

# What can I do with a degree in Speech and Language Pathology?

## Speech and Language Pathology.



### What is Speech and Language Pathology?

Speech–language therapists/pathologists are professionals educated in the study of human communication and swallowing, how they develop and the many differences and difficulties that children and adults can experience.

Speech–language therapists evaluate and treat individuals of all ages who have lost the ability to communicate or swallow effectively. In healthcare settings, therapists work with infants born prematurely, and those who have impaired function due to stroke, degenerative disease, brain injury or cancer.

They also work in preschools and schools with children who have difficulty communicating and learning. This includes supporting children who stutter, who have a voice disorder or speech or language delay because of various conditions, including autism or cerebral palsy.

### Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

#### Examples of professional bodies

- Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association  
[www.speechtherapy.org.nz](http://www.speechtherapy.org.nz)
- International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders  
<https://ialp-org.com/>
- Allied Health Professional Associations Forum  
[www.alliedhealth.org.nz](http://www.alliedhealth.org.nz)

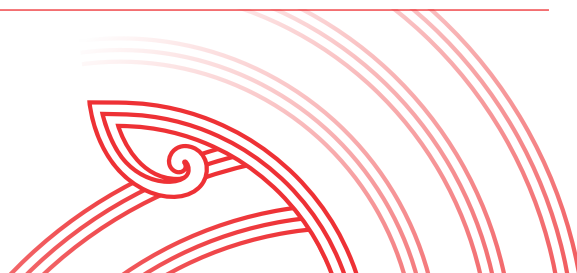
### Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

#### Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at  
[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/speech-and-language-pathology](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/speech-and-language-pathology)
- Job profiles on career websites like  
[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.





### Career and study information continued

UC offers the Bachelor of Speech and Language Pathology with Honours, while those with existing undergraduate degrees can pursue the profession via the Master of Speech and Language Pathology. Applicants typically come from science, linguistics, engineering, psychology, education, or health sciences backgrounds.

## What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Speech and Language Pathology, graduates develop a valuable set of skills and competencies, which can include:

- Research methodology
- Assessment and diagnosis
- Planning, implementing, managing and evaluating speech-language therapy
- Effective communication
- Advocacy
- Bicultural and multicultural awareness and safety
- The ability to extract and give information
- Critical and logical thinking
- Problem solving
- Cooperation, teamwork and leadership.

### Clinical placements

Depending on the year of study, clinical placements account for 25–50% of the year's work. Students work with practicing therapists and clients in a variety of settings in Ōtautahi Christchurch and throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. International placement opportunities are also possible.

Clinical placements help to deepen a student's skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge and employability.

### What do employers look for?

In addition to core speech-language therapy skills, many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork, and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability is important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, and technological literacy.\*

\*World Economic Forum: [www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills)

### How can these skills be developed?

- Foundational skills are gained through theoretical lectures and clinical placements
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

## Where have graduates been employed?

The majority of Speech and Language Pathology graduates find employment in health and education. The Ministries of Health and Education offer many opportunities, whether it is in a school setting, early childhood centre, hospital, rest home, rehabilitation facility, community organisation, or early intervention team.

Therapists are also found in private clinics, not-for-profit organisations, research laboratories and universities.

Speech and Language Pathology graduates have been employed in:

- School settings e.g. Ministry of Education
- Educational and research institutions e.g. University of Canterbury, NZ Brain Research Institute
- Te Whatu Ora | Health New Zealand – hospital and community settings e.g. Christchurch Hospital, Burwood Hospital
- Nursing homes
- Not-for-profit organisations e.g. TalkLink Trust, Age Concern, Manawanui, The Hearing House
- Specialist rehabilitation services e.g. Laura Fergusson Brain Injury Trust, Southern Cochlear Implant Programme
- Private practice e.g. Connect2Care, ECHO, Bay Audiology, Triton Hearing
- Organisations abroad.

## What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates can work as Speech-language therapists in Aotearoa New Zealand and in a number of countries who have a mutual recognition agreement with Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association.

