

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Master of Science Programme in Educational Speech-Language Pathology and Learning Disabilities [MScESLPLD]

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does a speech therapist / speech-language pathologist do?

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs), commonly referred to as speech therapists in Hong Kong, are trained to assess, diagnose and provide treatment for speech and language disorders, swallowing disorders and other communication difficulties. The clients range from infants to older adults.

SLPs may work in a variety of settings including schools, clinical settings, government and non-government organizations, and corporate environments. Their daily responsibilities include:

- meeting with clients and their caregivers to compile a detailed case history
- performing tests for clients so as to assess their strengths and weakness in speech, language, literacy, communication, and swallowing abilities
- planning and implementing individual and group treatment programmes together with the client and caregivers
- liaising and collaborating with other health care professionals (e.g. educators, doctor, psychologist, occupational therapist) where necessary
- monitoring clients' progress and advising and counselling caregivers
- design and implementing preventive measures on speech, language, communication and swallowing disorders in the community

School-based SLPs help students in all respects, from personal growth, academic achievement, professional development to quality of life enhancement. They will particularly focus on the assessment and diagnosis services for students with speech, language and communication disorders, literacy disorders, and provision of professional intervention and consultation services to schools for these students in communication and learning.

- 2. Is there any statutory requirement or registration system for a qualified SLP in Hong Kong ? *or***
Will the programme prepare me for SLP licensure or certification? *or*
Upon completion of the programme, can I register as an SLP / can I practice in other countries?
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Currently there is neither licensure nor registration system in Hong Kong for the SLP profession. Normally employers look for graduates with academic qualifications in related discipline. According to the internationally accepted standard, a qualified speech therapist must have received intensive relevant course work plus a specific requirement of supervised client contact hours. We have thus benchmarked the MSc curriculum against the highly acclaimed American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA#) Standards for Program of Study, with additional components to cater for the needs of educational contexts and the Chinese communities. The theory, research and practicum components all match with the ASHA training requirements of SLPs.

The Hong Kong Hospital Authority was the first statutory government body to recognize the MScESLPLD programme in a programme review exercise done by the Hospital Authority Coordinating Committee in April 2015. The Allied Health Professions Council of Singapore also accredited the MScESLPLD programme in a programme review exercise done in November 2015.

The MScESLPLD had already submitted the application of institutional membership endorsement exercise launched by the Hong Kong Association of Speech Therapists (HKAST) in April 2016. The programme will continue to work closely with the HKAST to prepare for the pilot stage of the new Accredited Registers (AR) Scheme for healthcare professionals by the Food and Health Bureau by the end of 2016.

To practise in other areas outside Hong Kong –

There is also neither licensure nor formal training scheme in China for the profession. Graduates of this MSc programme may have career options in the Mainland, particularly the southeast areas.

Internationally, requirements for licensure and certification of SLP vary from country to country (and even from state to state within same country). Graduates or practising SLPs looking for a career prospect overseas must check with national, state, or provincial licensing agencies regarding their eligibility to practice.

ASHA is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for audiologists and speech-language pathologists in USA. The ASHA certification is recognized by employers as a symbol of professional training and competence for speech-language pathologists.

3. Will there be any scholarship or financial aids available?

Although MScESLPLD is a self-funded programme, the programme launched a scholarship in 2013 that students with outstanding academic performance by the end of the first year will participate in an international conference organized by the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatics. Students may look into the following website for information related to application of financial assistance scheme of the government's Student Financial Assistance Agency

<<http://www.wfsfaa.gov.hk/sfo/tc/postsecondary/enls/overview.htm>>.

4. What is the difference between an entry-level bachelor and an entry-level master's degree?

What is the difference between the MScESLPLD programme and other programmes in speech and hearing sciences or speech therapy. degree?

At present most of the practising SLPs in Hong Kong hold a bachelor degree in speech and hearing sciences (or equivalent) which provides an entry-level clinical training at undergraduate level. We position our **Master of Science Programme in Educational Speech-Language Pathology and Learning Disabilities** [MScESLPLD] at the master's level to provide an alternative pathway for candidates who want to become SLPs but have an undergraduate training in other disciplines. To ensure programme quality, our curriculum follows closely the standards of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA#), which mandate that 36 credits of the coursework should be attained at graduate level. This lends a competitive edge to our graduates which will be highly sought after by all sectors.

