

Admitting Students from Other Undergraduate Programs: Smooth Transitions

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The Problem

- Many graduate programs in our field not only accept but actively seek students who have completed their undergraduate work in Communication Disorders at other institutions.
- Accreditation and certification standards as well as university guidelines require the admitting program to closely review the undergraduate curricula completed by students at another institutions.
- With the advent of the KASA form and the required tracking of the attainment of knowledge and skills the review and evaluation of the abilities that students bring with them from other institutions has become more of a challenge for many programs.

Our Goal

- Our goal today is to describe some problem scenarios which have been raised by faculty at various graduate programs and present some possible solutions.
- We heartily encourage the audience to comment on or add to the solutions that we describe and to raise additional problems that we have not covered.

Scenario 1:

University A has several knowledge and skills met at the undergraduate level. This particularly true of Standard II-B and parts of Standard III-C (etiologies, characteristics, anatomical/physiological and developmental aspects) . How can the graduate program know that students who took undergraduate work elsewhere have demonstrated the same K&S?

Solution 1: Be sure that all aspects of the relevant standards are covered in graduate courses (a higher level of proficiency might be required).

Caveat: This can result in redundancy of information for those students who met the K&S at the undergraduate level. It can also limit the extent of the graduate course.

Solution 2: Request a list of knowledge and skills from the undergraduate program

Caveat: Several programs have indicated that they do not track knowledge and skills at the undergraduate level. Programs may not respond to such requests at

all (based on personal experience)

Solution 3: Request syllabi from the undergraduate program

Caveat: The syllabi may not include specific delineation of knowledge and skills attained in the course.

Solution 4: Develop a test to assess those knowledge and skills you expect the student to be able to demonstrate at this point in their education.

Caveat: This is not an appealing idea to students and may affect the program's ability to recruit top students from other programs.

Scenario 2:

University A requires undergraduate courses in voice and fluency. They offer "advanced" voice and fluency on the graduate level. Students with little or no undergraduate work in voice or fluency are not typically prepared for a truly advanced course in these areas.

Solution 1: Share syllabi and student learning outcomes for the undergraduate course with the student. Determine, formally or informally, whether the student has the appropriate level of K&S. Provide a specific "leveling" plan including directed readings, projects, or auditing all or part of the undergraduate class.

Caveat: Time consuming for both student and faculty. May present a significant burden over and above the demands of the typical graduate course and practicum requirements.

Solution 2: If this presents a significant problem for students you may wish to review your undergraduate curriculum.

Caveat: Such revisions may be viewed as preventing the "advanced" classes on the graduate level from being truly advanced.

Scenario 3

A student comes from a program with a broad interpretation of physical and biological sciences. The graduate program has a more narrow range of acceptable courses to meet this requirement.

Solution 1: Require the student to take one of the courses acceptable to the program

Caveat: It may be difficult to fit such a course into the graduate sequence or

there may be additional tuition costs to the student

Solution 2: Allow students from other programs to meet this requirement with a broader range of courses.

Caveat: This solution does not meet the program's goals and may be perceived as unfair by the program's own students.

Scenario 4

A student has taken an undergraduate course in neuroanatomy. Your program offers this as a required course in your graduate sequence. The student requests that she not have to take your neuro course.

Solution 1: Require the student to take the course because you want all student "on the same page" in this area.

Caveat: It may actually be redundant for the student and prevent him/her from taking other coursework

Solution 2: Show the student the knowledge and skills outcomes for the course in question. Determine, formally or informally, if the student can demonstrate the expected level of knowledge and skills.

Caveat: Unless the student is made aware of this evaluation, it might appear

Scenario 5

A student applies to a graduate program with an undergraduate degree in fashion design and merchandising. How does the program allow this student to obtain the undergraduate coursework required for entry into the graduate program?

Solution 1: Admit the student to the graduate program on a provisional basis requiring undergraduate "leveling" courses. Full admission to the graduate program is granted if the leveling courses are completed satisfactorily.

Caveat: This is a two-step admission process. The level of performance required to move to the graduate sequence must be made clear. Also there is always the possibility that the student will not meet the threshold for full admission

Solution 2: Give full admission to the graduate program but require the student to take leveling courses.

Caveat: Mediocre performance in leveling courses may be adequate to keep the student in the program but not bode well for success in the graduate level.

