

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS



Supportive Personnel Programs Survey Report – 2010

Introduction

Context

With more than 5,500 members, the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) is the only national body that supports and represents the professional needs of audiologists, speech-language pathologists and supportive personnel (SP) inclusively within one organization. Through this support, CASLPA champions the needs of people with communication disorders.

Mission

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists ... supporting and empowering our members to maximize the communication and hearing potential of the people of Canada.

Survey Goals and Objectives

CASLPA's SP membership category was launched in 2006. The number of educational programs (colleges and universities) offering training to supportive personnel has grown over the years.

The profession of SP, working with speech-language pathologists and audiologists, is not regulated in Canada, nor is there any standardized curriculum across programs. Some SP programs train/educate in the area of speech-language pathology; other programs focus on audiology; and some cross-train their students in both disciplines. There are also programs which combine speech and language with other rehabilitation disciplines such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Variability in training across Canada adds to the flavour of this profession. However, the lack of standardization makes it difficult to draw comparisons regarding levels of competency, salary, job descriptions, etc.

The purpose of the Supportive Personnel Programs survey was to:

- Gain insight into the similarities and differences between programs offered at Canadian universities and/or colleges.
- Monitor any important trends that may be affecting the profession of SP now or in the future.
- Provide context to assess the current state of the profession of SP in Canada.
- Provide useful information to prospective students interested in entering the field of communication disorders as SP.

Method

CASLPA surveys the nine Canadian university programs in speech-language pathology and/or audiology every three years, the last survey was conducted in 2010. The survey questions for the SP programs were modeled after CASLPA's university survey. Once the questions were defined by CASLPA's director of audiology and supportive personnel, they were reviewed and revised based on feedback from CASLPA's SP representative on the board of directors, as well as one program coordinator from an Ontario SP program. The questions were then validated for accuracy and reliability by Statcomp.¹

The finalized survey was conducted using the online survey tool Survey Monkey. The survey was sent by email to the 13 SP programs listed on the CASLPA website. Because SP are not regulated in Canada, nor have a standardized accreditation system for its programs, it is difficult to ensure a complete list of programs. CASLPA is confident that the list of programs on its website, which was the distribution list for this survey, is comprehensive and includes programs that graduate students eligible for CASLPA SP membership. The programs include: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (BC), Capilano University (BC), Grant MacEwan College (AB), Medicine Hat College (AB) (two programs within Medicine Hat), Brock University (ON), Université Laurentienne (ON), Saint-Lawrence College (ON), Durham College (ON), Georgian College (ON), Lambton College (ON), Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (NB) and Keyin College (NL).

An email with a link to the survey was sent to program coordinators on May 11, 2010, with subsequent reminders sent June 17 and June 29. A 2-week extension of the deadline was also provided, and the survey closed July 9, 2010. In total, nine of the 13 programs completed the survey, which represents a 69% response rate; however, not all programs answered every question.

Results

Participating colleges/universities

- Collège Communautaire du Nouveau Brunswick (CCNB) (NB): Techniques de réadaptation
- Brock University (ON): Communicative Disorders Assistants program
- Medicine Hat College (AB): Speech-Language Pathologist Assistant Program
- Lambton College(ON): Communicative Disorders Assistant graduate certificate diploma program
- St. Lawrence College (ON): Communicative Disorders Assistant program
- Durham College (ON): Communicative Disorders Assistant program
- Keyin College (NL): Speech Language Pathology Assistant Diploma Program
- Capilano University (BC): Rehabilitation Assistant Diploma Program
- Georgian College (ON): Communicative Disorders Assistant Program

¹ Statcomp provides data analysis services for survey purposes. They advise on survey design, execution and data analysis and are located in Ottawa, Ontario.

Supportive Personnel programs

Six SP programs offer an academic training program, which combines both speech-language pathology and audiology.

Four programs grant a college diploma upon graduation and three grant a college graduate certificate.

