

**Benchmark statement:
Health care programmes**

Phase 1

Speech and language therapy

Subject benchmark statements: Health care programmes

Subject benchmark statements provide a means of describing the nature and characteristics of programmes of study and training in health care. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference when new programmes are being designed and developed. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum. Benchmark statements provide for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall conceptual framework.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support in the pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards.

Finally, subject benchmark statements are one of a number of external sources of information that are drawn upon for the purposes of academic review* and for making judgements about threshold standards being met. Reviewers do not use subject benchmark statements as a crude checklist for these purposes however. Rather, they are used in conjunction with the relevant programme specifications, the associated documentation of the relevant professional and statutory regulatory bodies, the institution's own self evaluation documentation, together with primary data in order to enable reviewers to come to a rounded judgement based on a broad range of evidence.

The benchmarking of standards in health care subjects is undertaken by groups of appropriate specialists drawn from higher education institutions, service providers and the professional and statutory regulatory bodies. The statements represent the first attempt to make explicit in published form the general academic characteristics and standards of awards in these subjects in the UK. In due course, the statements will be revised to reflect developments in the subjects and the experiences of institutions, academic review and others that are working with it.

* academic review in this context refers to the Agency's arrangements for external assurance of quality and standards. Further information regarding these may be found in the *Handbook for academic review*, which can be found on the Agency's web site.

This statement is © The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2001.

It may be reproduced by educational institutions solely for educational purposes, without permission. Excerpts may be reproduced for the purpose of research, private study, or review without permission, provided full acknowledgement is given to the subject benchmarking group for this subject area and to the copyright of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Electronic storage, adaptation or translation of the statement is prohibited without prior written agreement from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

ISBN 1 85824 571 0

AR 031 6/2001

/Published by

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Printed by

Frontier Print & Design Limited

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is a company limited by guarantee.

Contents

Foreword	1
An emerging health professions framework	2
A Expectations of the health professional in providing patient/client services	2
B The application of practice in securing, maintaining or improving health and well-being	3
C Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of health care professionals	4
Benchmark statement for speech and language therapy	6
Introduction	6
Nature and extent of speech and language therapy	7
A Expectations of the speech and language therapist in providing patient/client services	8
B The application of practice in securing, maintaining or improving health and well-being	8
C Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of speech and language therapists	10
Teaching, learning and assessment	12
Academic and practitioner standards	13
A The speech and language therapist as a registered practitioner	13
B Application of principles and concepts	14
C Knowledge, understanding and skills	14
Appendix 1	16
Speech and language therapy benchmark group membership	16
Appendix 2	17
Benchmark steering group membership	17

Foreword

This benchmark statement describes the nature and standards of programmes of study in speech and language therapy, that leads to awards made by higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK) in the subject.

It has been developed in collaboration with a number of other health care professions and these are listed below. Although initial work was undertaken in subject specific groups, the analysis of these early drafts identified a number of features which all the subject groups shared. It was, therefore, agreed by each of the specialist benchmark groups that their respective statements could be cast using a common structure. As work progressed it became increasingly apparent that there was considerable overlap within the details of the subject-specific statements and a common health professions framework was emerging. This emerging framework is, accordingly, displayed in each of the subject statements in order to illustrate on the one hand, the shared context upon which the education and training of health care professionals rests and, on the other, the uniquely profession-specific context within which programmes are organised. It is important to emphasise that benchmark statements are not cast in tablets of stone and will need to be revisited in the light of experience and further developments in health care. Moreover, we are confident that the emerging framework has the potential to embrace other health related professions such as social work, dentistry, medicine and other therapies. It is anticipated that further work in a second phase of the project could lead to an overarching health professions framework.

The initial section of this statement sets out the health professions framework under three main headings:

- A Expectations of the health professional in providing patient/client services;
- B The application of practice in securing, maintaining or improving health and well-being;
- C The knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of health care professionals.

The main section of this statement, in addition to describing the nature and extent of programmes leading to awards in speech and language therapy, describes the profession-specific expectations and requirements under the same three categories.