Graduates with this degree have been employed in a range of jobs – see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

### Speech-language therapist

- Regardless of the work setting, a speech-language therapist will have the following responsibilities:
  - Help clients/patients communicate, swallow, and eat
  - Educate clients and support their family
  - Develop and implement support plans, monitor progress and write reports
  - Speech-language therapists may also lead group therapy sessions.
- Specific responsibilities can also vary depending on work settings, for example:
  - In a hospital, a therapist assesses and diagnoses communication and swallowing difficulties following events such as a traumatic brain injury. They also provide education/advice to staff.
  - In a school, a paediatric speech-language therapist empowers and trains people around a child to support and progress the child's communication skills.

### Speech, language, or swallowing researcher

- Investigate communication and swallowing variations
- Develop new knowledge about communication and swallowing, and new assessment and treatment approaches
- Report findings in research publications

### University lecturer

- Prepare and give lectures and tutorials
- Set and mark assignments and exams
- Conduct research, write and publish articles

### Ngā pūkenga manaaki

- Plan and provide community support
- Support people through health issues (e.g. mental wellbeing) and change
- Work in a te ao Māori and Whānau Ora context

### Community support coordinator

- Recognise problems and concerns within communities e.g. mental health, housing access
- Develop programmes to address local issues
- Facilitate access to resources or services

### Audiologist, auditory-verbal therapist, audiometrist

- Measure and treat hearing differences and loss
- Prescribe and fit hearing aids and other listening devices
- Lead rehabilitation and workplace programmes

### Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Clinical manager
- Early intervention specialist
- Healthcare administrator
- Healthcare educator
- Healthcare sales and marketing
- Special education coordinator
- Advocacy coordinator
- Corporate trainer / communication skills coach.

## Further study options

For Clinical Speech and Language Pathology graduates, UC offers the Master of Science in Speech and Language Sciences, Master of Audiology and Doctor of Philosophy research degrees. These offer higher educational and research opportunities. Advanced study can also lead to an academic career.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study)

## How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

### Career planning checklist

#### Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

#### Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

#### Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

#### Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit:
  - [www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)





## What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories)



Angelin



Liz

### Angelin

Speech Language Therapist, Ministry of Education

Bachelor of Speech and Language Pathology with Honours

#### What motivated you to study Speech and Language Pathology?

I've always wanted to be in a job where I'm actively working to help others. It was pure luck and good fortune that my Careers Advisor in high school brought it up and it clicked in my head almost instantly. When I was contemplating changing my major at the time, my family reminded me that I had a stutter when I was a child. I think that sealed the deal for me because it felt like I'd come full circle. I wanted to be there for other children, growing up is hard enough without having communication difficulties.

#### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I like making a positive difference in people's lives. I find it really rewarding that my job is to help them improve their communication and subsequently their quality of life. I also get to meet some amazing people, both colleagues and clients.

#### What are you looking forward to in the coming years?

I'm looking forward to developing my skills further through professional development/workshops. I'm also excited about the potential to do research further down the line if I find an area I'm passionate about.

### Liz

Speech-Language Therapist, Ministry of Education

Master of Speech and Language Pathology  
Bachelor of Health Science (Minor in Psychology)

#### Why did you choose Speech and Language Pathology?

Previously I considered jobs in education and in health. A close friend suggested Speech-Language Therapy (SLT), I had never even heard of it, but it ticked every box! Flexibility, working to support people, options to work in education or health, and I could work in NZ or Canada where I grew up.

#### What do you do as a therapist?

My days consist of a combination of visits to whānau in their homes or with Kaiako, SENCO's, Teacher Aids in early childhood centres and schools. During these visits I connect with the people around the child, to learn who the child is and work from a strengths-based approach to support the team to progress towards shared goals in supporting communication interactions.

#### How have your studies helped you in your career?

My undergraduate degree was aligned with my interests but didn't qualify me to do anything specific. I wanted to be sure that whatever I studied, immediately qualified me to start work in that profession. Studying SLT resulted in me having a career that I am proud of and that offers opportunities to continue specialising in the field. Furthermore, I now have increased stability in my job opportunities, providing a strong foundation to raise my children.

## Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: [careers@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:careers@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers)

#### Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

## Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support)

#### Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: [futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz)

#### First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors

T: +64 3 369 0409

E: [firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz)

#### Continuing students – contact:

Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science

T: +64 3 369 4141

E: [science@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:science@canterbury.ac.nz)

[www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/science](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/science)