Solution 3: Allow the student to take undergraduate prerequisites at another university and then apply to your graduate program.

Caveat: See scenarios 1 and 2.

Scenario 6

“The trailing spouse.” A student’s working spouse obtains a promotion and is transferred to your area. The student wishes to transfer from the CAA accredited graduate program in which he/she is currently enrolled to your program. Within the guidelines of your university, how do you determine which courses may transfer and which may not.

Solution 1: Do not allow the student to transfer any graduate credit. Require that your entire course sequence must be completed.

Caveat: This may place a financial and time burden on the student and result in significant redundancy in coursework

Solution 2: Allow students to transfer as many credits as your university allows that are appropriate to your program.

Caveat: Requires some knowledge and skills verification (formative) If this verification is done as a comprehensive exam (summative) and the student fails, an unpleasant situation is likely

Why do we need to verify skills?

- 1) Our own professional reputation
- 2) To be sure our clients are getting appropriate services from the student
- 3) So employers of our students know where they may need extra professional development activities
- 4) Because ASHA said to!

How do we verify skills?

- 1) accept signed documentation of clock hours as verification that skills related to that client have been achieved.
- 2) role play (particularly useful for verifying skills in test administration)
- 3) Give a written test with questions based on clinical application of knowledge
- 4) observe student working with a client
- 5) review syllabus and assume if got an "A" that the student has the skills
- 6) review of undergrad portfolios/documentation & integrate appropriate materials into graduate folder
- 7) provide a tutorial addressing basic skills that form the foundation for a thorough and appropriate assessment and treatment program followed by a practical examination

WHAT DID THE SURVEY SHOW?

Demographics:

- # of responses: 17
- # that verify skills of grads from other universities: 7
- # that verify skills of grads from own university: 4
- # that offer UG practicum: 4 reg and 4 honors/limited
- # that undergrads function as assistants but don't get clock hours: 2

Verifying skills of students from other undergraduate programs:

- # that accept signed documentation of clock hours as verification that skills related to that client have been achieved: 2
- # that give a written test with questions based on clinical application of knowledge: 1
- # that role play: 0
- # that observe student working with a client: 5
- # that contact UG program: 1 (but gets no response)
- # that review undergrad portfolios/documentation & integrate appropriate materials into graduate folder: 0
- # that review clock hours: 2
- # that review transcript and assume if got an "A" that the student has the skills: 1
- # that interview student: 2

Verifying skills of students from own undergraduate program:

- # that accept signed documentation of clock hours as verification that skills related to that client have been achieved: 0
- # that give a written test with questions based on clinical application of knowledge: 1
- # that role play: 0
- # that observe student working with a client: 1
- # that contact UG program: 1 (but gets no response)
- # that review undergrad portfolios/documentation & integrate appropriate materials into graduate folder: 3
- # that review clock hours: 0
- # that review transcript and assume if got an "A" that the student has the skills: 0

I	Yes						X			
J	1 sem aide	X					X			
K	Yes									
L	Yes	X								
M	No	X								
N	Tx asst (some)	X								
O	Limited	X								
P	No	X								
Q							X			

NOTES:

- 1) School A: "...Review each transcript and look for similar courses to our (UG courses). I guess we should be asking students to submit all their syllabi, but that would be too crazy. Maybe we could get a statement from each university indicating what KASA standards were met within each program."
- 2) School C: reviews transcripts and syllabi for knowledge, but does not verify skills. Their philosophy is that the student needs to demonstrate clinical skills for their faculty at the graduate level.
- 3) School F: – "We review academic requirements (course work), observation hours but do not evaluate clinical skill levels. We will begin (Fall of 07) to screen for voice, hearing, written and oral language abilities."

- 4) School H: “We do require our UG students to develop a professional portfolio consisting of listing of all CSD classes and grades, syllabi for all CSD classes, mission statement and goals, clinical documents, etc.”
- 5) School I: “We are a little different than some since our students have two semesters of clinic at the UG level. We do have documentation of the clinical skills they obtained but haven’t done anything other than move this documentation to their grad file. Can’t imagine trying to get this info from other universities.”
- 6) School P: “Not really; we only expect 4 prerequisites and we cover all 9 disorders in two survey courses in the first semester (adult and child), so we are documenting it more there.”

Additional problem situations, questions, or comments?

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