



**COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS
COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE**

Benchmarking document

Speech Language
Pathology

The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine is issuing this Benchmarking Document for Speech Language Pathology in the performance of its functions as defined by Article 27 of the Health Care Professions Act, Chapter 464 of the Laws of Malta and in terms of Article 28 Health Care Professions Act, Chapter 464 of the Laws of Malta and Subsidiary Legislation 454.16 Professions Complimentary to Medicine (Licence to Practice) Regulations.

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Introduction

This document outlines Malta's Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine (CPCM) standards of proficiency for speech-language pathologists. The CPCM regulates on the professional entry level standard for speech-language pathology in Malta. These standards are the threshold standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public. They set out and reflect the training, knowledge and practice of speech-language pathologists to complete their training, so that they can apply to register with the speech-language pathology register with CPCM.

These standards are adopted by the CPCM to evaluate and assess applications to be registered to practice speech-language pathology within the jurisdiction of Malta. They also serve as guidance to the CPCM on how to address substantive differences from these standards.

This document sets out the standards of proficiency for a newly qualified practitioner. These standards set out safe and effective practice in the professions regulated by the Council for Professionals Complimentary to Medicine. These are the standards necessary to protect members of the public. They are a set of guidelines against which a Speech Language Pathologist in Malta needs to provide evidence for in order to be registered to practice. Any substantive differences from this benchmark noted in an applicant's qualification, may be supplemented by experience that is undertaken following that qualification and for which the applicant must provide evidence.

Description and Scope of Practice

Occupational Description

Speech language pathologists work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults. They also work with those presenting with voice and literacy difficulties.

Additionally, SLPs:

- Provide aural rehabilitation for individuals who are hearing impaired;
- Provide augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems for individuals with severe expressive and/or language comprehension disorders, such as autism spectrum disorder or progressive neurological disorders;
- Evaluate and diagnose speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders;
- Treat speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders;
- Provide training and education to family/caregivers and other professionals; and
- Work collaboratively with professionals from many other disciplines.

Additionally, SLPs may:

- Prepare future professionals in universities;
- Own or run clinics or private practices;
- Work for national, or private associations or agencies;
- Engage in research to enhance knowledge about human communication processes and develop new assessment and treatment methods that may lead to more effective outcomes;
- Provide counselling and consultative services; and
- Train and supervise support caregivers.

SLPs are autonomous professionals who are the primary care providers of speech language pathology services. Individuals with communication and/or swallowing disorders benefit from services that include collaboration by SLPs with other professionals.

The overall objective of speech language pathology services is to optimize individuals' abilities to communicate and to swallow, thereby improving quality of life. SLPs are committed to the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services and to the consideration of diversity in scientific investigations of human communication and swallowing.

Scope of Practice

The scope of practice in speech language pathology comprises of the following professional practice and service delivery domains:

1. Assess, diagnose, intervene, educate, advocate, research and outreach in speech and language disorders.
2. Assess, diagnose, intervene, educate, advocate, research and outreach in eating, drinking and swallowing disorders.
 - Assessment and identification of communication needs and swallowing problems - Planning and implementation of intervention;
 - Prevention of communication and swallowing disorders from occurring or developing, including early intervention in disorders; and
 - Professional development, continuing education and specific ethical responsibilities

It also comprises the following service delivery domains:

- Collaboration;
- Counselling;
- Prevention and Wellness;
- Screening;
- Assessment;
- Treatment;
- Modalities, Technology, and Instrumentation; and
- Population (e.g. demographic changes etc.)

SLPs provide services to individuals with a wide variety of speech, language, and swallowing differences and disorders within the above-mentioned domains that range in function from completely intact to completely compromised, in different contexts.

Level of Qualification

The CPCM expects that the threshold entry routes to the Speech Language Pathology Register will be a Bachelor's degree with honours in Speech and Language Pathology (MQF/EQF Level 6 as recognised by MQRIC). It is recommended that the duration of the programme is over a minimum of 4 years.

The level for Speech Language Pathology is based on what the CPCM believes is needed for individuals who successfully complete the programme to meet all the standards of proficiency. These expectations are in line with the recommendations of the Standing Liaison Committee of E.U. Speech and Language Therapists and Logopedists, CPLOL.

Language Proficiency

The CPCM requires those applicants who wish to enter the Speech Language Pathology register, to provide proof of language proficiency.

Communication in Maltese or English is a core professional skill for speech-language pathologists, SLPs, in Malta. Speech-language pathologists need to have an operational command of the language and be able to generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning. The requirements for registration in the SLP profession are therefore being listed separately as defined in Annex A.

Evaluation of Application

On evaluation of the application the Council may choose to do one of the following:

- Grant registration;
- Ask for further clarification when required;
- Ask for the applicant to attend an interview;
- Reject the application if the qualification is not adequate and in line with this benchmark; and
- Be asked to carry out a period of supervised practice or undergo an aptitude test.