The key feature in this statement, as in the associated statements, is the explicit articulation of the academic and practitioner standards associated with the award in speech and language therapy. This duality reflects the significance of the academic award as the route to registration for professional practice and formal recognition by the professional and statutory regulatory bodies. The threshold standards set out the expectations of health professionals entering their first post immediately on qualification.

The section on standards accords with the relevant level descriptor for awards in the qualifications frameworks published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The section on teaching, learning and assessment draws attention to the central role of practice in the design of learning opportunities for students and the importance of ensuring that professional competence developed through practice is adequately assessed and rewarded. It also notes how essential it is that the integration of theory and practice is a planned process within the overall arrangements made for teaching and learning.

The statement acknowledges the need to put the prospective client/patient at the centre of the student's learning experience and to promote within that experience the importance of team-working and cross-professional collaboration and communication. Implicit in the statement are the opportunities that exist for shared learning across professional boundaries, particularly in the latter stages of training when inter-professional matters can be addressed most productively. It is essential that the opportunities that exist for shared learning in practice are optimised, as well as best use being made of similar opportunities that prevail more obviously in classroom-based activities.

This statement and the associated statements will therefore allow higher education institutions, in partnership with service providers (where appropriate), to make informed curriculum choices about the construction of shared learning experiences. In this context, shared learning is seen as one of a number of means of promoting improved collaborative practice and addressing a range of issues which span professional accountability and professional relationships.

Finally, the statement does not set a national curriculum for programmes leading to awards in speech and language therapy. It acknowledges that the requirements of the professional and statutory regulatory bodies need to be incorporated into the design of programmes. It seeks to encourage higher education institutions and service providers to work collaboratively in the design and delivery of their curricula. Its essential feature is the specification of threshold standards, incorporating academic and practitioner elements, against which higher education institutions are expected, as a minimum, to set their standards for the award.

¹ *Dietetics, Health Visiting, Midwifery, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Orthoptics, Physiotherapy, Podiatry (Chiropody), Prosthetics and Orthotics, Radiography, and Speech & Language Therapy.*

An emerging health professions framework

The subject specific statements for speech and language therapy have been set within the emerging health professions framework outlined below. As indicated in the foreword, this framework developed as a result of the benchmarking work undertaken collaboratively by 11 different health professional groups. Further evolution of the framework is anticipated through a second phase of the project which will address its goodness of fit with a range of other health and social care professions benchmark statements.

A Expectations of the health professional in providing patient/client services

This section articulates the expectations of a registered professional within health and social care services. It describes what is regarded as a minimum range of expectations of a professional that will provide safe and competent practice for patients/clients in a variety of health and social care contexts.

A1 Professional autonomy and accountability

The award holder should be able to:

- maintain the standards and requirements of professional and statutory regulatory bodies;
- adhere to relevant codes of conduct;
- understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of professional practice;
- maintain the principles and practice of patient/client confidentiality;
- practise in accordance with current legislation applicable to health care professionals;
- exercise a professional duty of care to patients/clients/carers;
- recognise the obligation to maintain fitness for practice and the need for continuing professional development;
- contribute to the development and dissemination of evidence-based practice within professional contexts;
- uphold the principles and practice of clinical governance.

A2 Professional relationships

The award holder should be able to:

- participate effectively in inter-professional and multi-agency approaches to health and social care where appropriate;
- recognise professional scope of practice and make referrals where appropriate;
- work, where appropriate, with other health and social care professionals and support staff and patients/clients/carers to maximise health outcomes;
- maintain relationships with patients/clients/carers that are culturally sensitive and respect their rights and special needs.

A3 Personal and professional skills

The award holder should be able to:

- demonstrate the ability to deliver quality patient/client-centred care;
- practise in an anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive manner;
- draw upon appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements, recognising the limits of his/her practice;
- communicate effectively with patients/clients/carers and other relevant parties when providing care;
- assist other health care professionals, support staff and patients/clients/carers in maximising health outcomes;
- prioritise workload and manage time effectively;
- engage in self-directed learning that promotes professional development;
- practise with an appropriate degree of self-protection;

- contribute to the well-being and safety of all people in the work place.

