

**Proposal for a Combined Degree Program leading to a  
Doctor of Philosophy in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences  
and  
Master of Clinical Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders  
(Audiology or Speech-Language Pathology)**

**Overview**

The proposal combines two existing graduate degree programs into a combined degree program. The proposed combined degree program will provide opportunities for graduate students at Western to earn a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and, concurrently, a Master of Clinical Science Degree (MCISc) in Communication Sciences and Disorders, either in the field of Audiology or in the field of Speech-Language Pathology.

The combined degree program offers degrees in two fields of study:

1. a PhD in the field of Hearing Science combined with an MCISc in the field of Audiology, and
2. a PhD in the field of Speech and Language Science combined with an MCISc in the field of Speech-Language Pathology.

The combined degree program will be housed in the HRS program and will be administered jointly by the Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (HRS) and the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) within the Faculty of Health Sciences.

**Introduction**

The combined degree program is designed for academically exceptional students who wish to obtain a research-based PhD in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences *as well as* a professional “entry-to-practice” MCISc degree which is required to practice as a licensed audiologist or speech-language pathologist. Students will undertake the two degrees concurrently, with the PhD degree requirements administered through the Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences in concert with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and completion of the requirements of the MCISc monitored through the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Both the PhD and MCISc degrees are earned through successful completion of all degree requirements over five years of full-time study.

Within the combined degree program students who conduct research in the field of Hearing Science, and obtain clinical training in the field of Audiology, will be enrolled concurrently in the PhD (Hearing Science) and MCISc (Audiology). Students who conduct research in the field of Speech and Language Science, and obtain clinical training in the field of Speech-Language Pathology, will be enrolled concurrently in the PhD (Speech and Language Science) and MCISc (Speech-Language Pathology).

**Rationale**

The Combined MCISc/PhD degree program seeks to achieve the following goals:

- 1) to enhance recruitment of the brightest graduate students who wish to pursue both a research-based Doctoral degree *and* a professional Master’s degree,
- 2) to provide concurrent research/clinical discipline-based graduate learning experiences at the PhD and MCISc levels that will facilitate cross-pollination of research and clinical understanding and expertise, and
- 3) to contribute to the development of a cadre of “researcher-clinicians” and “clinician-scientists” who will be uniquely qualified to provide leadership in the evolution of health science and health care in Canada and internationally.

These goals are achieved through the completion of a combined research-clinical curriculum that provides graduate students with opportunities to develop the capacity to conduct basic and/or applied health research while gaining a foundation of knowledge in audiology or speech-language pathology necessary for clinical licensure and practice. It is anticipated that the theoretical and clinical content of the MCISc curriculum will provide a rich conceptual context which will facilitate the development of novel research questions and experimental approaches and will help advance the fields. In turn, the PhD research training will position students to approach clinical practice and health outcomes from a very strong research evidence-based perspective.

Material in *Appendices 1 and 2* outline the combined curricula and degree requirements for the MCISc/PhD in Hearing Science/Audiology (Appendix 1), and Speech and Language Science/ Speech-Language Pathology (Appendix 2). The essential and unique elements of the combined MCISc/PhD program are outlined below:

MCISc portion

- a) Timing of Clinical Education Practicum Hours. Students will exceed the minimum hours of clinical practicum required by provincial regulatory bodies and national professional associations, but (i) will complete their clinical hours over five years of the combined degree program (rather than two years), and (ii) where possible, complete some clinical hours in their supervisor's lab or in the context of dissertation data collection. These components enable simultaneous pursuit of PhD-related coursework and milestones and support the practice of clinical skills with clinical populations of participants/clients who are the focus of the students' research throughout the five years of the program.
- b) Eligibility for Practice as Audiologists or Speech-Language Pathologists. The majority of the MCISc coursework will be completed within Years 1 and 2 of the program. For AUD/HS students, Practicum in AUD IV (CSD9504) and V (CSD9505), and Professional Practice IV (CSD9524) will be completed in terms eleven, twelve, fourteen. For SLP/SLS students, Practicum in SLP IV (CSD9603) and V (CSD9604) will be completed during terms twelve and fifteen. Completion of the clinical practicum and required coursework is extended from a typical two-year period to a five-year period. Consequently, students will not fulfill the academic and clinical requirements necessary to practice as an Audiologist or Speech-Language Pathologist until the end of the five-year MCISc/PhD program.
- c) Deleted Courses from Standard MCISc Curriculum. AUD/HS students will not be required to complete the CSD9523a Professional Practice III (Evidence-Based Practice) or the CSD9534L Module in Advanced Topics (Rotating Special Topics). SLP/SLS students will not be required to complete the two courses in evidence-based practice (CSD9639b Evidence-Based Practice: Principles and Techniques, CSD9649b Evidence-Based Practice Applications) nor will they be required to complete the Optional Elective Seminar. The reasons for these deletions are that the doctoral-level research methods and designs courses address content related to evidence-based concepts. Moreover, PhD coursework is tailored to the student's research topic area eliminating the need for an Advanced Topics or an Elective Seminar.

