



THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF SPEECH THERAPISTS
香港言語治療師協會

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MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Institutional Based Evaluation Framework of the Hong Kong Association of Speech Therapists (HKAST)

I. Background

The Hong Kong Association of Speech Therapists (HKAST) was established in 1981. During that time, there were no locally trained speech therapists in Hong Kong. In the 80s, the Hong Kong Government granted scholarships for speech therapy courses in the United Kingdom and Australia so that local scholars can return with the professional knowledge and work in the government and hospitals settings. Non-government sponsorships for overseas training were also offered to establish speech therapy service in special schools. These overseas returnees with speech therapy qualifications, formed the first batch of speech therapists in Hong Kong. A local degree in Speech Therapy was established in 1988, when the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences¹ of The University of Hong Kong (HKU) was founded.

II. Needs of Membership Eligibility Criteria

In 2013, the Government has proposed a professional regulatory framework, namely “Accredited Registration” (AR) (See Appendix) to regulate the 15 streams of allied health professionals stated in the Health Services Functional Constituency, including audiologists, audiology technicians, podiatrists, dental surgery assistants, dental technicians, dental technologists, dental therapists, dietitians, dispensers, mould laboratory technicians, orthoptists, clinical psychologists and educational psychologists, prosthetists, speech therapists and medical scientific officers, in Hong Kong. Under this framework, the Government requests the organizations representing these 15 allied healthcare professionals to set appropriate educational and professional standards to ensure their full members are practising competently. In addition to the membership eligibility criteria, the Government also indicates that professional organizations should have its Ethics Board and a stated mechanism to handle complaints and concerns about its members. The ultimate goal of these exercises is to assure the general public of the

¹ Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences had been renamed as Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences since 2002.

quality of speech therapists and to protect the rights and well being of individuals receiving speech therapy services in Hong Kong.

Since 1992, speech therapists graduated from the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at HKU are eligible for full membership of the HKAST as stated in “The Qualifications for Full Membership” in the HKAST constitution. HKAST also recognizes individuals with equivalent speech therapy qualifications obtained in the US, the UK, and Australia. Individuals trained in countries other than the above countries who seek full membership to HKAST will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Membership Approval Committee of the HKAST. However, until now, there are no explicitly stated eligibility requirements or criteria for full membership of HKAST for individuals who apply directly, or through the institution where they received their training. In 2013, two new Master’s programmes in speech therapy emerged in Hong Kong. With the start up of these two new programmes and without a clear set of transparent and objective membership eligibility criteria, the current membership eligibility principles stated in the HKAST constitution fail to meet the standards requested by the Government.

Setting transparent and objective membership eligibility criteria to full membership of the HKAST is an integral part of the Association’s responsibility. These criteria ensure that graduates from institutions offering speech therapy programmes (hereafter Provider Institutions) in Hong Kong meet a common set of standards (see Section VI for details). At the institutional level, this process can be considered as an endorsement in which the Association determines if a degree programme fulfills the stated criteria and can produce qualified entry-level speech therapy graduates.

The Government’s proposed timeline for the pilot exercise of AR is in 2015/2016. Given the pressing needs to address the government’s request, a framework for determining membership eligibility which assesses the qualifications of an individual and the standard of relevant programmes with reference to the requirements in Hong Kong and internationally is necessary. This document outlines the structure and process of evaluating institutions that provide speech therapy training programmes. It is expected that the procedures will be updated and revised regularly to fit the Hong Kong context.

III. Roles of Speech Therapists - Definition

We adopt the following definition of the role of Speech Therapists/ Speech-language therapists:

“The speech and language therapy profession recognizes the rights of individuals to possess an effective form of communication and swallowing, and the need for efficient and effective service provision.

Speech-language therapists undertake to provide a high quality service to individuals, service providers and the community and to maximize these functions through assessment and identification, intervention, appropriate liaison, management, advocacy, community education and research.”

(Speech Pathology Australia, 2011)

IV. Purpose of the Membership Eligibility Criteria

The intent of the criteria is to evaluate speech therapy education programmes in Hong Kong in order to maintain high-standards and continuing improvement in the quality of professional education in speech therapy in Hong Kong. The HKAST recommends the following uses of the criteria:

- To provide a benchmark against which speech therapy qualifications from other countries can be assessed for eligibility for HKAST full membership
- To inform employers the expected standards of practice of entry-level speech therapists
- To inform Provider Institutions of the standards and requirements of the professional education of speech therapists

HKAST will grant full membership to graduates of speech therapy degree programmes that meet the required standards. The programmes endorsed by the HKAST permit only those students who have achieved the entry-level standard specified in the criteria to graduate.