A4 Profession and employer context

The award holder should be able to:

- show an understanding of his/her role within health and social care services;
- demonstrate an understanding of government policies for the provision of health and social care;
- take responsibility for his/her own professional development;
- recognise the value of research and other scholarly activity in relation to the development of the profession and of patient/client care.

B The application of practice in securing, maintaining or improving health and well-being

All health care professionals draw from the knowledge and understanding associated with their particular profession. This knowledge and understanding is acquired from theory and practice. It forms the basis for making professional decisions and judgements about the deployment in practice of a range of appropriate skills and behaviours, with the aim of meeting the health and social care needs both of individual clients/patients and of groups, communities and populations. These decisions and judgements are made in the context of considerable variation in the presentation, the setting and in the characteristics of the client/patient health and social care needs. They often take place against a backdrop of uncertainty and change in the structures and mechanisms of health and social care delivery.

Sound professional practice is essentially a process of problem solving. It is characterised by four major phases:

- the identification and analytical assessment of health and social care needs;
- the formulation of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs;
- the performance of appropriate, prioritised health promoting/health educating/caring/diagnostic/therapeutic activities;
- the critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, these activities.

B1 Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

The award holder should be able to:

- gather relevant information from a wide range of sources including electronic data;
- adopt systematic approaches to analysing and evaluating the information collected;
- communicate effectively with the client/patient, (and his/her relatives/carers), group/community/population, about their health and social care needs;
- use a range of assessment techniques appropriate to the situation and make provisional identification of relevant determinants of health and physical, psychological, social and cultural needs/problems;
- recognise the place and contribution of his/her assessment within the total health care profile/package, through effective communication with other members of the health and social care team.

B2 Formulation of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

The award holder should be able to:

- work with the client/patient, (and his/her relatives/carers), group/community/population, to consider the range of activities that are appropriate/feasible/acceptable, including the possibility of referral to other members of the health and social care team and agencies;
- plan care within the context of holistic health management and the contributions of others;
- use reasoning and problem solving skills to make judgements/decisions in prioritising actions;
- formulate specific management plans for meeting needs/problems, setting these within a timescale and taking account of finite resources;
- record professional judgements and decisions taken;
- synthesise theory and practice.

B3 Practice

The award holder should be able to:

- conduct appropriate activities skilfully and in accordance with best/evidence-based practice;
- contribute to the promotion of social inclusion;
- monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of the planned activity;
- involve client/patient/members of group/community/population appropriately in ongoing effectiveness of plan;
- maintain records appropriately;
- educate others to enable them to influence the health behaviour of individuals and groups;
- motivate individuals or groups in order to improve awareness, learning and behaviour that contribute to healthy living;
- recognise opportunities to influence health and social policy and practices.

B4 Evaluation

The award holder should be able to:

- measure and evaluate critically the outcomes of professional activities;
- reflect on and review practice;
- participate in audit and other quality assurance procedures;
- contribute to risk management activities.

C Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of health care professionals

The education and training of health care professionals draws from a range of well-established scientific disciplines that provide the underpinning knowledge and understanding for sound practice. Each health care profession will draw from these disciplines differently and to varying extents to meet the requirements of their specialty. It is this contextualisation of knowledge, understanding and skills that is characteristic of the learning in specific health care programmes. Consequently, in this introductory section, the attributes and capabilities expected of the student are expressed at a generalised level.

C1 Knowledge and understanding

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- understanding of the key concepts of the disciplines that underpin the education and training of all health care professionals, and detailed knowledge of some of these. The latter would include a broad understanding of:
 - the structure and function of the human body, together with a knowledge of dysfunction and pathology;
 - health and social care philosophy and policy, and its translation into ethical and evidenced based practice;
 - the relevance of the social and psychological sciences to health and healthcare;
 - the role of health care practitioners in the promotion of health and health education;
 - the legislation and professional and statutory codes of conduct that affect health and social care practice.

C2 Skills

Information gathering

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- an ability to gather and evaluate evidence and information from a wide range of sources;
- an ability to use methods of enquiry to collect and interpret data in order to provide information that would inform or benefit practice.

Problem solving

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- logical and systematic thinking;
- an ability to draw reasoned conclusions and sustainable judgements.

