

# **Orientation Guide for the Ph.D. Program in Applied Language and Speech Sciences**

**Updated and Proposed November 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

The Ph.D. in Applied Language and Speech Sciences (ALSS) in the Department of Communicative Disorders, is an advanced doctoral level program intended to produce professors/researchers. The primary goal of this program is to produce rigorous scholars equipped to conduct meaningful, high-impact research. While many students may pursue academia, where scholarship, publication, teaching, and service are common measures of success, others may find roles in industry, entrepreneurship, or other fields where research expertise is valued. Doctoral students may also engage in clinical activities, with guidance from their primary mentor and faculty approval. Although advanced clinical skills may emerge, the program's central aim is to foster excellence in research.

ALSS Program policies are determined, in part, by the University's graduate education policies, articulated in the current Academic Catalog. It is available on the university [website](#). One of the most relevant sections include: [University Policies and Regulations](#) particularly the section on [Graduate Course and Credit Regulations](#). Students should familiarize themselves with the document in place when they enter the ALSS Program. This is the Catalog year that determines which Catalog to follow.

If an ALSS Ph.D. student wishes to earn an M.S. in Speech Language Pathology and/or pursue the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) as clinical credentials offered through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), this intention must be approved by the Graduate Faculty in ALSS and coordinated with the M.S. Program Coordinator and Clinical Director. Students should note that ASHA requires all candidates pursuing the CCC to hold a master's degree, though the degree does not need to be in speech-language pathology or a related field. As a result, students admitted into the ALSS Ph.D. program have two possible paths:

1. Path One, Traditional: Students pursuing this degree path focus solely on the completion of the research doctorate. It follows the Steps in the Ph.D. Program described below. Currently, the average time to completion of this path is 3.5 years.
2. Path Two, Traditional plus Clinical Option: Pursuing this option will add significantly more time to the student's degree plan. The current projected time to completion of Path Two is 5 years post bachelor's degree. Students pursuing clinical credentialing must (i) follow the steps in the Ph.D. Program described below, and (ii) they must complete the coursework and clinical practicum equivalent to the Knowledge and Skills Acquisition (KASA) competencies required to meet the ASHA accreditation standards of the Department's M.S. program. Students in this Path must have their Doctoral Advisory Committee propose a Program of Study that demonstrates the KASA competencies and meets all other criteria necessary for beginning an ASHA Clinical Fellowship (CF). The M.S. Program Coordinator and the Clinic Director must approve of all coursework and clock hours (including substitutions and practicum experiences) applied to the clinical credentialing process.
  - a. If a student completes coursework that is not currently part of the M.S. program for a given scope of practice area, the course must be approved

by the M.S. Program Coordinator and the Clinic Director to ensure the course meets the standards and guidelines outlined by ASHA. For example, if a student takes an independent study to cover content related to a scope of practice area such as aphasia instead of completing the graduate course in aphasia offered to all M.S. students, this substitution must be approved in advance of taking the independent study.

- b. Students pursuing clinical credentialing may not begin the CF experience until they have completed at least three years of the Ph.D. program. Possible exceptions may include students transitioning from enrollment in the Department's M.S. program into the Ph.D. program. In each case, the student must also have the support of their Doctoral Advisory Committee and approval from the Ph.D. Program Coordinator prior to beginning the clinical fellowship experience.
- c. Students admitted without an M.S. degree in Communicative Disorders may not apply for the Department's M.S. degree until they have completed at least three years of doctoral work. All students applying for the M.S. degree must have coursework approved by the M.S. Program Coordinator and the Clinic Director.

Regardless of the path ALSS Ph.D. students take, the following departmental policies apply:

- At least 50% of a Ph.D. student's coursework each semester must qualify for progress towards the ALSS Ph.D. degree.
- Departmental funding recommendations made at admissions to the doctoral program are for three years with consideration for additional funding based upon availability of resources and student progression through their Program of Study. Students choosing to pursue the clinical path are not guaranteed extended funding beyond this three-year cycle.

Note: The student must complete all degree requirements within six years following advancement to Doctoral Candidacy in the Ph.D. program.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Approved Coursework:** Only 12 hours of courses classified as "Required" for the M.S. program may be included in the ALSS Ph.D. program of studies. M.S. research and clinical practicum courses may not be applied to the ALSS program of studies. According to the University guidelines, Ph.D. students may transfer up to 15 hours of outside coursework into the Ph.D. program of study, however, these courses must be approved by the Doctoral Mentor and the Doctoral Advisory Committee. Additionally, if the courses are dated more than seven years prior to the anticipated graduate date, a justification is needed for each course transferred in and the Graduate School must also approve.