Minimum Curriculum Requirements

The minimum curriculum standards ensure that the registrants' curriculum on completion of a speech language pathology programme meet the standards for their professional skills and knowledge as set by CPCM and are therefore fit to practice in Malta.

This should include the following study units that add up to 6000 hours of learning over a period of a minimum of 4 years.

Table 1: Minimum learned expectations for Speech Language Pathology

| | |
|--|---|
| Developmental | Developmental Psycholinguistics |
| | Typical Development |
| | |
| Speech & Language Pathology | Communication and Communication Disorders |
| | Voice Disorders |
| | Language Pathologies |
| | Specific Language Disorders |
| | Hearing Impairment |
| | Audiology |
| | Clinical Audiology |
| | E.N.T. |
| | Fluency Disorders |
| | Further related sciences |
| | Alternative/Augmentative Means of Communication |
| | Early Intervention |
| | Prevention |
| | |
| Psychology | Developmental Psychology |
| | Psychology of Learning for Health Carers |
| | Basic counselling skills |
| | Understanding psychological assessment |

Table 1: Minimum learned expectations for Speech Language Pathology

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Linguistics | Grammar (Syntax & Morphology) |
| | Phonetics |
| | Semantics |
| | Pragmatics |
| | Phonology |
| | |
| Neurology | Neurology |
| | Neuroanatomy |
| | Neurophysiology |
| | Neurogenic disorders |
| | |
| Anatomy & Physiology | Anatomy |
| | Physiology |
| | Anatomy of the Head and Neck |
| | Genetics |
| | |
| Professional Skills | Academic Reading and Writing |
| | Professional Skills |
| | Ethics for Health Professions |
| | |
| Evidence Based Practice | Research Methods |
| | Dissertation |

Practice and Training

This standard concerns speech language clinic placements referred to as clinically supervised practice in diverse speech and language clinical settings. These are an essential and integral part of the programme that must include both children and adult placements. The clinical training should include exposure to speech and language disorders, and eating, drinking and swallowing disorders. This should add up to a minimum of 450 hours of supervised practice. This should be accompanied by 300 hours dedicated to Client Presentation and Case File studies. The evidence for this clinical training must be clear, specific and distinguished from classroom practice and any other non-SLP practice.

Standards of Proficiency

In addition, to be included in the Speech and Language Pathology Register, one should have the following competencies as indicated in Benchmarks for Speech and Language Therapy Education in Europe compiled by NetQues Project Management Team and Partners (2013).

Key subject specific and generic competencies which form common standards for European SLT initial education (NetQues, 2013):

Subject Specific Competences

General Competences

- Interpersonal and intrapersonal competences;
- Systemic competences;
- Instrumental competences.

Once on the Speech-Language Pathology Register, one must meet the standards of proficiency which relate to the areas of their profession.

When registered one is expected to keep to our standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards for continuing professional development. These are published in separate documents found on the CPCM website.

Other CPCM documents to be considered in conjunction with this Benchmarking Document:

1. Codes of Professional and Ethical Conduct

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/regcounc/cpcm/Documents/Codes%20of%20Professional%20and%20Ethical%20Conduct%20-%20March%202019.pdf>

2. Code of Practice (Speech Language Pathology)

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/regcounc/cpcm/Documents/Speech%20Language%20Pathology%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf#>

ANNEXE A

Language Proficiency Requirements by The Council for The Professions Complementary to Medicine

The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine requires applicants to meet the Council's level of Proficiency in the English or the Maltese Language.

All professionals seeking registration are requested to present either one of the following:

1. A Maltese language certificate; **OR**
 - (i) An Ordinary Level MATSEC certificate (MQF level 3); OR
<https://myexams.gov.mt/matsec-examinations/>
 - (ii) An Advanced/Intermediate Level MATSEC certificate (MQF level 4); OR
<https://myexams.gov.mt/matsec-examinations/>
 - (iii) A Medical Maltese Proficiency Certificate.
<https://www.um.edu.mt/arts/malti/korsijiet/medicalmaltesecourse>
2. The applicant can provide evidence that his/her professional qualification(s) (on the basis of which he/she is applying for registration) was/were acquired through the medium of English or Maltese and that practice placements in that/those qualification(s) were undertaken and supervised through the medium of English or Maltese; **OR**

3. The applicant can provide evidence that s/he has **lived in and practised** his/her profession through the medium of English or Maltese in a country that has English or Maltese recognised as the official language of that country for a period of **not less than 2 years in the past five-year period; OR**
4. Any other proof of English or Maltese language Proficiency.

Additionally, should the applicant choose to opt for other forms of proving language proficiency, the applicant can opt for either one of the following Secure English Language Tests.

Should the applicant opt for this, the below is the list of Examining Boards recognized by the Council and the minimum required standards accepted by the Council in terms of the table below (or equivalent);

| Examining Board | TOEFL Internet-Based (iBT) | IELTS (Academic) | Cambridge |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Required Level | 100 | 7.5 | Advanced Certificate |

Any other Secure English Language Tests which are equivalent to those mentioned in the table above will also be considered.