Communication

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- effective skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, clients, their relatives and carers; and, when necessary, to groups of colleagues or clients.

Numeracy

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- ability in understanding, manipulating, interpreting and presenting numerical data.

Information technology

The award holder should be able to demonstrate:

- an ability to engage with technology, particularly the effective and efficient use of information and communication technology.

Benchmark statement for speech and language therapy

Introduction

The ability to communicate is central to what we do, who we are, how we learn, and how we relate to each other at home, at school and at work. Thousands of people fail to access education, social, economic and career opportunities as a result of communication difficulties. Speech and language therapists will appraise a person and his/her communication in order to understand the person's needs. From this they will develop a programme of intervention to maximise communication skills. Speech and language therapists also work to support people with swallowing difficulties.

Speech and language therapists are therefore the experts in the United Kingdom in the therapeutic management of communication and swallowing disorders in people across the entire age spectrum. Such disorders may be either developmental or acquired. They can be caused by physical, cognitive, linguistic, psychological or social factors, or a combination of these. Speech and language therapy is a profession whose practice is underpinned by the supporting disciplines of linguistics, psychology and human biological sciences, in addition to the core discipline of speech-language pathology and therapeutics.

The majority of speech and language therapists are employed by the NHS. They work in a range of settings, and in a variety of roles. The settings include education, health and social care, from acute to community-based locations. Uniquely amongst the Allied Health Professionals many speech and language therapists work within educational contexts. Some speech and language therapists work as independent practitioners.

Therapy can be both direct (face to face with the patient/client) and indirect, (where the therapy aims can be realised through other methods, such as working with the family, teacher, support worker or carer).

Speech and language therapists select the approaches that are most appropriate for meeting the patient/client needs, given the setting, client base and available resource. As well as providing treatment, speech and language therapy roles include those of consultant, educator, facilitator, advocate and researcher.

Speech and language therapy is underpinned by the following principles, which guide therapeutic management:

- the need to evaluate the patient/client's communication environment, because a communication disorder impacts not only on the patient/client but also on significant others' communication with the patient/client;
- the identification of the communication or swallowing problem enabling appropriate evaluation and therapy;
- the importance of the therapeutic relationship established with the patient/client and their family is central, because face to face therapy is a collaborative, active process, based on trust and empathy;
- the importance of using eclectic methods of communication where necessary, to ensure that the patient/client understands, and participates in, as far as possible, the aims and methods of therapy;
- an understanding of communication disorders and their impact on life opportunities.

Speech and language therapy pre-registration degree courses are accredited by the professional (The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)) and statutory regulatory bodies, and validated by the relevant higher education institution (HEI). This accreditation is based on five-yearly periodic visits to the HEI and annual monitoring. Each approved graduate is eligible for a certificate to practise. A register of those who hold full state registration is maintained.

This benchmark statement has been informed by work on learning outcomes produced by the RCSLT. It also aims to articulate with the RCSLT's competencies project which is developing a clinical competencies framework for registered speech and language therapists. Representation on the benchmark group reflected speech and language therapy managers, therapists and academics across the UK.

Nature and extent of speech and language therapy

Speech and language therapists work with patients/clients of all ages, with problems that may be categorised along two continuums; mild-severe and simple-complex.

Mild-severe is judged against the impact that the communication difficulty has on the person's ability to communicate (both in understanding and in expressing him/herself and judged by the family/carer as well as the patient/client). With reference to swallowing, it is judged by how effective and efficient is the disordered swallow.

Simple-complex is judged by how many factors impact on the communication or swallowing disorder/difficulty. Such factors may be both causal and attendant.

Speech and language therapists are able to act as first-contact practitioners, and patients/clients may seek a consultation from speech and language therapists without a referral from another healthcare professional. There are exceptions to this, where a speech and language therapist would not assess a patient/client without an appropriate medical, education, health or social care referral. The importance of appropriate onward referral is central to such professional autonomy.

Speech and language therapists usually work as part of a team, with an evaluation of the impact of the communication or swallowing difficulty being informed by the patient/client, the family/carer and the insights of other professionals.