PhD portion

Students enrolled in the MCISc/PhD combined degree program will fulfill all the degree requirements as set out by the HRS program (e.g., required courses, seminars, comprehensive exams, and thesis work). Progression requirements set out by both the HRS program and SGPS will also continue to be met (e.g., no less than 60% on any course, and maintain a cumulative average of no less than 70%). Students in the combined MCISc(SLP)/PhD or MCISc(AUD)/PhD will focus primarily on courses in the clinical masters during the first two years of the program (see Charts provided in Appendices 1 & 2). The following list highlights similarities and differences for expected completion of milestones and course work in the five-year combined MCISc/PhD degree vs the standard four-year PhD program.

- Advisory committee formation and annual review and reporting structure remain the same.
- Comprehensive exam completed by term 6 (no change).
- Proposal development planning, preparation and defense will begin in term five and will be completed by the end of term seven (delayed one term).
- Majority of PhD required courses and seminars will be taken in term 7 and/or term 8 – normally taken in term 1 or 2 of the PhD program.
- The Theory and Practice of University Teaching (GS9500) course or equivalent will be completed in term eleven so that all course work required for the PhD degree would be completed by the end of term 11 (normally completed by term 6).
- An additional requirement for students in the Hearing Science field is completion of a first-year research project. This requirement should be completed by the end of term 7.

Admission:

Students who wish to enroll in the MCISc/PhD program must provide evidence of completion of a four-year honors undergraduate degree and prior research experience. Students who wish to enroll must provide evidence of a minimum of an 85% average in their last 10.0 or equivalent courses.

Application Process:

Applicants to the combined degree program will apply for admission to the Graduate Program in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (HRS) through OUAC just as current PhD applicants must do. Applicants to the combined degree program will contact the HRS Program Secretary and the CSD Graduate Program Chair to advise them that they are applying to the Combined MCISc/PhD Degree Program. A description of the application procedure is presented in *Appendix 3*.

Applicants to the combined degree program will be required to meet all admission requirements to the PhD degree of the HRS graduate program as well as the MCISc graduate program in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

All components of the current CSD MCISc application package that are not included in the HRS application package will be added to the HRS application package for students applying to the Combined MCISc/PhD program. The following application requirements, specific to the combined MCISc/PhD, will be added:

- i. cover letter describing interest in combined MCISc/PhD program.
- ii. one-page summary that describes the applicant's research experiences as well as a curriculum vitae that outlines the relevant experience (e.g., published papers, scientific presentations, academic/research honors research project, summer research work, graduate thesis, etc.).
- iii. prerequisite form that provides a list of courses that must either be completed or in progress as of the application deadline. The form includes a chart that must be completed with details of the prerequisite courses (course title, course code, university where the course was taken, start date, full/half year and credit weight, and final grade). The form also indicates that applicants are required to submit detailed course descriptions from the university calendar for these courses to the HRS Graduate Program Secretary.
- iv. a list of locations, the name of the registered professional and number of clinical volunteer hours completed is required. Applicants are required to complete a minimum of fourteen clinical volunteer hours working with a registered professional in their chosen field of study (Audiology or Speech-Language Pathology).
- v. one reference from a registered professional with whom the applicant completed clinical volunteer hours. This reference letter should provide an evaluation of the applicant's interpersonal skills and potential clinical strengths as a future clinician.

Electronic monitoring of applicants to the Combined MCISc/PhD Degree Program by the HRS Program Secretary and the CSD Graduate Affairs Assistant will ensure that both HRS and CSD are aware of new applications in a timely manner. The HRS Program Secretary will contact the CSD Graduate Affairs Assistant when an applicant's file has been started and when the file is complete.

Applications to the Combined MCISc/PhD Degree Program in AUD/HS will be reviewed by members of the AUD/HS MCISc/PhD Program Committee. This committee will consist of:

1. Director of CSD
2. Graduate Chair of CSD
3. one AUD Clinical Faculty Member
4. HS Field Leader
5. Graduate Chair of HRS (Ex-Officio)

Applications to the Combined MCISc/PhD Degree Program in SLP/SLS will be reviewed by members of the SLP/SLS MCISc/PhD Program Committee. This committee will consist of:

1. Director of CSD
2. Graduate Chair of CSD
3. one SLP Clinical Faculty Member
4. SLS Field Leader
5. Graduate Chair of HRS (Ex-Officio)

Suitable prospective candidates, as identified by members of the HS and SLS Program Committees will be contacted by the CSD Graduate Program Assistant to schedule an interview. Eligible applicants then will be interviewed by the HS or SLS Program Committee members. Committee members will make a recommendation regarding offers of admission to the Graduate Chair of HRS. The decision of an offer will be communicated to the applicant in writing by SGPS.

Eligible applicants will be advised to contact the faculty member who has agreed to supervise their research to develop a research plan prior to attending the interview. The name of the supervisor and the statement of the research plan will be submitted to the CSD Graduate Program Assistant prior to the scheduled interview.

#### Financial Support

MCISc/PhD students will receive financial support for a five-year period commensurate with the level of funding for other combined degrees offered by the HRS program. This funding amount is typically \$19,000 per year for domestic PhD students. The actual amount provided to the student will be outlined in a funding letter provided by HRS before the commencement of each academic year. Students will pay Category II tuition fees (as set out in the fee schedule) for all five years in the program. Students will be expected to apply for external scholarships and research funding. Continued funding will be contingent on meeting FHS academic requirements. Students will be available for Teaching Assistantships in terms seven, eight, ten, eleven, thirteen and fourteen. They may also TA in other terms if their schedules permit.