V. Establishment of Membership Eligibility Committee

A Membership Eligibility Committee (MEC) was formed in 2013 and consisted of Speech Therapy academic and practitioner members representing different sectors in Hong Kong. An open call for applications from the private sector to serve on the Committee was also distributed. The responsibility of this MEC is to set up benchmark and procedures to evaluate whether Provider Institutions or individuals who intend to be full members of HKAST meet the stated standards. Through a series of face-to-face meetings and email correspondence, the MEC completed setting up the evaluation criteria. The members are as follows:

Institutional representatives:

Dr. CHAN Angel Wing Shan
Assistant Professor
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Ms. LAU Suk Han (Polly)
Senior Teaching Fellow
The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Dr. WONG Mei Yin Anita
Associate Professor
The University of Hong Kong

Prof. WONG Patrick Chun Man
Professor
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Invited Representatives from Major Service Sectors:

Mr. AU Chi Yeung (Danny)
Chairperson
HKAST 2013-14

Ms. CHAN Wai Kei Amy
Speech Therapist
Child Assessment Service

Ms. CHAN Ka Lam Jess
Service Supervisor
Hong Kong Christian Service

Ms. CHEUNG Pui Sze (Pensy)
Speech Therapist (Senior Supervisor)
Po Leung Kuk

Ms. FOO Shun Yee Sophia
Senior Speech Therapist
Hong Chi Association

Ms. KWOK Chui Ling Irene
Senior Speech Therapist
Hospital Authority

Mr. LAI King Lok (Joshua)
Chairperson
HKAST 2014-15

Ms. LAI Sau King (Yvonne)
Senior Speech Therapist
Heep Hong Society

Ms. LEE Hoi Lam Caroline
Specialist (Speech Therapy)
Education Bureau

Mr. LEE Kam Shing (Raymond)
Speech Therapist
Private Sector

Ms. LUI Lai Yee (Aster)
Speech Therapist
Caritas Hong Kong

Mr. PUN Yan Hung Eric
Senior Speech Therapist
Hospital Authority

Ms. YAN Ka Lee (Gladys)
Senior Speech Therapist
SAHK

HKAST Membership Eligibility Sub-Committee Members

Mr. AU Andrew Yat Chun

Ms. IP Shuk Fan (Anita)

Mr. LAW Thomas Ka Tung (Convenor)

Mr. LEE Eddie Hau Kit

HKAST Membership Approval Sub-Committee:

Dr. LEE Yuet Sheung Kathy
Associate Professor
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Dr. LEUNG Man Tak
Associate Professor
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Dr. TO Kit Sum (Carol)
Associate Professor
The University of Hong Kong

VI. Standards for the Membership Eligibility Criteria – Institutional based Evaluation Framework

Standard 1: Governance and Administrative Structure of the Provider Institution

1.1 The Provider Institution should meet the required level in the Qualification Framework (2012).

Elaboration:

The Provider Institution should meet Level 5 or above of the Qualifications Framework of the Education Bureau (2012). That is, either a Bachelor's degree (Level 5) in Speech Therapy or equivalent, or a Master's Degree (Level 6) in Speech Therapy or equivalent. The institution should be a University Grants Committee (UGC) funded institution who possesses the self-accrediting status as granted by the Education Bureau to ensure the quality of the programme they offer.

1.2 The programme should employ appropriately academically and clinically qualified staff in all positions.

Elaboration:

- The Provider Institution employs a balance of academic and clinical staff to deliver the programme adequately.
- The majority of teaching staff in the programme should hold a speech therapy qualification and be eligible for full membership of the HKAST.
- The programme director should hold a doctoral degree and have a research emphasis in speech-language therapy or in speech or language science.

Standard 2: Curriculum (Academic and Clinical Education)

2.1 The course length should be sufficiently long for students' academic and clinical work.

Elaboration:

- A bachelor's degree would take a minimum of 105 weeks of full-time study preferably distributed over four academic years and one year of common core courses (Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, 2010).
- A master's degree would normally take a minimum of 80 weeks full-time equivalent study over at least two extended years and the bachelor's degrees of the individual should be a discipline that is related to speech therapy (Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, 2010).

