COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS

Master of Science in
Speech-Language Pathology

Q: What is the deadline for the application to the Master’s Degree Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders?
A: The deadline is January 1, 2016. All of the following materials must be in by this date for your application to be reviewed: the application form, three letters of recommendation, the official GRE report, official transcripts, and personal essay. We use the Communication Sciences and Disorders Centralized Application Services (CSDCAS). In order for CSDCAS to have time to verify all your materials, we recommend you get your materials into CSDCAS at least one month prior to the January 1 deadline. Information about how to apply via the centralized application service is available on our website. If all your materials are in by January 1, we will review your file, even if CSDCAS takes up to 4 more weeks to verify all the information.

Q: Who reviews the application?
A: Each application is reviewed in its entirety independently by members of the MGH Institute faculty in the CSD program. Recommendations are made by the CSD Admissions Committee that is made up of most of the CSD faculty.

Q: How are GRE scores considered?
A: We are most interested in the percentile ranking on the GRE. We hope to see percentile ranks above the 50th percentile for each of the 3 GRE sub scores. We understand that some students do not do well on standardized multiple-choice tests. That being said, if your GREs are not high, then we will look at other information in your personal essay, the letters of recommendation, and your undergraduate transcript to see if there is a good likelihood that you will be successful in the program.
Q: What is the typical undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of successful applicants?
A: Most of our accepted students have an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.5.

Q: What is your acceptance rate in the CSD program?
A: We typically receive between 400 and 500 applications each year. We accept about one third of applicants to achieve a class size of about 60 students.

Q: What is the typical class size?
A: We aim for a class size of about 60 students. However, many classes are smaller. For example, the seminar courses have about 30 students; some electives have 10 students. The nice thing about a medium-sized program like ours is that we are able to have a large number of professors who teach only in their specialty areas, and we have more than adequate resources for our program.

Q: Is it possible to attend the program on a part-time basis?
A: No, our program requires six consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment. Students finish all requirements by mid-August of their second year. During the first two semesters, students need to be on campus to attend classes during the day, and to prepare for and conduct their clinical sessions at our onsite Speech, Language, and Literacy Center. During the second year, students need to be available for up to four full days a week to be at their external clinical practicum sites. Therefore, we recommend that students do not take on outside work that requires more than 8-10 hours a week.

Q: It appears that the MGH IHP program is primarily focused on Medical Speech-Language Pathology. Is this true?
A: Well, not really! Many people make a wrong assumption that because MGH (Massachusetts General Hospital) is part of our name that our Master’s program is largely or solely focused on medical speech-language pathology. Instead, our program is very comprehensive and includes a wide range of courses and clinical experiences that educate students about medical as well as developmental/educational speech pathology topics and disorders. With our optional specialty concentrations, students can elect to more deeply focus on medical or educational topics beyond our balanced curriculum. A look at our curriculum online highlights both the breadth and depth of our course and clinical offerings. www.mghihp.edu

Q: How important is it to have a background in speech-language pathology?
A: Each year about half of the entering class does not have an undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology. Some have degrees in related areas such as neuroscience, elementary education, special education, linguistics, or cognitive psychology. Other students are changing careers and have no related background. When we review applications we look for a match between what you hope to obtain from our Master’s program, what our program offers, and the potential we see for you to be successful in the program and in speech-language pathology as a career. We have found that whether or not our students have a background in speech-language pathology is not necessarily an important factor.

Q: When will I hear if I am accepted into the program?
A: We complete our application review by early March. You can expect to hear about the status of your application after that. Each year we have an Open House for all accepted students that occurs in late March or early April.

Q: Does the CSD program offer scholarships?
A: Yes. We offer Merit Scholarships to approximately one-third of each entering class. You do not need to apply for these scholarships. They will be offered to you based on the strength of your application. The scholarships cover varying amounts of the total cost of tuition and fees for the two-year program, ranging from 25% to 100%. Please look at the admission and financial aid section of our website for more information.
Q: What other financial aid is available?
A: Please see the financial aid section of the Institute website for information or email financialaid@mghihp.edu for more information. Most students receive financial aid of some kind. The CSD Program also has several Graduate Assistantship (GA) positions available. These are part-time jobs on campus (about 6-10 hours/week) where students generally have the flexibility to schedule their own work hours in between classes. Information about how to apply for these opportunities is given to students the summer before matriculation.

