



**BRITISH ACADEMY
OF AUDIOLOGY**

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EDUCATION, ACCREDITATION AND REGISTRATION**

Curriculum Guidance Document: Audiologist

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1. Acknowledgements

This document is based on the 2006 QAA benchmark statement initially drafted by Professors John Bamford (University of Manchester) and Mark Lutman (University of Southampton). It was extensively redrafted during wider consultation under the auspices of the British Academy of Audiology (BAA). The final version was approved by the BAA.

The Education, Accreditation & Registration (EAR) committee would also like to acknowledge the significant contributions of the previous EAR board leads (Lizanne Steenkamp and Tim Wilding) and Accreditation and Education Expert Advisory Panel to this document.

2. Foreword

The purpose of this document is to act as guidance for the development of curricula leading to the award of (audiology) qualifications by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom. It may also be used for the purposes of external review of a course alongside guidance from professional regulatory bodies and institutional data. This document aims to set out the threshold proficiency for a candidate awarded an audiology qualification that leads to registration with the Academy for Healthcare Science ((AHCS) incorporating the Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists (RCCP)).

This document does not set a single national curriculum for programmes leading to audiology awards. Instead, it specifies the **threshold standards** (incorporating academic and practitioner elements) as minimum requirements for curricula leading to the award of audiology qualifications that leads to registration as an audiologist. It acknowledges that the requirements of the professional and regulatory bodies need to be incorporated in programme design. It encourages UK HEIs and service providers to work collaboratively in the design and delivery of their curricula.

This guidance document was developed by the BAA Education, Accreditation and Registration portfolio, consisting of specialists drawn from HEIs, service providers and regulatory bodies. It will be reviewed regularly, and revised as needed, to reflect developments in audiology and experiences of key stakeholders.

3. Introduction: the nature and extent of audiology

Audiologists are experts in the assessment and rehabilitation of hearing and balance problems across the lifespan. Hearing and balance problems are primarily the result of physiological disorders (either congenital or acquired) but are also influenced by psychological, educational, and social factors. Audiology practice is underpinned by the supporting disciplines of human biological and physiological sciences, physical sciences, sociology, and psychology, in addition to the core discipline of audiology.

Audiology is a healthcare science specialism. Audiologists work across a range of settings and roles, including ear, nose, and throat (ENT) departments, audiology-led services (in hospitals or in the community), independent practitioners, local authorities, educational establishments, research, social enterprise, and the voluntary sector. The British Academy of Audiology, British Society of Audiology, Royal National Institute for Deaf People, and National Deaf Children's Society produce service delivery guidelines.

Audiology encompasses several areas in which audiologists may choose to specialise in following further academic and practice-based learning, including but not limited to (i) paediatric audiology assessment and (re)habilitation, (ii) adult diagnostic investigation of hearing and/or balance disorders, (iii) adult hearing and/or balance rehabilitation, and (iv) tinnitus and hyperacusis management.

Audiology is underpinned by the following principles, which guide assessment and (re)habilitation:

- ⌘ the need to select and offer a range of assessments that are appropriate to the individual
- ⌘ the need to record and document assessments accurately and in a way that facilitates inter-disciplinary communication
- ⌘ the need to evaluate the individual in terms of their needs and context, recognising that hearing, tinnitus & hyperacusis, and balance disorders affect the social and emotional wellbeing of the individual affected and their significant others
- ⌘ the importance of developing a therapeutic relationship with individuals undergoing (re)habilitation (and their families or carers where appropriate)
- ⌘ the importance of working collaboratively with individuals undergoing (re)habilitation and, where appropriate, their families, carers and/or other health, education and social care professionals, to co-create individual management plans
- ⌘ the importance of understanding the communication and cultural needs of the individual and adjusting the approach accordingly

- ⌘ an understanding of hearing, tinnitus & hyperacusis and balance disorders and their impact on life
- ⌘ an understanding of different models of disability which informs the philosophy and principles of intervention
- ⌘ the need to identify and work within limits of professional practice, maintain evidence based practice and identify requirements for appropriate onward referral

In the UK there are several different pathways that lead to professional registration as an audiologist. All programmes are expected to be fully integrated with respect to academic and clinical work, and to have embedded the principle of planned progression. Programmes should already have established recruitment and student support strategies, to ensure that the profession reflects the community (including groups currently underrepresented in higher education).

4. Threshold competencies

The following sections describes the **threshold competencies** that graduates are expected to demonstrate. Threshold competencies are the essential characteristics required to be effective within a role. They do not distinguish between superior and average completion of task. Instead, they define the minimal acceptable performance for a task.

