. The theme for the writing sample will be established.
7. The interview committee will be established.
8. A spreadsheet of all applicants with summary information will be distributed to the Admission Committee February 5th of each year, and updates sent periodically depending on the number and frequency of additional information.

Applicant Interviews

Personal interviews of prospective applicants can provide information not available in transcripts, letters, or test scores. We are looking for highly qualified students who will be well served by the program. The interview process should provide the admissions committee with more accurate information about each student’s career objectives, interactional skills, and written expression, thereby assisting us in making more thorough and fair admission decisions.

It is anticipated that it will take approximately 1.5 hours for each applicant to complete the three steps of the interview process listed below:

1. Tour the facility (optional)
2. Interview with a panel
3. Complete a writing sample (30 minutes)

Interview: A panel consisting of no fewer than five Admission Committee members will constitute the Interview Committee. At least one member will be a full-time faculty member whose primary responsibility is clinical. A minimum of three, but not more than five, members must be present for each interview. The Interview Committee will interview all applicants. Members of the Interview Committee missing a majority of interviews should excuse themselves from the Interview Committee. Although there are a minimum number of members on the Interview Committee, there are not a maximum number of members that may be on the Interview Committee.

Videotaping Interviews: If an interview is to be videotaped it is required that the applicant be informed as such and asked if there are any objections to doing such. If the applicant objects then the interview may not be videotaped. The applicant must be asked so that the inquiry and response is the first part of the videotape. All videotapes must be destroyed once letters of offers are submitted to the applicants.

The purpose of the interview is to allow applicants the opportunity to talk and is not a time for faculty to recruit the applicant or provide lengthy answers to questions about the program. The panel will ask brief, yet open ended questions to which the applicant will respond. The questions should include:

- What is your interest to the program and what do you think it can contribute to your professional preparation?
- What do you think you can bring to or offer the program?
- How do you view your career or professional life 10 years from now?
- How do you view yourself as an academician and a student?
- What areas of the discipline interest you?
- Is there anything in your academic record you'd like to discuss?
- Do you have any questions for the faculty?
- Other questions to be determined by the faculty (the same for each interview).

Following the interview, the panel will take 5 minutes and individually rate the applicant from 1 to 5 (high [see rubric below]). These three individual ratings will then be averaged, resulting in a cumulative interview rating for each applicant. Each panel member will also briefly write down a few comments on 1) observed strengths, and 2) possible concerns if any.

Alternate Interview: When a personal interview causes a hardship, as determined by a member of the Admission Committee, on an applicant, a telephone conference interview may be utilized.

Evaluation Rubric:

- 1 Questionable: problematic performance or interactions. At times awkward or inappropriate. Not sufficiently assertive or excessively domineering. Knowledge base uncertain. Unfamiliar with the discipline.
- 2 Slightly below average: Factors detracted from the performance or interaction
- 3 Average: Expected level of performance or interaction quality.
- 4 Above Average: Strong performance or interaction quality. Somewhat insightful, assertive, knowledgeable.
- 5 Outstanding: Impressive, very strong performance or interaction quality. Insightful, assertive, knowledgeable, professional.

Writing Sample: Each applicant will be required to submit a writing sample. The applicant will be given 30 minutes to write the question. The question will be formulated by the faculty prior to the initiation of the first interview and will be the same for all applicants. The writing sample will be available to all faculty members for review and incorporation into their scoring as deemed appropriate by each individual faculty member.

Alternate Writing Sample: In the case where an applicant is not available for a personal interview (see *Alternate Interview*, above) the student will be required to submit the writing

sample via computer. In such situations, a Blackboard essay exam will be opened and timed for 30 minutes.

3rd Admissions Meeting

A faculty meeting is then held where the Interview Committee gives their reports and open discussions occur regarding any or all of the applicants. Faculty members not attending this meeting become ineligible to submit a rating on the applicants.

Faculty Ratings

A meeting occurs in which each applicant may be discussed. Following this meeting, pre-professional and academic ratings are submitted within 72 hours following the meeting. At this time the applicants are ranked and the rankings are **locked**. There is no sharing of scores and no changes are made once the ranking is locked.

Rating of Applicants

Pre-Professional Rating: The pre-professional rating will be a single score of the chart review (Letters of Recommendation, Letter of Intent, etc.) and the Interview. The rating scale will consist of a number from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score. The pre-professional rating will have a weight of 1.0.

Academic Rating: The academic rating will be based on all academic information available in the applicant's file that has been received through official channels. This generally consists of the applicant's transcripts of courses completed as well as the applicant's score on the Graduate Record Exam. The rating scale will consist of a number from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score. The academic rating will have a weight of 1.5.