**Candidacy:** Admission to candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy degree is recognition of a stage in advancement toward the degree. Immediately after satisfactory completion of the general comprehensive examination and language requirement, the student shall make an Application for Admission to Candidacy on the form available on the Graduate School website.

**Program of Study:** The Program of Study includes a list and approximate schedule of the combination of (i) Required Courses of the ALSS program, and (ii) Electives selected in consultation with the Doctoral Advisory Committee. The specific content and expected length-to-completion time frame will vary according to the Path followed by the student.

**Doctoral Student:** Any student actively enrolled in the ALSS Ph.D. program who is making satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree, and prior to their successful completion of their comprehensive examination experience.

**Doctoral Candidate:** Any student actively enrolled in the ALSS Ph.D. program that is making satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree and has successfully completed their comprehensive examination experience. These students are working on the dissertation and may be labeled as ABD (all but dissertation).

**Doctoral Advisory Committee:** The committee takes two forms. First, the committee is selected by the Ph.D. student in collaboration with their Primary Mentor(s) and documented through the Ph.D. Doctoral Advisory Committee Appointment Form, which can be found on the Graduate School website. This committee must be comprised of the student's Primary Mentor and at least two other members with Graduate Faculty status and within the Department of Communicative Disorders at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. A majority (50% +1) must be members of the Graduate Faculty in the ALSS Program. The Primary Mentor(s) must have a Full Membership Graduate Faculty status in the ALSS Ph.D. program. Students must complete the Doctoral Advisory Committee Report Form and circulate the form for signatures of all committee members before the department sends the form to the Graduate School. This form is to be completed by the doctoral student in the semester after acceptance into the Ph.D. program.

**Doctoral Dissertation Committee:** This committee is composed of at least three individuals. The makeup of the Dissertation Committee does not have to be the same as the Doctoral Advisory Committee. The Chair(s) must be a Graduate Faculty member (Full Membership) in CODI. The committee must have a majority of members from CODI (50% + 1). Members from other departments in the university are allowed on the committee but must have Graduate Faculty status. Students may also choose to have external committee members outside of the university who bring specific skills and expertise that the current committee is lacking. Any external committee member appointed to the Doctoral Dissertation Committee must be approved by the Primary Mentor. Dissertation Committee roles and responsibilities are defined in greater detail in the current Academic Catalog (<https://catalog.louisiana.edu/>). A Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Dissertation Committee Appointment Form can be found on the Graduate School Website and must be completed by the graduate student, signed by all committee members, and submitted to the Graduate School.

**Clinic Director:** Clinical faculty member who oversees all operations of the on-campus Speech Language and Hearing Center (The Clinic) and ensures all graduate students pursuing clinical competencies meet the requirements set by the ASHA. If a Ph.D. student is interested in pursuing clinical competencies, the Clinic Director must approve any coursework that is substituted for the coursework designated for knowledge in a given area. Currently, Ms. Ashley Kidd is the Clinic Director and can assist in most matters related to gaining clinical competencies.

**M.S. Program Coordinator:** Academic faculty member responsible for the coordination of all practices related to the M.S. degree program. The Coordinator can sign many of the forms required by the Graduate School and other university entities. Currently, Dr. Holly Damico is the coordinator and can assist in most matters related to the M.S. Program.

**Ph.D. Coordinator(s):** Academic faculty member(s) responsible for the coordination of all practices related to the Ph.D. degree program. The Coordinator(s) can sign many of the forms required by the Graduate School and other university entities. It is also the responsibility of the Ph.D. Coordinators to review the progress toward degree for all Ph.D. programs, including any issues related to barriers toward completion. Currently, Dr. Jamie Azios and Dr. Ryan Nelson are Co-Coordinators and can assist in most matters related to the Ph.D. Program.

**Primary Mentor:** Academic faculty member serving as a major professor who has agreed to serve as the student's advisor and is typically identified in this role at the time of admission to the program. Primary Mentors can change once a student enters the doctoral program; however, this may require additional time and coursework for the student. Students must consult with one of the Ph.D. Coordinators prior to changing Primary Mentors. Students are also encouraged to discuss the change with their current Primary Mentor prior to approaching a new mentor. While Primary Mentors serve on the student's Doctoral Advisory Committee, they are not required to sit on the Dissertation Committee if the student appoints committee members in compliance with Dissertation Committee requirements.