A. The application of practice in securing, maintaining, or improving health and well-being

B. Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of audiologists

A. The application of practice in securing, maintaining, or improving health and well-being

Audiology graduates will have a core theoretical understanding of (a) a range of auditory, balance and related disorders, and (b) the principles of assessing and providing therapeutic interventions to support individuals with these disorders.

It is expected that graduates will have developed a minimum threshold level of expertise for safe and competent provision of diagnostic tests and therapeutic interventions for a range of service users within a variety of clinical contexts. **It is expected that new graduates in their first clinical role will be supported in a preceptorship according to the procedures maintained by the professional body.**

A1 Identification and assessment of auditory, balance and related disorders (at threshold level)

The award holder should be able to:

- ⌘ apply theoretical knowledge from psychology, physical sciences, and human biological & physiological sciences, linking theory to evidence-based practice
- ⌘ use standard and modified procedures for assessment of auditory function in adults (including, but not limited to, otoscopy, case history, pure tone audiometry with masking and immittance measures)
- ⌘ understand the principles and procedures for assessment of children with auditory, balance and related disorders
- ⌘ understand the principles and procedures for assessment of balance disorders alongside auditory-related disorders

- ⌘ identify the influence of the individual's context on auditory, balance and related disorders
- ⌘ describe the impact of auditory, balance and related disorders on the individual's wellbeing and quality of life
- ⌘ recognise contributing factors to auditory, balance and related disorders, whether medical, psychological, or social
- ⌘ evaluate interaction between medical, social, cognitive, educational and communication needs
- ⌘ understand the impact of values, beliefs, and needs of individuals, their families, and carers on this process
- ⌘ use literature to inform current and evolving research and evidence-based practice
- ⌘ use clinical reasoning to systematically gather and evaluate information, prioritising according to the individual's needs

A2 Formulation of plans and strategies for meeting the individual's auditory, balance and related disorders needs

The award holder should be able to:

- ⌘ make the individual central to the delivery of care and set goals jointly
- ⌘ generate hypotheses from the analysis and integration of case history and assessment findings and apply clinical reasoning and problem solving to plan, prioritise and implement therapeutic interventions
- ⌘ understand and apply the rationales and principles underlying assessment and rehabilitation
- ⌘ plan and implement appropriate and effective rehabilitation for adults with hearing loss
- ⌘ plan and implement appropriate and effective rehabilitation of adults with complex auditory and balance disorders
- ⌘ plan and implement appropriate and effective (re)habilitation of children with auditory, balance and related disorders
- ⌘ produce agreed management plans in the context of multidisciplinary provision and liaising with individuals' relatives/carers as appropriate
- ⌘ show adaptability and flexibility in provision of audiology services, indicating an awareness of contextual constraints which influence service delivery
- ⌘ be able to understand, interpret and integrate contemporary and emerging evidence-based practice (research, literature, protocols, and procedures)
- ⌘ accurately and concisely record all clinical assessment methods and results of appointment episodes in accordance with department procedures and legal requirements.

B. Knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the education and training of audiologists

The education of audiologists is characterised by the integration of academic theory and clinical practice.

Skills should be embedded and based on a combination of Section A, profession specific knowledge and understanding, as well reference documents specified by the appropriate regulator. The audiology pre-registration award holder will be able to evaluate knowledge critically and integrate that knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

Auditory, Balance and related disorders

- ⌘ hearing loss across the lifespan (congenital and acquired)
- ⌘ balance disorders across the lifespan
- ⌘ tinnitus & hyperacusis
- ⌘ other ear related disorders across the lifespan (including non-organic, central nervous system and auditory processing disorders)

Language and communication

- ⌘ normal language development and the effects of childhood hearing impairment
- ⌘ the effects of hearing impairment on communication
- ⌘ the implications of English as a second language for assessment and rehabilitation
- ⌘ oral and signed communication
- ⌘ working with interpreters and modifying communication according to the individual's needs

Human biological sciences

- ⌘ human development and function
- ⌘ the anatomy and physiology of systems relevant to auditory, balance and related disorders
- ⌘ principles of neurology and neuroanatomy as related to auditory, balance and related disorders

Physical sciences

- ⌘ acoustics, signal processing and instrumentation related to audiology

Psychology

- ⌘ auditory perception (including speech perception)
- ⌘ self-report instruments (including outcome measures)
- ⌘ the impact of auditory, balance and related disorders on the psychological and social well-being of the individual and their relationships
- ⌘ aspects of psychology (cognition, neuropsychology, social, health, developmental, learning) and the application of such knowledge to normal and impaired auditory, balance and related disorders

