

Frequently Asked Questions About Observing Clinical Services at the Department of Communication Disorders

How do I sign up to observe a session?

Each week, observer sign-up sheets for the following week are posted on the observation bulletin board in the main hallway of the department. The sheets indicate clinician's name, clinical instructor's name, type of case, age of client, time of session, and room assignment. Print your name in the space to the left of a listing. If the space(s) for a particular session are full, you may not observe that session. Please erase or cross off your name if you have signed up to observe a session and then change your mind, so someone else may sign up.

May I observe an audiology evaluation?

Opportunities for observing audiology evaluations are listed on the observation sign-up sheet. One observer per appointment is allowed, given the limited space available. The audiology clinical instructor will help you get oriented during the appointment. Please remember that for some of the people scheduled, this is their first visit to the clinic, and we may not have their authorization to allow observers. If we learn at the time of their appointment that they do not wish to be observed, your observation, unfortunately, will be cancelled.

May I observe a speech-language evaluation?

Opportunities for observing speech-language evaluations are listed on the sign-up sheet. These are typically two-hour blocks, and you must be able to commit to the full time. They are great opportunities to gain observation hours and develop an understanding of this aspect of clinical practice. You must check in with the clinical instructor in charge of the evaluation before the appointment. Since this is often the first time the person being evaluated has visited the clinic, we usually do not have prior authorization for observers. While unlikely, you may be informed at the time of the evaluation that no observers are allowed.

How early should I arrive for an observation?

You should arrive approximately 5 minutes before a session is scheduled to start, and should always be on time. The clinical instructor may ask you to wait outside during transitions, but will welcome you into the observation room when they are ready to start.

I signed up for a session, but there was no one in the room when I arrived.

What should I do?

First, double check the sign-up sheet to see if you have the correct day, time and room. If so, then check the cancellation board in the office to see if the session was cancelled. If nothing was listed, locate one of the clinical instructors and ask for help. Remember, changes to scheduling happen frequently, and we may not have had a chance to update the sign-up sheet. We will make these updates as soon as possible, but ask your politeness and patience as we do so.

My professor is requiring me to watch therapy session with clients with “acquired” disorders. How will I be able to tell which sessions fall into this category?

Clients with acquired communication disorders will be indicated with an “A”; those with developmental communication disorders will be indicated with a “D”.

How do I know if a session I have signed up for has been cancelled?

Check the cancellation board in the Department office on the day of the observation to see if there have been any cancellations or changes. Please remember that changes can occur at the last minute, and may at times not be posted.

How many people may observe a session?

Observations are limited to one (1) or two (2) observers per session. Exceptions may be made only by the clinical instructor.

How should I dress when observing at the Center?

You must dress in a modest, professional manner when observing. Your course instructor will review a professional dress code with you at the start of the semester. You will be asked to leave an observation if you are not dressed appropriately.

How will I know what is going on in a therapy session?

A copy of a therapy session plan can be found on the counter under the observation window. Observers should be sure to share the plan and may not remove the plan from the room. The plan contains information regarding goals, procedures, activities, and materials for the session. Session plans are not to leave the observation room for any reason. Photos or digital copies may not be made of session plans or any other clinical document.

May I talk about what I see and hear in a clinical session?

All activity that takes place during sessions and between client, clinician, family, and clinical instructor is CONFIDENTIAL. You may be asked to leave the observation room in instances when particularly sensitive information is discussed. Please use earphones in the observation room if a discussion between a clinical instructor and family members takes place to ensure confidentiality of that discussion.

Who else will in the observation room with me?

You may be sharing the observation room with another student observer, a clinical instructor, and the client’s caregivers or family members. Please make sure that the instructor and family members have a place to sit before you take a seat.

Can I take notes during an observation?

You may take notes about what you are observing. Please do not try to copy the session plan, or take so many notes that you are not able to listen and pay attention to that is going on in the session. Remember, your primary job during an observation is to watch, listen and think.

Is it OK to talk to clinical instructors and family members or other caregivers about what is going on in a session?

You should refrain from asking questions of the clinical instructor when family members are present. You should never direct questions or comments to family members or clients. Often when clinical instructors are present, they will explain aspects of the case to observers, and in those instances you are free to ask questions. In the event that a family member attempts to elicit information from you as an observer, you should tactfully identify yourself as a student-observer and refrain from comment.

May I bring food or drinks into the observation room?

No.

How do I keep track of my clinical observation hours?

Forms to record your observations are available from your course instructor and are also typically available on the bulletin board where you signed up to observe. Fill out all the required information completely. Ask the clinical instructor for the session you observed to sign verifying your attendance. Be sure they include their ASHA account number. This pertains to all sessions observed both on and off the SCSU campus.

Am I guaranteed observation hours at the department's clinical service programs?

The department is pleased to help you obtain the clinical observation hours you need for your course assignments as circumstances permit. Please remember, however, that these programs are not obligated to ensure that you complete all your required observation hours, and, in the unlikely situation that you fail to abide by the above protocol, you may forfeit your observation privileges in these settings. Current departmental policy limits the total number of observation hours you may pursue in the department's clinical service programs to 15. Your remaining hours must be obtained in other practice sites or through resources such as MasterClinician.org