2.2 The curriculum (academic and clinical) should provide the training that is in congruent with the competencies set in CBOS 2011 and the supplementary document.

Elaboration:

- The programme must provide appropriate academic and clinical experiences on a regular basis.
- The programme should demonstrate how the requirements stated in CBOS 2011 and the supplementary document are met by describing the outcomes of students' knowledge and skills necessary for entry level for speech therapists in Hong Kong.

2.3 The clinical practica should provide students with appropriate experience in the evaluation and treatment of children and adults and with a diversity of disorders of speech, language, hearing, and swallowing disorders.

Elaboration:

- The programme should have written policies and procedures that describe the nature of students' supervision and qualifications of clinical supervisors.
- The programme should have a minimum of 300 clock hours of direct client contact and of which on average of at least 25 percent must be supervised.
- Clinical experience and time spent in clinical settings should be distributed in a way that prepares students to provide speech therapy service to a diversity of populations. At least 30 clock hours must be completed in each of the four categories listed below.
 - Assessment in pediatric population
 - Assessment in adult population
 - Treatment in pediatric population
 - Treatment in adult population

Standard 3: Student Admission

3.1 The programme should have clear written criteria for accepting student cohorts for the study in speech therapy.

Elaboration:

The Provider Institution should have admission criteria specific to the speech therapy program.

3.2 Students of the programme should be informed about the degree requirements, ethical standard, programme's policy and procedures.

Elaboration:

The programme can provide relevant information to students via student handbooks, orientation sessions and academic advising meetings.

Standard 4: Resources and Facilities

4.1 The Provider Institution should provide adequate support to ensure the curriculum could be delivered adequately.

Elaboration:

The Provider Institution should provide students with access to adequate space, library resources, clinical resources, state-of-the-art technology, equipment, research laboratories, and support services for students' successful attainment of learning objectives.

4.2 The programme should have access to adequate client base.

Elaboration:

The Provider Institution should have access to adequate clinical sites and client base to support students' clinical and educational experiences.

Standard 5: Evaluation

5.1 There is an evaluation plan for the speech-therapy programme.

Elaboration:

To ensure that students can achieve successful programme outcomes, the programme should have a regularly scheduled review of the course, normally in no more than 5-year cycles.

5.2 Students' progress in the clinical and academic curriculum should be evaluated each semester.

Elaboration:

Each student should be assessed as he/ she progresses across the programme. There should be separate evaluations conducted for the academic and clinical components of the curriculum.

5.3 Teaching effectiveness of lecturers, tutors and clinical supervisors are evaluated at regularly scheduled time.

Elaboration:

Lecturers, tutors, and clinical supervisors play an important role in the educational experience of students. Teaching evaluations should be carried at regularly scheduled interval for the development of the programme.

VII. The Evaluation Process

The principal objective of the evaluation process is to assess the standard and content of programme in relation to the context in Hong Kong and according to the international standards required for recognition of speech therapy qualifications in other countries.

The process involves examination of the Provider Institution's staffing, organization, quality assurance, examination of the course syllabi, entry standards, and other aspects that comprise the graduating student experience with reference to CBOS. The Provider Institution is recommended to submit the following documents so as to provide sufficient evidence that the programme meets the standards.

1. Programme start-up review report (for new programmes)
2. Policy or statement of how they judge the quality of enrolled students (e.g., admission criteria and admission report)
3. A written report explaining how the programme maps on to each of the units of the modified CBOS document
4. Curriculum document
5. Full course outline with the timing of assessments
6. University prospectus
7. Syllabus of each subject
8. Clinical hours and distribution
9. Nature of clinical supervision
10. Qualification of clinical and academic staff (e.g., CVs)
11. Sample examinations including summative and formative assessments
12. Documentation of any ongoing programme review
13. Student course evaluation
14. External supervisor evaluation
15. Quality control mechanism (e.g., reports from external examiners, programme review)
16. Access to adequate facilities and resources

The process can be considered as 4 steps:

1. The Provider Institution prepares an application for Institutional Assessment to be submitted to HKAST for the Membership Eligibility Committee (see above). This application is first checked by the MEC for the completeness of the submitted documents. If the Committee judges that the application is ready for review, it may proceed to Step 2.
2. A Review Panel consisting of a minimum of four members will be formed and selected by the MEC. The members of the Review Panel will include:
 - i. A tenured faculty member from Speech Therapy programme in Hong Kong excluding the programme under reviewed,
 - ii. A practising speech therapist selected from the MEC,
 - iii. A overseas faculty member with relevant background and qualifications in accrediting speech therapy programmes, and
 - iv. A member appointed by HKAST among the full members.