When asked about the name of diploma/degree/certificate that students receive, responses were as follows:

Table 1
Name of Diploma/Degree/Certificate Received

Program	Name
CCNB	Diplôme en Techniques de réadaptation
Brock	Communication Disorders Assistant
Medicine Hat	Speech-Language Pathologist Assistant
Lambton	Communicative Disorders Assistant Graduate Certificate Diploma
St. Lawrence	Communicative Disorder Assistant Certificate
Durham	Communicative Disorders Assistant Graduate Certificate
Keyin	Speech Language Pathology Assistant Diploma
Capilano	Rehabilitation Assistant Diploma
Georgian	Ontario College Graduate Certificate

Admission requirements

SP programs have a variety of entrance requirements and only one program requires a university degree (Brock).

Table 2
Minimum Entry Requirements

Requirements	Number of Programs
High school diploma	4
University bachelor's degree	1
College education	4

Four programs require college education as an entrance requirement and indicated the following minimum years to be completed:

- One year
- Two years
- Two-year program with concentration in social sciences
- A two-year college diploma is the minimum or a three- or four-year university degree

When asked if students are required to have completed certain mandatory courses as a minimum to enter the program, three responded no and six responded yes, indicating the following courses:

**Table 3
Mandatory Courses**

Program	Mandatory Courses
CCNB	Maths regular grade 11, one additional science.
Brock	Three-year (pass) BA in Speech and Language (or Hearing) Sciences or equivalent must include, minimally: Introduction to Linguistics, Introduction to Communication Disorders, Phonetics, Anatomy and Physiology of Speech Production, Child Language Acquisition, Language Disorders in Children and Youth and Introduction to Audiology.
Medicine Hat	High school diploma with a minimum grade of 60% in English 30 and Biology 30 and two 30 level subjects one of which must be a science or math.
Lambton	Applicants must have completed at minimum, a post-secondary diploma or degree with emphasis on communication disorders, linguistics, human anatomy and physiology, social sciences, or human services curricula
St. Lawrence	Two-year social services program (college) or university graduate with high concentration in linguistic or social service.s
Durham	None
Keyin	None
Capilano	Grade 12 English, science 12 – biology, chemistry or physics (biology recommended).
Georgian	None

For an admissions application to be considered complete, SP programs indicated the following information was required (all nine programs require transcripts):

**Table 4
Information Required for a Complete Application to SP Programs**

Requirements	Number of Programs
Transcripts (high school, college and/or university)	9
Resume	6
Letter(s) of recommendation	4
Application fee	7
Personal statement/letter of intent	5
Language proficiency test (if necessary)	2
Face-to-face interview	1
Other	5

Three programs require volunteer experience for admissions. Comments included:

- Brock: Experiences that would allow the applicant to demonstrate empathy, responsible behaviour (e.g., timeliness, dependability), maturity, and creativity. Volunteer activities should have taken place in health care or school environments.
- Capilano: 50 hrs in a rehabilitation or medical setting.
- Georgian: While the entrance requirement to Georgian's CDA Program is: “applicants must have a college diploma or a university degree,” we screen all applications received. Our scoring system weighs heavily in favour of related university academic background along with related work,

volunteer or practicum experience. The more experience in terms of months/years, the higher the score. In addition the higher the GPA, the higher the score.

Seven programs do not require a minimum grade point average for admission and one program indicated a required minimum GPA of 2.5.

All programs accept applications from international students including internationally trained speech-language pathologists and audiologists. Five programs require language proficiency evaluation scores for students whose native language is not the language of instruction.

Six programs do not have an affirmative action policy for admissions.

Six programs indicated that if students (international or domestic) do not meet the minimum entry requirements, they would provide a mechanism to assist them in meeting requirements.

**Table 5
Mechanisms Offered to Meet Minimum Entry Requirements**

Program	Mechanism
CCNB	The College offers upgrading courses or admissions upon certain conditions if possible.
Brock	Applicants may be asked to take additional course work along with their CDA courses. If there are too many additional courses to complete in one academic year, they may, at the discretion of the department, be permitted to complete some of them as a special student prior to admission to the CDA program. Applicants may also be referred to other SP programs with fewer minimum entry requirements.
Medicine Hat	Students are advised how to gain the courses needed for admission.
Durham	We recommend courses to take, college programs to meet the educational requirements, etc.
Capilano	Advise prospective students re: upgrading and English/biology courses.
Georgian	We make recommendations frequently about various paths potential applicants can take to meet entrance requirements, e.g., degree assessment processes for international students, college diploma programs and university degrees.

