

What We Have Learned So Far: An Accreditation Perspective

Michael J. Moran
Chair, Council on Academic Accreditation

Since July of 2003, the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA) has been reviewing annual reports and accreditation/re-accreditation applications in which programs were required to describe how they met the 2005/2007 certification standards. The CAA has also begun to conduct site visits in which the site visitors look for evidence of compliance with the new certification standards. As a result of these activities the CAA has identified several areas in which programs appear to be unsure of what is expected of them. Most of our discussions with programs have involved the following issues:

The starting date

Several programs have reported confusion regarding when they were required to have the mechanisms in place to allow students to meet the 2005/2007 standards. That date was July 1, 2003. All students entering graduate programs in the fall of 2003 should be assessed for knowledge and skills required under the new standards.

Student Learning Outcomes

The CAA requires programs to have written learning outcomes related to the knowledge and skills required in the 2005/2007 SCCC. These are “programmatic” outcomes. Many programs have decided also to have student learning outcomes in each of their courses which lead to the programmatic outcomes. There have been questions raised regarding the differences between programmatic and course outcomes. A definition of each type of outcome might be as follows:

Programmatic student learning outcomes - The knowledge and skills a student will have when he/she graduates from the program. What will your graduates know and be able to do?

Course student learning outcomes - Knowledge and skills the student will have at the end of a course. Often course outcomes are formative assessments on the way toward achieving the program goals.

Some programs have only course outcomes that are listed in the course syllabi. This is probably not adequate to meet the intent of the standards. Many programs have chosen to adapt the language of the SCCC and/or the KASA

form to serve as programmatic student learning outcomes. This is acceptable if it is a “generalist” program and does not wish to feature any strengths or unique aspects. In all cases the programmatic student learning outcomes should reflect the program’s mission statement.

Measures of Student Learning Outcomes

Measures of student learning outcomes may be direct or indirect. Although indirect measures have some value for programs the measures of student learning outcomes of concern to the CAA are direct measures. Examples of direct and indirect measures are provided below.

Direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes at the course and programmatic level.

	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures
Course	Course and homework assignments Examinations and quizzes Standardized tests Term papers and reports Observations of clinical Performance Research projects Class discussions/ participation Case study analysis Criterion-based rating scale for writing and oral presentations Grades that are <u>based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals</u>	Course evaluations Percent of class time spent in active learning Number of student hours spent in treatment Number of student hours spent on assignments Grades that are not based on explicit criteria related to clear learning goals.
Program	Capstone projects Pass rates on licensure, certification or subject area tests Student publications or conference presentations Employer and internship supervisor ratings of	Focus group interviews with students, faculty or employers Course enrollment information Program review data Job placement data Alumni surveys Student perception

	student performance	surveys Proportion of upper level courses compared to similar programs at other institutions
--	---------------------	---

Adapted from Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources. Middle States Commission on Higher Education. 2003

Problems in Measuring of Student Learning Outcomes

In reviewing student learning outcomes submitted to the CAA by programs, we have identified several common problems. Student learning outcomes in courses are sometimes too extensive. There were not opportunities to assess K&S as expected when the course was planned. The proposed assessments were not as effective as planned. What should be done with those students who pass the course but did not meet all K&S listed for that course?

Validation of Learning Outcomes

Many programs are still confused about the validation of learning outcomes. By validation we mean “how do you know that the learning outcomes selected by your program are appropriate for an entry level clinician and appropriate to your program”?

Formative and summative assessments

Although assessments at the end of a course may be “summative” for that course, the SCCC standard states that summative assessment is:

“A comprehensive examination of learning outcomes at the culmination of professional preparation.”

Therefore summative assessments include such measures as those listed in the table above under direct measures of program outcomes. These include comprehensive examinations, portfolios, and scores on the Praxis exam. Formative assessments include measures such as those listed in the table above under direct measures of course outcomes.

Demonstrating Skills

Several questions have arisen regarding how students should be expected to demonstrate the skills required by the SCCC. These questions include:

Must a program provide opportunities for students to demonstrate skills in all areas?

YES. CAA reviewers and site visitors will require programs to demonstrate

how all required skills are demonstrated, and review student records to determine how the program monitors this.

Must a program provide **practicum** in all areas?

No. Programs must have a mechanism by which students can demonstrate skills in all areas but not necessarily through direct patient contact. It is incumbent on the program to demonstrate how students obtain those skills when no practicum is provided.

Can CAA guarantee that every student in a program meets every K&S identified in the CCC standards?

No. As always, CAA will ensure that the program has a curriculum and resources that allow all students to meet the CCC requirements. CAA will review the records of selected students as one way to verify compliance.

Record Keeping

Most programs appear to have adapted the KASA form as the final check-off form for documenting knowledge and skills. They have identified courses which serve as steps toward achieving the final desired level of K&S and rely on instructors to verify that the student learning outcomes in each course were met.

Basic Science Courses

Some programs seem to be unaware that the 2005/2007 SCCC require students to demonstrate knowledge in both biological science (or life sciences) *and* in physical science. Most programs have included biological science for many years but the physical science seems to be hurdle. Some programs have added a physical science requirement to the undergraduate program but have graduate students who “fall between the cracks” on this. Others have required first year graduate students or upper level undergraduates to take a physical science although it was not required when these students began the undergraduate program.

There is also some question about which courses are appropriate to meet the basic science (physical, biological, math, behavioral/social) requirement. This a decision left to the program and to the institution, however in most cases these courses should be taken outside the CSD department.