Review Panel members must inform the HKAST of any potential conflict of interest with regard to serving as a Review Panel Member to a particular programme before the review process. One of the above members except (i) (to avoid any conflict of interest) will become the Panel leader who coordinates the Panel meeting. The member in (i) can contribute to the discussion and review process but he or she does not have a vote on the panel.

3. The MEC passes the document to the Review Panel. After reviewing all the received documents, the Review Panel initiates a half-day site visit coordinated by the Provider Institution. The aims of the site visit are to:
 - provide an opportunity for discussion and clarification
 - validate information given in the documentations
 - obtain a complete picture for the assessments of the programme.

The visit includes, but is not limited to, meetings with the programme director, a full-time clinical supervisor, a sample of students in all years, and visit to the library, computing, research and other facilities relevant to the programme.

4. The Panel Leader prepares the Panel's final report with the support of the HKAST MEC based on the programme evaluation of the written application and the site visit results. The report indicates what status of evaluation is recommended. The HKAST will then communicate its findings and recommendations to the Provider Institution. Three outcomes are possible:

i. Full Endorsement

HKAST grants full endorsement when there is sufficient evidence that the programme scope, content, and assessments are deemed to have fulfilled the endorsement standard.

Once full endorsement is granted, the HKAST will issue a certificate to the Provider Institution. This is valid for 5 years subject to the conditions below. During that time the graduates from the programme will be accepted as eligible for full membership of the HKAST provided that the programme remains fully endorsed for the duration of their training.

Endorsement may be withdrawn if any of the followings occur:

1. An annual report statement of changes to curriculum and assessments mapped against the Standards is not presented to or accepted by the HKAST.
2. There are substantive changes made to the assessments, curriculum or programme structure such that a programme is judged to no longer be in compliance with all accreditation standards, as indicated by clear evidence of circumstances that jeopardize the capability of the programme to provide acceptable educational experience for the students.
3. A programme has uncorrected issues noted earlier by the panel.

ii. Provisional Endorsement

Provisional Endorsement is awarded when the HKAST finds, based on the Review Panel's report, that the assessments, currency and scope of programme content have not yet adequately demonstrate that the programme fulfills the standards, but that there are a limited number of changes which need to be made to reach those criteria. The HKAST will indicate which specified conditions must be achieved to allow full endorsement to be awarded.

When provisional endorsement is awarded, the HKAST Review Panel sets a date within 12 months of the initial provisional endorsement award by which specified conditions must be met. If the programme fails to comply with the specified requirements within that 12-month period it will be deemed "not endorsed".

iii. Not Endorsed

A programme is declared "not endorsed" when the HKAST finds, based on the Panel's report, that the assessments, the currency and scope of programme content are deemed to have failed to fulfill the standards, and if it is clear that major adjustments to the curriculum and/or assessment processes are necessary

before the programme can fulfill the standards, and that those adjustments are likely to take more than 12 months to implement. If a programme has had provisional endorsement for 12 months but is deemed to have not met the specified conditions, it will be deemed “not endorsed”.

VIII. Requirements for Institutional-based Assessment for Membership Eligibility Criteria

Institutional-based Assessment is priority recommended for new degree programmes. The assessment will take place within the final year of the first cohort of the programme. It would be recommended if a Provider Institution who intends to launch a course on training STs to seek HKAST views to validate the programme standard before launching.

In the future, for previously-endorsed programmes, HKAST recommends the programme to be re-endorsed on a regular basis. Under this preliminary framework, the interval between endorsement can be 5 years. A shorter interval will be considered when a programme experiences substantive changes or when substantive problems are brought to the attention to the HKAST.

IX. Cost

Fees will be charged according to the costs of activities (e.g., invitation of reviewers) required to conduct high-quality reviews and make appropriate decisions.

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