Program Details

**Table 6
Average Length (in months) of SP Programs for Full-time Students***

Months	Programs
0-6	
7-12	Lambton, Saint Lawrence, Durham and Georgian (CDA programs)
13-18	Brock
19-24	CCNB ² , Medicine Hat, Capilano (combines SP in physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology)
25 or more	Keyin (includes therapeutic recreation coursework)

*from the beginning to completion of all graduation requirements (including clinical practicum)

² Combines SP in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and audiology

Part-time Studies

Five programs (CCNB, Brock, Medicine Hat, Keyin and Georgian) responded that they offer part-time studies.

For those offering part-time studies, the average length to complete the program is:

- 19-24 months: Brock University
- 25-30 months: Georgian College
- 31 months+: Keyin, Medicine Hat, CCNB

Courses

When asked about courses offered within the SP curriculum, results indicate comparable coursework among the programs with the exception of psychology coursework only offered in five programs. In addition, all programs indicated that their coursework prepares graduates to work with all age groups.

Table 7
Program Coursework

Coursework	Percentage of Programs
Introduction to the profession of SP including roles, scope of practice, guidelines, supervision, ethical and regulatory issues	100%
Clinical procedures in communication disorders including observing, preparing materials, report writing, documenting, functioning and maintenance of instrumentation	100%
Anatomy and physiology of the speech and hearing mechanisms	88.9%
Normal speech, language and hearing development	88.9%
Communication disorders screening and treatment methods	88.9%
Introduction to the use of instrumentation and technology in communication disorders	88.9%
Amplification systems and aural rehabilitation	88.9%
Developmental and behavioural psychology working in the field of communication disorders	55.6%
Other	22.2%

Classroom and Lab Hours

The average classroom hours and lab hours (practical component of the coursework) required:

Table 8
Average Classroom Hours Required in Each Academic Semester

Average Classroom Hours	Program
0-10 hours	
11-20 hours	Lambton
21-30 hours	
31-40 hours	Brock
41 hours or more	CCNB, St. Lawrence, Keyin, Capilano, Durham, Medicine Hat and Georgian

Table 9
Average Lab Hours (practical component of the coursework) Required
in Each Academic Semester

Average Lab Hours	Program
0-10 hours	
11-20 hours	Brock, Keyin
21-30 hours	St. Lawrence
31-40 hours	
41 hours or more	CCNB, Capilano, Durham, Medicine Hat and Georgian

Distance Education

Only Medicine Hat currently offers the option of completing the program by distance learning.

Note: Grant MacEwan University in Alberta also offers the option of distance learning for their speech-language assistant program.

Keyin College and Georgian College both indicated plans to offer this option in the next three years.

Faculty and Admissions

When asked about the highest educational qualifications/credentials of full-time and part-time faculty, respondents indicated the following:

Table 10
Faculty Educational Qualifications/Credentials

Educational Qualification	Full-time Faculty	Part-time Faculty	Sessional/contract Faculty
College degree-diploma	1	1	2
University undergraduate degree	4	9	9
Master's degree	8	7	13
AuD	1	0	1
PhD	3	1	0
Total	17	18	25

All nine programs reported no vacant full-time faculty positions; however, three programs (CCNB, Keyin and Medicine Hat) anticipate recruiting additional faculty in the next two years.

Six programs have an advisory committee which offers suggestions regarding course structure, content, admissions, etc.