**Department Head:** Academic faculty member that directs the entire department. The Department Head can sign many of the forms required by the Graduate School and other university entities, as well as make other departmental decisions. Currently, Dr. Ryan Nelson is the Department Head and can assist in most departmental and university matters.

## ADMISSIONS

A student may apply to the Ph.D. Program at any time. Admission decisions are made at least 6 times per year (estimated February 1, April 1, May 1, August 1, October 1 and December 1), and other times as needed. This allows for admission into the program during any semester. All applications are submitted through to the Graduate School ([gradschool.louisiana.edu](http://gradschool.louisiana.edu)). The department receives the application only when the Graduate School completes processing of all required materials. An application packet includes:

- A completed application and payment of the application fee
- A letter of intent which includes the identification of a primary area of study and a primary mentor (the primary mentor must agree to accepting this student)
- Three letters of recommendation/support from people familiar with the applicant's work and academic potential
- A writing sample (published paper or term paper is ideal; other suitable writing samples are accepted)
- Official transcripts from degree granting institutions (contact the Graduate School for clarification)

- The GRE is not required. However, students are encouraged to provide scores as support for their application. Scores supplied by the Educational Testing Service should be sent directly to the university (preferably within the past seven years; older scores are acceptable in some situations)
- International students need to provide official documentation of English language proficiency – See the Graduate School ([gradschool.louisiana.edu](http://gradschool.louisiana.edu)) for clarification.

Applicants for admission are voted on during meetings of the Graduate Faculty in CODI. A simple majority of Graduate Faculty members in CODI is required for admission along with the acceptance by the Primary Mentor.

At the time of application, a student may also apply for funding. Note that funding is governed by University Budget allocations, which are subject to change; moreover, actual amounts might not be available at the time of a student's application. Funding is available through:

- Graduate Assistantship (GA)
- University Fellowships
- Out-of-state tuition vouchers
- Other

Information for eligibility criteria can be found on the Graduate School website. Admission, funding, and clinical option are all voted on separately by the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Communicative Disorders when completed applications are provided by the Graduate School.

On or before entry to the program, the student shall identify a Graduate Faculty in Communicative Disorders willing and able to serve as the student's Primary Mentor (i.e., primary advisor), or the Graduate Coordinator(s) will identify someone willing and able to serve in that role. To serve as a Primary Mentor to any doctoral student the faculty member must have an active publication and research agenda relevant to the student's declared area(s) of interest. No student will be admitted unless there is a qualified member of the Graduate Faculty willing to serve as that individual's Primary Mentor.

## **STEPS IN THE PH.D. PROGRAM**

Once admitted, a student follows three major steps in completing the Ph.D. in ALSS including 1) Coursework, 2) Comprehensive Examination, and 3) Dissertation.

### STEP 1: COURSEWORK (GENERAL REQUIREMENTS)

All doctoral students must complete 72 post-baccalaureate semester hours of which at least 48 hours must be in approved non-dissertation (and non-prerequisite) course work and of which a maximum of 15 approved hours can be counted from a master's degree program already completed. The Doctoral Advisory Committee is responsible for approving transfer hours, subject to university rules. The student must complete all degree requirements (i.e., coursework

and dissertation) within seven calendar years beginning with the first semester of enrollment as a Doctoral Student.

## COMMON CORE

The student's Program of Study must include coursework related to their main interest or foci of study, selected courses from the Theoretical Core, and selected courses that make up the Research Core. The Primary Mentor and Doctoral Advisory Committee's role is to help guide the Ph.D. student on coursework that meet's the student's goal. Coursework in the Theoretical and Research Cores is listed below.

### **Theoretical Core**

Students are required to obtain an understanding of the theoretical issues related to their studies in ALSS . Consequently, students must choose a minimum of three courses from the following list as a part of their Program of Study. Students may take more than three courses in the Theoretical Core and these can count towards the degree plan. The Theoretical Core must be chosen from the following courses:

- CODI 601 (Human Narrative)
- CODI 602 (Clinical Neurolinguistics)
- CODI 603 (Clinical Sociolinguistics)
- CODI 607 (Developmental Theorists)
- CODI 608 (Concepts in Disability)

The student and Primary Mentor ensure this requirement is met. With approval of the Primary Mentor and Doctoral Advisory Committee, the student may substitute other theoretical courses for those listed above.