Speech and language therapy encompasses a number of specialities. These include the management of children with speech and language disorders, adults with acquired neurological conditions which may lead to swallowing and/or language difficulties, the elderly, people requiring palliative care, people with learning difficulties, people with voice disorders, and people with problems of fluency in their speech.

Speech and language therapy is offered in a variety of delivery patterns, as matched to the patient/client needs, efficacy research, and the service resource. The RCSLT produces guidelines which inform the delivery of the service with respect to aspects such as frequency of therapy and length of episodes of therapy, individual versus group, or a combination of both. It can be weekly, a number of times a week, daily, or in some consultation models of intervention, less frequent, as informed by factors such as recovery patterns, the school year and the service resource.

The principle of managed therapy closure/discharge should be embedded in any therapy episode, reflecting that the psychological well-being of the patient/client and their family is a central consideration in the execution of any management.

Speech and language therapy is offered in a variety of settings and can take place in nurseries, schools (special and mainstream), in hospital specialist department or clinics, eg ear, nose and throat departments, on wards, in day centres, in social care venues, in the patients'/clients' residential setting, in health clinics, and on charities' premises.

Speech and language therapy intervention takes account of the multicultural and multilingual needs of the population.

Undergraduate courses range in length from three years (minimum of 105 weeks) to four years. Most are full-time courses but there are also some part-time routes. RCSLT specifies the minimum number of clinical sessions with different client groups that must be undertaken before a certificate to practise is awarded. There are also pre-registration, postgraduate, two-year courses (80 weeks). All courses are expected to be fully integrated in respect of academic and clinical work and to have embedded the principle of planned progression, through both clinical and academic units/modules to the point of award. They also should be developing, or have already established, recruitment and student support strategies, to ensure that the needs and diversity of different communities can be reflected in the profession.

A Expectations of the speech and language therapist in providing patient/client services

This profession-specific statement should be read in conjunction with the health professions framework articulated above.

A1 Professional autonomy and accountability of the speech and language therapist

The award holder should be able to:

- conform to the standards detailed in the RCSLT's publication, *Communicating Quality*;
- be knowledgeable about the current published efficacy guidelines, with respect to assessment and therapy.

A2 Professional relationships

The award holder should:

- develop and maintain effective working relationships across the range of individuals and agencies, as appropriate;
- participate effectively in a variety of multi-, inter-, and intra-professional teams, keeping the rights and needs of the patient/client central to such participation;
- take cognisance of professional and support staff boundaries and roles;
- apply appropriate referral practices, within health, education and social care settings.

A3 Personal and professional skills

The award holder should be able to:

- demonstrate sensitivity to personal frameworks and an ability to recognise personal prejudice ;
- assess personal abilities realistically;
- recognise personal and emotional needs of both themselves and their clients and respond appropriately;
- demonstrate an awareness of the need to manage personal equilibrium;
- take on appropriate responsibility for his/her professional and clinical actions;
- show an understanding of the role of empowerment in the therapeutic process.

A4 Profession and employer context

The award holder should be able to:

- show awareness of the structure and function of the education, social and health care services, and an understanding of current developments;
- show an understanding of health education and how it relates to communication and swallowing;
- demonstrate an ability to use research, statistical and epidemiological data.

B The application of practice in securing, maintaining or improving health and well-being

This profession-specific statement should be read in conjunction with the health professions framework articulated above.

Speech and language therapy graduates will have a core theoretical understanding of a range of communication, swallowing, and related disorders, and theoretical frameworks which underpin the principles of assessing, treating, and managing people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

It is expected that graduates will have developed a threshold level of expertise for safe and competent management of a broad range of client types within a variety of clinical contexts. This expectation is recognised by the procedures initiated and maintained by the professional body for the support of new graduates in their first post.

B1 Identification and assessment of communication and swallowing needs

The award holder should be able to:

- apply theoretical knowledge from psychology, linguistics and human biomedical sciences;
- use published and self-generated assessments, instrumentation and transcription where appropriate to describe, identify, analyse, and evaluate developmental and acquired phonetic, phonological, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, fluency, voice disorders and swallowing problems;
- identify the influence of situational context on communication;
- provide a differential description of patients/clients assessed, showing an ability to relate theory to practice;
- analyse communication at motor, thematic, conversational and pragmatic levels;
- evaluate the effect of communication difficulty on the psychosocial well-being of the client;
- recognise possible contributing factors to communication difficulty, whether social, psychological or medical;
- evaluate interaction between medical, social, cognitive, educational and communication needs.