Furthermore, our Msc programme offers more than just an ordinary training as other speech therapy programmes do. Apart from being a medically-oriented study with emphasis on clinical practice, our MSc programme is designed with a special focus on supporting students in educational settings. It encompasses educational, pedagogical and professional training, with a unique blend of evaluation, re/habilitation and special education elements in each and across the courses. Graduates from this programme will be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to tackle challenges faced by students who have various kinds of speech, language, hearing and communication disorders, learning disabilities, and swallowing difficulties.

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5. What are the professional careers for graduates of this programme?

Graduates of this programme are well-equipped to assume positions as school-based SLPs within the local school system. In addition, they can also obtain positions in clinical settings, government and non-government agencies, and private sectors, that provide services to individuals across the life span from infants, children, adolescents, adults to older adults.

6. What are the attributes of a quality speech therapist / speech-language pathologist?

Speech-language pathologist is a very rewarding profession that makes a difference by improving the lives of individuals with communication or swallowing disorders. To achieve the competency standards of the profession, the SLP should possess the following attributes and skills:

Character and Attitude

- possess a strong commitment to assist individuals to maximize their functioning and life participation as it relates to communication, learning and swallowing
- respect individuality and diversity, and is sensitive to clients' and caregivers' needs and feelings
- have plenty of patience and emotional resilience to manage a myriad of emotionally charged or ethically challenging scenarios that frequently arise in all work settings
- have an analytical and problem solving mind to unravel the causes and effects of a client's difficulties

Skills

- have the knowledge and practical experience in speech-language pathology and learning disabilities to provide safe, ethical and effective services to clients
- possess good listening and communication skills, including an ability to perceive and convey verbal and non-verbal information with clients effectively
- demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to engage and motivate clients and caregivers, and work collaboratively with peers or other professionals
- demonstrate creative problem solving skills with flexibility, formulating different management plans for different clients
- demonstrate skills for gathering information through observation, interview, information search and document review

7. Is the programme articulated with/to other programmes?

Can I waive some of the core requirements?

- (a) The programme curriculum addresses the relationship between speech-language pathology and learning disabilities, and individual courses are specifically designed to immerse students in different dimensions of the professional sphere. Students are required to finish all the courses so as to develop a critical view and achieve mastery of the subject. Applications for course exemption will only be considered if there is strong evidence of the student's proficiency in the concerned area.
- (b) We are planning for a doctoral programme on Speech-Language Pathology and Learning Disabilities in the foreseeable future. Graduates of this MSc Programme will be placed at a higher priority for admission to this proposed doctoral programme.

8. Who teaches the courses? What language will be used?

The programme is administered by the Department of Special Education and Counselling (SEC), EdUHK. SEC has a strong and active group of faculty with track record in areas encompassed by this SLP education programme. These high-calibre colleagues hone their professional expertise in a wide range of specialism including speech-language pathology, audiology, literacy disorders (including dyslexia), learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, special and inclusive education, developmental disabilities, and Chinese linguistics.

The medium of instruction is English and Chinese (Cantonese) and graduates will be proficient in servicing, particularly, the Chinese communities.

9. Where are the Practicum courses held?

Practicum training is conducted on- and off- campus. On-campus practicum training is conducted at the Speech, Language and Counselling Clinical Research Unit which is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and tools. SEC has developed a wide collaborative network with speech therapy service providers all over Hong Kong including mainstream inclusive and special schools, child care centres, hospitals, rehabilitation network, elderly service centres, etc. This collaborative network offers comprehensive off- campus practicum training experiences to our MScESLPLD students before they enter the speech therapy profession.

10. How many students will be admitted?

We plan to have annual intake of about 40 students.

11. What is the deadline for applying?

The preferred deadline is 31 March -2017. We will not accept applications after that unless there is an unfilled place.

12. When will I be notified of your decision regarding my application?

Application for enrolment in the MSc programme is a competitive process. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an admission interview and/or test. It is expected that applicants will be notified of the final result within 2 months from deadline.