### **Research Core**

Students are required to obtain the qualitative and/or quantitative research skills necessary to their individual research agenda. Consequently, students must take two required courses in Research Design (i.e., Experimental Research Design in CODI and Qualitative Analysis of Social Action) and three courses related to research methods. The Research Core includes the following:

- CODI 606 (Experimental Research Design in CODI, required for all Ph.D. students)
- CODI 610 (Qualitative Analysis of Social Action, required for all Ph.D. students)
- at least three more courses in research methods/design at a 500 level or higher

Proposal: Students must complete five courses in fulfillment of the Research Core. Two courses are required as part of the research core courses – CODI 606 and CODI 610. Additionally, students must complete at least three courses representing practical application of at least one of the required research core courses. These application classes may be, but are not required to be, in the student's major areas of interest. The student consults their Primary Mentor and Advisory Committee to determine the appropriate practical application courses.



## STEP 2: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Each student, with the advice and consent of the Advisory Committee, must pass a Comprehensive Examination set by their Advisory Committee. Upon completion (or near completion) of your coursework, a student should request in writing to take their comprehensive examination. The request should be sent to the Ph.D. Coordinator and Primary Mentor. Upon receipt of the request, the Doctoral Advisory Committee will meet with the student and determine the specifics of the Comprehensive Examination. The scheduling of this meeting should occur in a timely and reasonable fashion. All students must address the core areas of their Program of Studies in their Comprehensive Examination, and at a *minimum, every* student must show evidence of sufficient knowledge in three areas. Each student must identify a topic from each of the three areas below: Content Area/Focus, Theory, and Research. Examples are listed below. This list is not exhaustive, and the Advisory Committee should guide the student in selecting areas.

1. Some particular areas of communication sciences and/or disorders (may specialize in a particular disorder, its diagnosis, or treatment). Examples include:
  - ▶ Diversity issues in communication/education
  - ▶ Language acquisition (L1 or L2) or a specialization across topics
  - ▶ Language disorders
  - ▶ Literacy
  - ▶ Measurement or diagnosis
  - ▶ Methodologies of treatment or intervention
  - ▶ Speech disorders
2. Theoretical Issues. Examples include:
  - ▶ Disability
  - ▶ Linguistic
  - ▶ Motoric
  - ▶ Person-centered Care
  - ▶ Semiotic
  - ▶ Social
3. Research Design and Methods. Examples include:
  - ▶ Discourse Analysis
  - ▶ Experimental
  - ▶ Implementation Science
  - ▶ Language/Speech Analysis Tools
  - ▶ Qualitative

## PROCEDURAL PROCESS FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The Comprehensive Examination takes place after a student has completed all Ph.D. coursework. The Comprehensive Examination consists of a written assessment of the student's knowledge. The student and their Doctoral Advisory Committee agree on three critical areas which serve as the proposed areas of examination for the student. The Advisory Committee reviews these areas and reaches an agreement with the student over their final selections. The Advisory Committee then sets the final questions for the Comprehensive Examination and the student addresses the



questions in the examination. *In cases of dispute regarding the formulation and selection of the questions, the committee will decide by a simple majority vote.* Prior to the examination, in all matters of dispute between the student and the Doctoral Advisory Committee regarding the areas chosen, the student may choose to withdraw the proposal and reformulate a Doctoral Advisory Committee.

The Doctoral Advisory Committee will, according to their agreed-upon procedure, develop analytical questions in each of the three major areas of examination. Each area will include two essay type questions and several short answer questions. The student will select one of the two essay questions to answer and approximately 75% of the short answer questions **in each area**. Typically, a short answer question includes 10-15 concepts. In this case, the student would only need to answer approximately 75% of the concepts provided (i.e., 7-12 concepts). The exam can be taken over two or three days, at the student's discretion. If taken over two days, the student will complete three hours each day and one and a half topic areas per day; if taken over three days, they will complete two hours each day, with one topic area presented each day.

The examination will take place in a quiet place under the supervision of a faculty member. The candidate will be allowed to answer the questions via computer. The candidate will be provided with a secure laptop through password access, the questions, and no other material. No other material relevant to the potential questions will be allowed in the room.

Student responses to the written questions will be read and graded by the Doctoral Advisory Committee. Evaluation of written responses will be submitted to the Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair within five working days of receipt. A student may receive a score of "Pass" or "Fail" at this point. Alternatively, the Committee may require additional content before assigning a score. In this case, an oral examination will be scheduled. The oral examination (with an emphasis on the questions under review) shall be conducted within two weeks of the written examination (maximum 10 working days – five days for Committee review of written responses and five days to hold the scheduled oral exam). During the oral portion of the examination, the Doctoral Advisory Committee members may question any part of the written Comprehensive Examination but will emphasize any identified areas of difficulty or deficiency in the written portion of the examination. The oral examination will not normally take more than two hours; however, oral examinations are as brief or as long as necessary to allow assessment of student responses. Following the student's responses to oral questioning, the committee will meet and the student will be notified of the result.