B2 Formulation of plans and strategies for meeting communication and swallowing needs

The award holder should be able to:

- generate hypotheses from the analysis and integration of case history and assessment findings;
- plan and implement appropriate and effective therapy;
- produce management plans in the context of multidisciplinary provision;
- take account of available service delivery options;
- show adaptability and flexibility in provision of speech and language therapy services, indicating an awareness of contextual constraints which influence service delivery;
- understand the rationales and principles underlying therapy;
- use therapy techniques appropriate to the range of communication and swallowing difficulties;
- set goals based on assessment and communicative need;
- select the appropriate role/s, such as assessor, educator, counsellor, advocate, researcher, trainer, facilitator, and consultant, and be aware of his/her boundaries;
- liaise effectively with other professionals, patients/clients' relatives/carers, and appreciate their potential contributions to the management process.

B3 Practice

The award holder should be able to:

- practise in a manner that promotes well-being and protects the safety of all parties;
- demonstrate supportive and therapeutic interaction skills, which includes the adaptation of strategies for optimum communication with patients/clients/others/in all situations;
- modify his or her linguistic and interpersonal behaviour to ensure the patient/client understands and expresses him/herself as fully as possible;
- identify and implement strategies aimed at overcoming any barriers to communication;
- discharge patients/clients appropriately, which includes building in adequate and timely preparation of the patient/client and family for the cessation of therapy;
- when relevant, refer clients for advice on augmentative and alternative communication;
- demonstrate critical reflection skills as a foundation for ongoing professional development.

B4 Evaluation

The award holder should be able to:

- make use of current research, by evaluating and applying it, where appropriate, in clinical practice;
- understand the principles of research and research methodology which underpin an analytical approach to clinical practice;
- evaluate the range of formal and informal assessments in relation to current research.

C Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of speech and language therapists

This profession-specific statement should be read in conjunction with the health professions framework articulated above.

The education of speech and language therapists is characterised by the integration of academic theory and clinical practice.

C1 Knowledge and understanding

Communication and swallowing disorders

The speech and language therapy award holder will have critically evaluated and integrated knowledge and understanding of the following disorders, and of the respective theoretical and therapeutic frameworks underlying the principles of assessing and managing people with these disorders:

- developmental speech and language disorders;
- acquired speech and language disorders;
- voice disorders;
- disorders of fluency;
- disorders of swallowing;
- developmental and acquired cognitive disorders.

Linguistics

- Normal processing at sub-lexical, lexical, grammatical, discourse/text and conversational levels.
- The relevant aspects of linguistics, including phonetics and the application of such knowledge to normal and impaired communication at both theoretical and practical analytical levels.
- Sociolinguistics: knowledge of how language and communication are used in social contexts.
- Psycholinguistics: normal development and processes in the perception, comprehension and production of spoken, written and gestured messages in both monolingual and multilingual communication.

Human biological sciences

- The relevant aspects of biomedical and medical sciences including the anatomy and physiology of body systems relevant to the development of, and maintenance of, communication and swallowing. This includes disruptions to the functions of these systems.

Psychology

- The impact of communicative need on the psychological and social well-being of the person and his/her relationships.
- The relevant aspects of psychology (cognitive, neuropsychology, social, health, developmental, clinical, learning theory) and the application of such knowledge to normal and impaired communication.

Sociological perspectives

- The person in society, including education, health, workplace and multicultural society.

Education

- Educational philosophy and practice.
- Language and literacy.

Research

The award holder will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the research culture and methods appropriate to informing the knowledge base of speech and language therapy.

Context of professional practice

The award holder will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following:

- speech and language therapy therapeutic contexts, models and processes, including service delivery;
- contexts as applied to speech and language therapy: the legal context with reference to, for example, health and safety, child protection and education, law, equal opportunities and professional regulation;
- professional roles and boundaries in education, healthcare and social services contexts.