Sociology

- ⌘ psychological and social factors that influence an individual's health (including education, employment, and culture)
- ⌘ theories of communication and learning
- ⌘ effective teamwork and leadership

Epidemiology, and public health

- ⌘ epidemiological principles as applied to audiology
- ⌘ screening for auditory, balance and related disorders

Audit, Quality Improvement and Research

- ⌘ research methods as applied to audiology
- ⌘ critically evaluation of research and application to clinical practice
- ⌘ audit, evaluation and quality improvement
- ⌘ research delivery in a healthcare setting

Context of professional practice

- ⌘ current issues in audiology
- ⌘ contexts of service delivery
- ⌘ health and safety, child protection, education, statutory requirements, equal opportunities, and professional regulation
- ⌘ professional roles and boundaries in education, healthcare, and social services contexts

5. Teaching, learning and assessment

Decisions about the strategies and methods for teaching, learning and assessment are for institutions to determine, and should complement the learning outcomes associated with health profession programmes. This document promotes an integrative approach to the application of theory and practice. It underlines the significance attached to the design of learning opportunities that facilitate the acquisition of professional capabilities and to appropriate assessment standards. Pre-registration Audiology programmes should lay the foundation for career-long professional development and lifelong learning to support best professional practice and the maintenance of professional standards.

The design, content, and delivery of the curriculum is driven by effective, dynamic partnerships between practising audiologists, including those who work with students on placement, and HEIs.

The learning process in audiology can be expressed in terms of four interrelated themes.

Cognitive and perceptual

Programmes should develop cognitive skills in students, e.g., the ability to reconstruct knowledge and apply it to individual situations. Such skills should be developed through a variety of teaching and learning methods in which students are encouraged to become actively and practically engaged with the process.

Clinical and technical

Audiology skills should be developed in both the university and clinical setting. These should be supervised, facilitated and developmental learning experiences in which students receive information, summative judgements and formative feedback on their performance.

Social and personal context

The training pathway should enable students to develop an awareness of cultural diversity, values, beliefs, and social factors that affect the context of audiology. This should be achieved through both theoretical and practice perspectives across varied settings.

Generic and enabling skills

Programmes should be designed to facilitate students' acquisition of effective communication skills, team working, problem solving, use of information technology, research methodology and clinical reasoning through activity-based experiences.

Assessment

Methods and assessments should match the teaching and learning strategy, meet learning outcomes and encompass a wide variety of tools. They may include case study presentations and analyses, practice-focussed assignments, essays, project reports, clinical assessments, and examinations of a written or practical nature.

The assessment of competence to practise should be determined in partnership between audiology lecturers and clinical staff. Universities should ensure that clinical staff involved in supervision and teaching receive appropriate training and support for their role. Professional registration is dependent upon meeting university requirements that include satisfactory completion of a period of clinical practice, as specified by the professional accrediting bodies.

6. Academic and practitioner standards

Standards associated with threshold level are identified below. Although only threshold level has been articulated, many graduates attain a level well above threshold. Standards are predicated on the integration of theory and practice, not solely on demonstration of professional and key skills.

Students emerge with different profiles of strengths and areas requiring attention. It is the review of such a profile that forms the judgement as to the student's readiness to practise as an audiologist.

The profile considers the following three skills and abilities.

- ⌘ The ability to understand, critically evaluate and apply relevant theoretical knowledge to clinical practice
- ⌘ The practical skills such as the performance of assessments and the implementation of (re)habilitative methods, therapeutic interventions, and materials
- ⌘ The interpersonal and communication abilities, used to set up and maintain professional environment and relationships with individuals and other healthcare providers where individuals can be assessed effectively and whereby rehabilitation is facilitated

Assessment is also made according to effectiveness of the resultant management plan. **A graduate will not be effective in all clinical situations, but at threshold should be reflexive practitioners who are aware of their own limitations and able to execute plans to improve effectiveness. This includes a responsibility to be aware of the impact of their own health on their fitness to practice.**

It is recommended that clinical supervision in the form of a preceptorship period should be available to all graduates who enter the workforce upon completing a training pathway.

7. Further information and resources

More information on curriculum design of education audiologists, hearing therapists and hearing aid dispensers can be found here:

Educational Audiologists: <http://www.educational-audiologists.org.uk/index.php>

Hearing Aid Dispensers: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/hearing-aid-dispensers/>

Hearing Therapists: Standards of Proficiency (in preparation)