



## DOCTORATE IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Loma Linda University is a world-renowned health sciences institution recognized for the emphasis on educating students in a values-based environment that promotes a lifestyle of wellness. The SLPD program provides licensed clinicians an opportunity to upgrade their knowledge base within a convenient online format.

### OVERVIEW

The Doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology is a degree for Master's-level clinicians who want to increase depth of knowledge in the field of speech-language pathology while also acquiring clinical research experience. Doctoral students will gain advanced knowledge in the field of speech-language pathology, with specialized training in evidence-based practice, critical thinking, and leadership. They will also become adept at analyzing and synthesizing the existing research literature as they design and conduct their own clinical study in their area of interest.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is projected that students will spend just over 2 years in the program, taking 2 (3-credit) classes a quarter for 8 quarters. Students have the ability to extend the program for 2 additional quarters (for a total of 10 quarters) if the required Clinical Research Capstone project is not complete by the end of the final quarter. Only full-time students are admitted into the program.

The SLPD program's coursework is organized into two broad domains: the research domain and the content domain.

**Research Domain** – Students are supported and guided through the process of completing an independent Capstone Research Project in speech-language pathology, working closely with a dedicated faculty mentor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. This experience encompasses every stage of the research process, including developing valid and measurable research questions, preparing a proposal for faculty review, obtaining IRB approval, implementing the study, analyzing data in collaboration with a statistician, and preparing the final manuscript. Students then present their completed capstone project for faculty evaluation. Through this process, students gain hands-on experience in scholarly research and contribute new knowledge to the field, culminating in the submission of their manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal prior to graduation.

**Content Domain** – Students engage with some of the most current, complex and specialized topics in the field through doctoral-level classes. These classes are designed to deepen clinical expertise and broaden professional perspectives, with

an emphasis on evidence-based knowledge that enhances advanced practice.

### BENEFITS OF THE SLPD PROGRAM AT LLU

**Depth of Knowledge** – The scope of practice in speech-language pathology continues to expand, encompassing an increasingly wide range of clinical areas. Coursework at the master's level cannot provide comprehensive coverage of every topic within the discipline. The SLPD program offers clinicians the opportunity to deepen their expertise by engaging in course work that focuses on relevant and specialized areas of the field, thereby broadening their knowledge base and enhancing professional competence.

**Clinical Research** – Students in the SLPD program engage in coursework that fosters a foundation in empirical research, critical analysis, and statistics. Building on this knowledge, each student will design and conduct a capstone research project under the guidance and mentorship of faculty. Through this process, students not only develop valuable research skills but also generate new knowledge that contributes to the advancement of the speech-language pathology profession. Upon completion of the program, graduates will have meaningful clinical research experience, and a research manuscript prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, positioning them to share their insights with the broader professional community.

**Professional Development** – Across the allied health disciplines, clinical and professional doctorates are increasingly becoming the standard entry-level degree for practice (e.g., Audiology, Nursing, Physical Therapy). Although a doctoral degree is not currently required for Speech-Language Pathologists, pursuing one strengthens clinicians' professional credentials and helps them remain competitive for leadership, management, and administrative opportunities.

**Convenient** – The SLPD program at Loma Linda University is designed to support working professionals who wish to advance their careers without the extensive time commitment of a PhD. The program offers online coursework, often with accompanying live evening classes held via video conference, allowing students to participate from a location that is convenient for them. This format fosters meaningful interaction and engagement between instructors and students. The only required on-campus component is a one-day, in-person orientation at the start of the program. While attendance at graduation weekend is not required, we warmly encourage students to join us on campus to celebrate this important milestone together.