C2 Skills

These are embedded into Sections A and B of the discipline-specific benchmarks and articulate with C2 in the health professions framework.

Teaching, learning and assessment

Decisions about the strategies and methods for teaching, learning and assessment are for institutions to determine, but should complement the learning outcomes associated with health profession programmes. It is not for benchmark statements to promulgate any one, or combination of, approaches over others.

However, this benchmark statement promotes an integrative approach to the application of theory and practice. It underlines the significance attached to the design of learning opportunities that facilitate the acquisition of professional capabilities and to assessment regimes that ensure these are being both delivered and rewarded to an appropriate standard. Fundamental to the basis upon which students are prepared for their professional career, is the provision of programmes of academic study and practice-based learning which lay the foundation for career-long professional development and lifelong learning to support best professional practice and the maintenance of professional standards.

The design, content, and delivery of the curriculum is driven by effective, dynamic partnerships between practising speech and language therapists, who work with students on placement, and the HEI.

Academic and practitioner standards

Standards associated with threshold level are identified below. Although only threshold level has been articulated, many graduates attain a level well above threshold. Standards are predicated on the integration of theory and practice and that professional and key skills can not only be considered in isolation, but as the end result of such integration and synthesis.

Students emerge with different profiles of strengths and areas requiring attention. It is the review of such a profile that forms the judgement as to the student's readiness to practise as a speech and language therapist. The profile takes into account the following three skills and abilities:

- ability to understand, critically evaluate and apply relevant theoretical knowledge to clinical practice;
- technical skills such as the manipulation of assessment and therapy tools, materials and the environment;
- interpersonal and communication abilities, used to set up and maintain a therapeutic atmosphere, where patients/clients are facilitated in an optimum communication environment.

Judgement is also made along the parameter of effectiveness of the resultant management plan. A graduate will not be effective in all clinical situations, but should, at threshold, be aware of limitations in effectiveness and be able to execute plans to improve effectiveness.

Another parameter, which impacts more at modal and exemplary levels, is efficiency. It may be that whilst the award holder, at the point of award, should be clinically effective most of the time, he/she may not be as efficient at reaching therapy goals within a timeframe. This may be because the experience and confidence necessary to know when to move through the therapy stage has not yet been achieved.

Given these preliminary statements, all students are not expected always to meet each standard. Using the above outline of students' learning profiles, some standards are more interdependent, and possibly hierarchical, than independent.

A The speech and language therapist as a registered practitioner

Professional autonomy and accountability

The award holder should:

- be eligible to apply for statutory registration.

Professional relationships

The award holder should be able to:

- develop and maintain constructive working relationships;
- participate constructively in a variety of multi-, inter-, and intra-professional health, social and education approaches;
- take cognisance of others' boundaries and roles;
- apply appropriate referral practices, with health, education and social settings.

Personal and professional skills

The award holder should be able to;

- demonstrate awareness of the influence of his/her own feelings, knowledge, beliefs and experience, and the potential for prejudicial judgements;
- seek support when required for his/her professional and personal development;
- demonstrate an awareness of strategies to handle emotions to facilitate the task in hand;
- show an understanding of the role of empowerment in the therapeutic process;
- take on an appropriate level of responsibility for professional and clinical actions;
- operate with a suitable degree of self protection.

Profession and employer context

The award holder should be able to:

- demonstrate an emerging knowledge of social policy, institutional and organisational structures, and the political context;
- contribute to a safe working environment;
- demonstrate knowledge of the application of statistical and epidemiological data.

B Application of principles and concepts

Identification and assessment of communication and swallowing

The award holder should be able to:

- demonstrate, in writing and orally, evidence of sound clinical reasoning in the analysis and integration of case history and assessment data, for patients/clients along the continuums of mild-severe and simple-complex;
- know when to seek professional direction for confirmation of his/her clinical reasoning.

Formulation of plans and strategies for meeting communication and swallowing needs

The award holder should be able to:

- justify, with direction, the hypotheses from the analysis and integration of case history and assessment data, for patients/clients along the continuums of mild-severe and simple-complex;
- justify, plan and implement appropriate therapy, for patients/clients along the continuums of mild-severe and simple-complex;
- know when to seek professional direction in respect of his/her management plans.