Program Capacity

**Table 11
Program Capacity**

Program	Max # of applicants able to accept in 2009 (# of seats)	# of applicants for 2009-2010 academic year	Actual # of applicants accepted in 2009	Plans to increase # of seats
CCNB	20	Between 81-100	20	No
Brock	5	No Response (NR)	NR	No (insufficient # of applicants met minimum entry requirements therefore no new students admitted for 2010)
Medicine Hat	25 (on-site and distance learning)	NR	25	No
Lambton	25	81-100	24	No (intake suspended for 2010)
St. Lawrence	25	41-60	19	No
Durham	32	160	32	No
Keyin	20	41-60	11	No
Capilano	20	41-60	20	No
Georgian	40-45	NR	NR	NR
Total	212-217	445-540	151	

Recent and Projected Graduates

**Table 12
Graduates**

Program	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	Attrition rate*
CCNB	1	16	1	20	NR
Brock	NR	NR	NR	0	NR
Medicine Hat	8	7	11	15	5 students
Lambton	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
St. Lawrence	NR	0	12	0	7 students
Durham	31	31	30	32	2 students
Keyin	NR	11	NR	NR	20%
Capilano	17	20	20	20	0
Georgian	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Total	57	85	74	90	14+

*Reasons for attrition included:

- “Suitability for field – students find that they are not suited for the field.

- Academic rigour – students cannot meet the academic standards required. This is especially true of students who just make the minimum standard for admission.”
- “Lack of accomplishment of required levels (did not achieve 67.5%)
 - found course to be very challenging
 - several identified students with learning challenges – none were successful”
- “Two students withdrew from their first field placement.”
- “Academic mostly”

Age

The age range of students upon entry to the SP programs was fairly evenly dispersed between 17 and 39 years of age. Two programs indicated that they do not collect information on age of students.

Graduation Requirements:

All programs require completion of mandatory coursework and supervised clinical placements in order to graduate. A research project is also required for graduates of Keyin College.

Minimum Grade Needed to Pass a Course

Table 13
Minimum Grade to Pass a Course

Program	50%	51-60%	61-65%	66-70%	71% +
CCNB			√		
Brock	√				
Medicine Hat			√		
Lambton			√		
St. Lawrence				√	
Durham	√				
Keyin			√		
Capilano			√		
Georgian		√			

Minimum Grade Needed Overall to Graduate

Table 14
Minimum Grade to Graduate

Program	50%	51-60%	61-65%	66-70%	71% +
CCNB			√		
Brock			√		
Medicine Hat			√		
Lambton			√		
St. Lawrence				√	
Durham		√			
Keyin*					
Capilano					√
Georgian		√			

*no minimum average

Clinical Placements

As indicated earlier, all programs that responded require supervised clinical placements. Five programs require over 301 hours while two programs require a minimum of 201-300. This is significantly higher than the required minimum of 100 hours for CASLPA SP membership and demonstrates a strong program commitment to clinical preparedness.

Difficulty finding clinical placements was reported by five programs.

None of the programs offer an in-house clinic or have plans to increase the number of required hours.

Five programs have a final clinical placement after the students have completed all coursework.

Clinical placements are completed:

Table 14
Completion of Final Clinical Placement

Time of Year	Percentage
Fall	28.6%
Winter	28.6%
Spring	42.9%
Summer	0.0%

Table 15
Time of Year Students Complete All Program Requirements

Time of Year	Program
Fall	Brock, Keyin
Winter	Medicine Hat
Spring	Capilano
Summer	CCNB, St. Lawrence and Durham

Conclusions

The data obtained from this survey have revealed many similarities as well as differences between programs across Canada. Continuing to administer this type of survey on a regular schedule (e.g., every three years) will allow CASLPA as well as SP programs to draw comparisons regarding program composition, requirements, curricula, student body and faculty. It will also allow the association to learn about evolving program successes and challenges and keep current with trends regarding online delivery of courses, etc. This data will serve as a useful tool to prospective students interested in entering the field of communication disorders.

CASLPA extends their thanks to those responsible for providing the data for this survey and taking the time to respond. For more information, please visit the CASLPA website for links to the [supportive personnel programs](#) in Canada or contact Chantal Kealey, director of audiology and supportive personnel at 1-800-259-8519 ext. 233, chantal@caslpa.ca.