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Master's degree in speech-language pathology from an accredited institution and six months of professional practice
- Minimum GPA of 3.3
- Current clinical certification (CCC's) and state licensure to practice speech- language pathology
- Completed online application
- Nonrefundable application fee
- Official transcripts for all undergraduate and graduate coursework
- Resume
- Three letters of reference
- Written statement: 2-3-page essay describing your research interests (and experience, if any), your professional experience/ accomplishments, why you want to pursue a Doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology, and why you want to attend Loma Linda University.
- Zoom interview (to be scheduled with applicants who pass the first round of screening)

### Student Health Requirements:

Applicants are asked to review the student health requirements: <https://llu.edu/campus-spiritual-life/student-health-service/new-students-health-requirements>



### State Regulations for Online Programs

Note that due to legal restrictions created by some state governments, only students from certain states are eligible for the program. Please refer to Loma Linda University's Information page for online distance education programs for a current list of which states are eligible. <https://llu.edu/academics/office-of-provost/departments-and-divisions/educational-effectiveness/llu-distance-education/llu-state-authorization>

## COURSEWORK

### RESEARCH DOMAIN

SLPD 600 Components of Clinical Inquiry  
SLPD 611 Capstone: Proposal & IRB  
SLPD 621 Capstone Planning  
SLPD 623 Capstone II  
SLPD 624 Capstone III  
SLPD 625 Capstone IV  
SLPD 626 Dissemination of Research

### CONTENT DOMAIN

2 SAHP Leadership Courses  
RELE 524 Bio-ethics  
RELR 540 Wholeness and Health  
SLPD 555 Translating Research  
SLPD 570 Special Topics in SLP (taken three times)  
SLPD 580 Clinical Issues in SLP

### COST OF ATTENDANCE

Please review LLU's Find a Program website [page](#) for the most up-to-date information on the cost of attendance or scan the QR code below.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### How does an SLPD degree compare to a PhD?

A doctorate in speech-language pathology is a professional degree and is shorter than a PhD. Our program provides all the training and skills needed to conduct clinical research but does not have the scope of a PhD. This means it is much more manageable with regard to time commitment (most PhDs take 4+ years as a full-time student to complete).

### What is the course load like? How long does it take to complete the program?

The SLPD program is structured as 2 courses per quarter over the span of 8 quarters, totaling 48 credit units. Each course typically carries three credit units. In general, students are expected to dedicate two to three hours per week per credit outside of class to complete assignments, engage with readings, and prepare for upcoming sessions. For Capstone research credits, students should plan to spend three to four hours per week per credit on research activities and related project work.

### What is the program like? Is there a dissertation?

The first year is primarily made up of content courses. At the end of the first year, the capstone sequence begins. The Capstone Project (sometimes called an Applied Dissertation) is a written manuscript in publishable form documenting a research project designed and carried out by the student. It is comparable to a dissertation, but less ambitious in scope (dissertations typically consist of multiple studies).

### How many students do you accept each year?

This varies depending on the strength of the applications we receive as well as the availability of faculty to mentor in a given area of interest. In order to ensure the quality of the program, we will be restricting the number of students we admit (at most 5 per cohort).

### When is the application due?

The deadline for applications is June 15.

### Is admission rolling?

Yes. Once an application is submitted, applicants will be contacted for a formal interview. Students who apply early will have a higher chance of preferred mentor availability. All accepted students will start in one cohort in the fall.

### Is the program traditional (face-to-face), online, or hybrid/blended?

The program is primarily online, with just one required in-person visit to the LLU campus for orientation day. This day is a great opportunity to meet faculty and classmates and begin building connections as students start the program.

### Is this program accredited by ASHA?

No, ASHA does not currently accredit SLPD programs.

### Why should I get a SLPD?

The SLPD is beneficial to individuals who wish to take on roles as leaders, clinical educators, clinical administrators, or who wish to conduct their own independent research. For more information, see the results of ASHA's report on Clinical Doctorates in SLP: <https://www.asha.org/policy/gl2015-00341/>

### Contact Information

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## LLU at a Glance

>> Founded in 1905 >> A Seventh-day Adventist institution integrating health, science, and Christian faith >> Offers over 200 programs in the health sciences >> Houses eight schools: Allied Health Professions, Behavioral Health, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Religion >> About 4,000 students >> Over 1,300 faculty >> 2,000 professional researchers >> \$46 million dollars in private and public grants generated each year >> Many service-learning opportunities

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