

# Position Statement



## Dual Entry to the Speech Pathology Profession

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## 1.0 Position Statement

### **Speech Pathology Australia supports dual entry into the profession of speech pathology.**

With the introduction of Masters Level speech pathology programs across Australia, the difference between Bachelor and Masters Degree entry into the speech pathology profession requires clarification.

The Federal Government of Australia, Department of Education, Science and Training recognises Speech Pathology Australia as an assessing authority for speech pathologists in Australia (Accreditation of Speech Pathology Programs, 2005). Speech Pathology Australia has the important role of accrediting university programs that offer training courses at both undergraduate and post graduate levels.

The Competency Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists (CBOS 2001) details the professional competencies required for entry into the profession of speech pathology. All professional entry level degree programs in Australia, whether undergraduate or graduate entry, are assessed to the same CBOS 2001 standards in the accreditation process. University-based speech pathology programs that are accredited by Speech Pathology Australia have demonstrated that their graduates have attained CBOS Entry Level competencies in the areas of speech, language, swallowing, voice and fluency with both paediatric and adult clients and are thus eligible for practising membership to Speech Pathology Australia.

The clinical supervision of Bachelor and Masters Entry students is conducted in the same manner by field clinicians who are eligible for membership of Speech Pathology Australia and within the same CBOS assessment criteria.

Speech Pathology Australia believes dual entry promotes diversity in the profession and ensures a choice of entry level option for prospective speech pathology students.



## **2.0 Questions and Answers**

### **2.1 How can a person attain the necessary skills to practise as a speech pathologist in less than four years?**

Masters Entry students all have a prior undergraduate degree, many in areas related to Speech Pathology, such as Psychology, Linguistics, Education, Second Language Teaching and Medical Science. Such students bring both broader and more specialised knowledge to the program and ultimately the profession. Post graduate students have also successfully completed their undergraduate degrees to a high standard in order to be accepted into the Masters Entry program. This signals they are capable of tertiary level study, have developed study skills that should prepare them for, if not accelerate, their learning at a Masters level, and have established a knowledge base that can be consolidated and extended via the Masters program. Prior work experience would appear to provide Masters Entry students with the interpersonal skills required in clinical situations (Armstrong, 2003).

### **2.2 Is a Masters qualified speech pathologist better recognised by employers because they have a Masters degree?**

Graduates from both programs are required to meet the same independent criteria against CBOS. Thus both Bachelor and Masters qualified speech pathologists should be viewed equally by employers.

A pilot survey of new graduates in Speech Pathology demonstrated there were no apparent differences in general or specific competency between new graduates with a Masters degree or those with a Bachelor degree. While the small sample size precluded definitive conclusions, results suggested no perceived difference by employers in competencies for graduates of the Bachelor verses Masters programs (Speech Pathology Australia, 2003).

### **2.3 Do I need a Masters qualification to supervise a Masters degree student?**

You do not need to have a Masters degree to supervise a Masters degree student.

### **2.4 Does the pay scale differ between Bachelor and Masters degree graduates?**

Both Bachelor and Masters graduates are remunerated using the same award structures and pay scales in public sector and Australian government departments.



## References

*“Accreditation of Speech Pathology Degree Programs”* (2005) Speech Pathology Australia

*“Competency-Based Occupational Standards (CBOS) for Speech Pathologists Entry Level”* (2001) Speech Pathology Australia

*“The Competence of the New Graduate Speech Pathologist”* (2003), Unpublished report, Speech Pathology Australia

Armstrong E; Mortensen, L; Baker, R & Fordham, L (2003) *“A look at post graduate clinical education: The Macquarie Masters Program”*. Paper presented at the Speech Pathology Australia National Conference Hobart.