Q: What are you looking for in the personal essay part of the application?
A: We look for a statement that is specific as to why you want to enroll in the CSD Program at the MGH Institute of Health Professions in particular, rather than a generic statement that could apply to any speech-language pathology graduate program. You should describe why you want to attend our program as well as why we would want to have you as a student in our program. That being said, if there is something special about you and your experiences, please make sure to highlight that. If you have visited the program and met with faculty, you should also mention that in your essay. We also evaluate the clarity and maturity of your writing.

Q: Do I need to have letters of recommendation only from professors?
A: The letters of recommendation should be from people who know you well enough to judge your ability to be successful as a graduate student in our rigorous program. Most applicants try to have at least one letter from a professor who knows them as a student. However, if you have been out working for a number of years and other people such as your employers or supervisors are more likely to be able to judge your potential as a graduate student, it is perfectly acceptable to have letters from them.

Q: Is there an advantage to getting my application in early?
A: Although we have an application deadline of January 1, 2016, please try to get all application materials submitted to CSDCAS at least 3-4 weeks before the application deadline in order to allow time for CSDCAS processing. After your file is complete at CSDCAS, they then verify all the information by looking at your transcripts. This verification process takes 3-4 weeks. We can access your file for our review only after it has been verified.

Q: What prerequisite courses are required?
A: The prerequisite courses that are required by the program are: (1) Introduction to Communication Disorders, (2) Speech and Language Acquisition, (3) Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism, (4) Phonetics and Phonetic Transcription and (5) Audiology (covering hearing disorders and audiometry, not just hearing science). All students must find these courses elsewhere.

The Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) also requires that students have taken: (1) a biological science course, (2) a statistics course, (3) a social science course, and (4) a physical science course (chemistry or physics). The Institute offers online courses that will fulfill the requirements for all of these. More information can be found at Prerequisites for the Health Care Professions. All of these must be completed prior to starting the master’s program in September.

Q: Can I take the CSD prerequisites courses online via distance learning?
A: Yes. You may take them at other institutions that offer them online.

Q: Do I need to have the prerequisite courses completed before I apply?
A: No. They need to be completed prior to starting the Master’s program in the fall but not before the application deadline. Prerequisite courses can be taken at other institutions. Part of the application within CSDCAS will ask you to report how you have completed or plan on getting the prerequisites completed prior to starting the Master’s program.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who should I contact if I have a question about whether a course I have taken or plan to take will qualify for one of the prerequisite courses?

A: If you took a course that covered the same information but has a slightly different name, you can assume it will be accepted to fulfill our prerequisite. If you aren’t certain, or you took a combination of courses that together you think covered the same information as one of our prerequisite courses, you can check with us. On the admissions section of our website you can access a pre-requisite inquiry form.

Q: Do I need to select one of the concentrations at the time of application?

A: No. The Master’s program offers seven concentrations which are optional. These are Autism Spectrum Disorders, Adult Neurogenic Communication Disorders, Early Intervention, Literacy, Literacy with preparation for Massachusetts licensure as a reading specialist, Medical Speech Pathology, and Voice Disorders. Completing a concentration requires enrolling in 72 credits rather than 69. Students can decide whether to select a concentration at the end of their second semester, and they may complete only one of the concentrations. Again, the decision to complete one of the concentrations is optional, and many students choose to skip this option.

Q: What is the observation hours requirement?

A: All entering students must have completed 25 hours of observing an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist working with clients. These hours must be signed by the certified clinician who must also provide his or her ASHA number. A website where observation hours can be obtained is called “Master Clinician Network.”

Q: Is it possible for me to visit the Institute and/or sit in on a class?

A: Yes. We welcome visitors at any time. To arrange a visit, contact csd@mghihp.edu.

Also, make sure you check our website for the dates of the information sessions. These sessions occur about once each month from September through December, and in April and July. The sessions are an excellent way to learn more about the program, meet faculty and students, and have a tour of the Institute’s main classroom building and our Speech, Language, and Literacy Center. So please get in touch!