Grades of "Pass" or "Fail" at any stage will be assigned via a simple majority of the Doctoral Advisory Committee. The Chair of the Doctoral Advisory Committee will notify the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program in ALSS and the Graduate School of the results by written memo and completion of the forms required by the Graduate School.

All matters of Comprehensive Examination paperwork are the responsibility of the Chair of the Advisory Committee. This includes compilation of the examination questions, transmission of copies of the completed examination to the Advisory Committee members, compilation of the assigned grades, informing the student of the results, informing the Coordinator of the ALSS

Ph.D. Program and the Graduate School of the results, and all requisite paperwork concerning the conduct and outcome of the examination.

The Comprehensive Examination – both questions and the product of the student – shall be the property of the Faculty of the ALSS Ph.D. Program and shall be kept by the ALSS Doctoral Coordinator for no less than two years and shall not be provided to the student or other students.

**In all cases of comprehensive exams:**

- ▶ Only two attempts are allowed.
- ▶ If the student does not pass the Comprehensive Examination in two attempts, they will be dismissed from the University.

**STEP 3: DISSERTATION**

Upon completion of the Comprehensive Examination and all other requirements for candidacy, a student should form a DISSERTATION COMMITTEE. The makeup of the Dissertation Committee does not have to be the same as the Doctoral Advisory Committee. The Chair of the Dissertation Committee must be a member of the Graduate Faculty (Full Membership) in CODI. The remainder of the committee will be comprised of at least two other members approved by the Graduate Faculty at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette (Associate Membership or Full Membership) and a majority (50% + 1) must be from CODI. Committee members outside of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette are permitted but must be approved by the Primary Mentor and Dissertation Committee.

The student must present a written copy of their dissertation proposal (with cooperation of the Chair of their Dissertation Committee) to the committee prior to beginning work on the dissertation project. After acceptance of a dissertation proposal, the student must remain continuously enrolled for dissertation credit (excluding summers) until the dissertation is accepted. The scope of the project should be sufficiently rigorous to meet with the standards of Ph.D. level dissertations in Communicative Disorders, Linguistics, and other related fields throughout the country. Once a student completes the Comprehensive Examination and a dissertation proposal has been accepted, the student must apply for admission to candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. This form contains all coursework toward the degree, must be signed by the Department Chair, Dissertation Committee Chair, and Dean of the Graduate School, and can be found on the Graduate School website.

**Dissertation Defense**

After the dissertation is completed to the satisfaction of the Dissertation Committee, it is to be presented in its completed form to all members of the Dissertation Committee and the Graduate Coordinator of the Ph.D. program. A formal, public Dissertation Defense will be announced to the Doctoral Candidate, the Dissertation Committee, the Graduate School, and more widely in the Department, the University and/or the community at large.

## **Final Submission**

After the student has completed the public oral defense of the dissertation (as judged by the Dissertation Committee and possibly attended by an outside observer appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School), the student must file such copies as the Department and/or Graduate School may require (including electronic versions) and must submit the Abstract of the work in an acceptable form for publication in *Dissertation Abstracts*. Detailed explanation of the process, timelines, and guidelines for dissertation submissions can be found in the Graduate School Handbook.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF A Ph.D. STUDENT**

### **Course Requirements**

Full-time students can expect to take three to four courses per semester (Fall and Spring), with optional courses during the summer. These courses should all be part of the student's Program of Study. In any given semester, 50% or greater of their courses **MUST** be at doctoral level (600 level). Exceptions to this policy must be obtained from the Graduate Coordinator(s).

### **Graduate Assistantship (GA) Requirements**

Funded students must meet the requirements described in their offer letters. Students will be assigned by the Department Head to a professor (typically their primary mentor) to complete their work and may be assigned to teach a course as part of their duties. GA students typically are assigned to teach one course per year during their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years. On some occasions, GA students may be assigned to teach more than this minimal requirement. When a student is assigned to teach a course, it will count as 10 hours of their required 20 hours of work. Students who hold the ASHA-CCC may be required to complete clinical supervision as part of their work requirement. Generally, teaching or supervision will make up 50% or less of the GA student's work requirement with at least 50% being assigned to research/lab work with their Primary Mentor.

Note: It is the responsibility of the Doctoral Student/Candidate to maintain and regularly check their university e-mail account. This e-mail address should be used on all university correspondence, including when submitting papers for publication and presentation.