

# Guidelines for Initial Education in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)

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The Education Committee of the *International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics* (IALP) has recently completed the revised Education Guidelines and published them in the special issue of *Folia Phoniatrica and Logopaedica* in July 2010. Back in 1995 the IALP Board approved the first set of Guidelines for the Initial Education in Logopedics. Surveys of the education of speech pathologists world-wide have indicated that various approaches to the initial education of speech language pathologists are implemented. In some countries the education in Speech-Language Pathology exists on its own whereas in other countries or regions it is undertaken simultaneously with a second profession, e.g., Audiology/Hearing therapy, Education, Psychology, Generalist rehabilitation.

During the past couple of years, academics and Speech-Language Pathology practitioners from many parts of the world have contributed to the discussion in preparation of these revised guidelines. The main goal of such guidelines is to harmonize initial education in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), develop and maintain high standards of education, and facilitate the international movement of personnel and knowledge. The guidelines should provide a standard for individuals in countries and regions that are planning to establish an initial education programme in Speech-Language Pathology. These guidelines also have a special section related to developing an education programme in speech, language and hearing in underserved countries.

The guidelines make allowances for the practice of different cultures and in different countries. However, when the education is amalgamated with any other profession these guidelines relate specifically to the Speech-Language Pathology component of the education. The SLP education should be sufficient for the profession to stand on its own and to be analogous to programmes where it is an independent field. SLP should be an identifiable profession independent of practitioners seen as educational/medical/social assistants. The SLP professional follows a code of ethics and should have a broad and generalist scope of work with people of all ages.

The guidelines state that the education and training of SLPs should include an appreciation of cultural and linguistic

factors as well as an appreciation of evidence based practice and the use of research to support clinical approaches. It is also recommended strongly that new SLP graduates should be given opportunities to develop their skills under supervision for their first year of experience in the profession and to engage in continuing education where possible. Experienced speech language pathologists have a responsibility to assist and tutor students of their profession and supervise their clinical practice.

The guidelines provide an overview of the content of SLP education programmes. The programme should cover the principal discipline of Logopedics/SLP, include practical work carried out under the supervision of qualified and experienced speech language pathologists, and monitored by the logopedic educational programme. Hands on experience should be provided to the students related to individuals with primary communication or oral disorders as well as secondary to at least one of various disabilities. It is recommended that a practical examination would be held by the end of the programme in order to assess the student's ability to apply theory to practice and to approve the student has reached the expected competence as a safe practitioner. The guidelines suggest the provision of clinical guidelines for clinical educators/supervisors.

A reference for the establishment of national standard: not intended to substitute for the accreditation requirements set by national professional bodies concerned with SLP. Apart from the core subjects related to the assessment, diagnosis and intervention in individuals with communication disorders and feeding/swallowing difficulties, the programme of studies should include aspects of supporting disciplines including psychology and linguistics, behavioral sciences and biomedical sciences; each of these should include a practical component or guided fieldwork.

For countries where the service to people with communication disorders is developing a first degree, preferably distributed over four years and covering all necessary "domain specific competencies" or a post graduate degree (or equivalent) in Logopedics (at least three years) are considered acceptable. In case of countries where the professional education of speech language pathologists does not currently exist it is suggested that the first steps to be taken would be to identify major cultural issues and to evaluate needs, including a review of existing services, within the prevailing local context, in particular the local education system. External facilitators should be sensitive to aspects of indigenous culture and circumstances such as

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1	sustainability, financing, cultural values, availability of equipment and technical resources and the existing collaboration of education and health services.	59
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4	Academics on the programmes should be active in research to stimulate students' interest in research and keep academics and students up-to-date. All SLP programmes of studies should include a research project amongst the students' experiences, and foster a research-oriented approach (evidence based) to	62
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clinical work. Programmes should periodically undertake their own self- evaluations. IALP may approve professional programmes with experiences in accreditation for use as its agent in satisfying itself that the guidelines have been adequately met by identified programmes, and thereby permitting statements to be made to that effect.

The guidelines and other issues of the journal can also accessed on line via [www.ialp.info](http://www.ialp.info).