Practice

The award holder should be able to:

- demonstrate supportive and therapeutic interaction skills with the patients/clients/others/, which may require some development to be maximally effective;
- modify his/her linguistic and interpersonal behaviour, to enhance the patient/client's ability to participate fully communicatively;
- demonstrate insights into the therapeutic situation and modify therapy accordingly;
- plan for discharge in an appropriate manner.

Evaluation and research

The award holder should be able to:

- recognise the potential clinical application of research findings;
- use current literature and appreciate its application to clinical practice;
- demonstrate a knowledge of different service delivery options;
- understand the limitations of assessments in relation to current research.

C Knowledge, understanding and skills

The award holder should be able to:

- evaluate and apply, with evidence of critical thinking, knowledge and understanding in the core discipline of communication disorders;
- evaluate and apply, with evidence of critical thinking, knowledge and understanding in the disciplines of linguistics, human biological sciences, psychology, sociology, and education;
- demonstrate knowledge of research methods as related to speech and language therapy issues and questions;

- demonstrate understanding of speech and language therapy's therapeutic contexts, models and processes;
- appreciate the relevance of the ethical and moral issues in relation to speech and language therapy practice.

Generic skills

The award holder should be able to:

- identify key issues and begin to create effective solutions, necessary for effective practice;
- demonstrate competence in record keeping, with knowledge of legal, ethical and other considerations related to such practices.

Appendix 1

Speech and language therapy benchmark group membership

Dr Shelagh Brumfitt	University of Sheffield
Mr Martin Duckworth (facilitator)	College of St Mark & St John, Plymouth
Ms Rosalind Gray	University of Ulster
Ms Julie Nettleton	University of Central England in Birmingham
Ms Lorna Povey	Wolverhampton Health Care NHS Trust
Ms Oonagh Reilly	University of Central England in Birmingham
Ms Jois Stansfield	Queen Margaret University College
Ms Dilys Treharne	University of Sheffield

Appendix 2

Benchmark steering group membership

Mrs Margaret Andrews	North East Wales Institute of Higher Education
Mr David Ashcroft	Society of Chiropractors & Podiatrists
Mrs Linda Auty	Leeds Metropolitan University
Miss Lesley Barrowman	National Board for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting for Northern Ireland
Mrs Valerie Beale	Somerset Health Authority
Ms Mary Boyle	National Board for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting for Scotland
Mrs Ann Clarke	Bedford Hospital NHS Trust
Ms Helen Davis	Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
Professor Anne de Looy	Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh
Miss Faye Doris	University of Plymouth
Mr Martin Duckworth	College of St Mark & St John, Plymouth
Mr Brian Ellis	Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh
Miss Anne Fagan (deceased)	Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth, London
Mrs Janice Gosby	UK Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting
Ms Valerie Hall	University of Brighton
Mrs Julia Henderson	University of Hertfordshire
Ms Anne Hopkins	University of Wales Swansea
Mr Stephen Hutchins	University of Salford
Mr Tom Langlands	English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting
Ms June Leishman	University of Abertay, Dundee
Professor Jeffrey Lucas	University of Bradford
Professor Dame Jill Macleod-Clark (co-chair)	University of Southampton
Ms Diane Marks-Maran	Thames Valley University
Mrs Susan Montague	University of Hertfordshire
Mrs Christine Mullen	South Manchester University Hospital NHS Trust
Mr Luke O'Byrne	East Berkshire NHS Trust
Mrs Audrey Paterson	Canterbury Christ Church University College
Ms Robyn Phillips	Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Visiting
Professor Mike Pittilo (co-chair)	Kingston University & St George's Medical Hospital
Ms Lorna Povey	Wolverhampton Health Care NHS Trust
Mrs Jarina Rashid-Porter	Coventry Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr Gwilym Roberts	College of Occupational Therapists
Ms Jenny Routledge	University of East Anglia
Mr Ian Rutherford	University of Nottingham
Mrs Sandra Sexton	University of Strathclyde
Ms Gail Stephenson	University of Liverpool
Professor Averil Stewart	Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh
Professor Mary Watkins	University of Plymouth