Ranking of Applicants

The academic rating for each Admissions Committee member's score will be multiplied by 1.5 and added to the pre-professional score resulting in a total score. The total score for an individual applicant will be averaged across each total score for each admission committee member. The applicants will then be ranked from highest to lowest. A cut-off rank will be established where no applicant below the cut-off rank would be considered for admissions, including being considered placed on the alternate list.

4th Admissions Meeting

A final meeting is held of the faculty to review the final selection. If something significant has occurred then this may be discussed and changes made based on 100% agreement. Any single individual has the right of veto to this action.

5th Admissions Meeting

A follow-up meeting will be held to evaluate the policies, procedures, and guidelines utilized for the current admission cycle. This meeting will occur following June 1st of the current year but prior to January 1st of the following year.

Diversity

We cannot legally restrict admission positions to diverse students. However, since we support and defer to the University Enriched Environment Statement we may select a diverse student over a stronger credentialed student. The Enriched Environment Statement is as follows:

“The Mission of Brigham Young University – founded, supported, and guided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – is to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life. That assistance should provide a period of intensive learning in a stimulating setting where a commitment to excellence is expected and the full realization of human potential is pursued.

“To this end, the University seeks qualified students of various talents and backgrounds, including geographic, educational, cultural, ethnic, and racial, who relate together in such a manner that they are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” It is the University’s judgment that providing educational opportunities for a mix of students who share values based on the gospel of Jesus Christ and come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences is an important educational asset to BYU.”

The following guidelines may be used in our consideration of diverse students:

- We may look at diverse backgrounds and make a determination on the applicant’s qualification for admission.
- We maintain that a diverse perspective adds to our program and is encouraged by the Department, the University, and ASHA.
- It is inappropriate to go outside of our normal rating procedure; however, we may reflect diversity into our ratings.
- Both the GPA and GRE may often be a disadvantage for diverse students.
- Older students and English as second language students may not perform as well on the GRE as native English speaking students and students recently completing their baccalaureate degrees.
- We may reflect in both our pre-professional and academic ratings, as individuals, diverse students.
- Turning down a higher credentialed applicant is not unusual and the University does this with undergraduate applicants in its accommodation of qualified diverse students. Some applicants that rate high have applied elsewhere and may be applying here as a convenience rather than a strong motivation, etc. We do not need to feel uncomfortable that we are denying a highly qualified applicant for a well qualified diverse applicant.

SUMMARY OF COMD ADMISSON PROCEDURES (details not specified on this summary sheet)

	Meeting/Process	Date(s)	Activity	Comment/Result
1	Changes to Admission Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Document	~May through January		
2	Application Deadline	February 1st		
3	Notification to applicant of receipt of application	Within 3 days and any deficiencies in the application		
4	Last day to accept additional information	February 15th		
5	1st Admissions Meeting	Prior to February 1st		
5.1			Discussion of procedures etc.	
5.2			Establish timeline.	
5.3			Final date of accepting additional application information.	
5.4			Establish final date of acceptance notification from the applicant.	
5.5			Determine the number of graduate positions available.	
5.6			Determine the number of graduate positions to be offered.	
5.7			Determine the number of applications on the alternate list.	
5.8			Date of 2nd Admissions Meeting.	
6	2nd Admissions Meeting	A minimum of 5 working days following 5.3, above	Faculty to review each applicant's chart prior to this meeting.	
6.1			Vote on those to receive interviews.	
6.2			Time period (dates) for the interviews.	
6.3			Theme for the writing sample.	
6.4			Set date for 3rd Admission Meeting.	
6.5			Establish the Interview Committee	

6.7	Applicant spreadsheet sent	February 5 th .	A spreadsheet of applicant information will be sent to each committee member and periodically an updated spreadsheet will be sent.	
7	Letters sent to applicants	A maximum of 3 working days from 6, above.		
8	Applicant interviews		Interviews completed.	
8.1		A maximum of 3 working days from the date of the last interview.	Writing sample placed into the applicant's folder	
9	3rd Admissions Meeting	As established in 6.4		
9.1			Review all applicant information including the report from the interview committees.	
9.2			Establish 4th Admissions Meeting.	
10	Faculty Ratings	Within 72 hours of 9.0	Faculty ratings on each applicant are sent to the Graduate Coordinator.	
10.1		Prior to the 4 th Admission Meeting.	Applicants will be rank ordered from highest to lowest and a spreadsheet distributed to the faculty.	
11	4th Admissions Meeting	As established in 9.2, above	A final meeting where the rankings are disclosed to the faculty and a cut-off rank is established.	
12	5th Admissions Meeting	After June 1st of the current year but prior to January 1 of the following year.	Review of procedures etc.	