

# **International Hearing Society's Position Statement on the Audioprosthology Title**

The International Hearing Society (IHS) wants to make it understood that consumer protection is of paramount importance to IHS and its members. For the reasons stated herein, it is IHS' position that use of the term audioprosthologist accurately describes the services provided by the individual who has earned the right to use it. Accordingly, we respectfully disagree with the proposition that the term audioprosthologist is in any way confusing, or that it "tends to create the impression...that [one] is licensed or certified to practice audiology."

## **Definition**

The term Audioprosthologist is defined in The *Comprehensive Dictionary of Audiology* by James H. Delk. The definition is as follows:

"Alternative title for a hearing aid-fitting specialist who has completed a course in audioprosthology."

The term audioprosthology is defined as follows:

"... to apply to a special course devoted to the study of hearing aid fitting."

The roots of the term make its definition self-explanatory: *audio* for hearing, *prosthetic* for device, and *ology* for science. "Audio" as used in both "audiology" and "audioprosthology," is clearly a derivation from the Latin term "audire," which means "to hear," and is commonly used in numerous other English words that are related in varying ways to hearing and sound (see MSN Encarta Online Dictionaries). The Latin basis for these and many other English terms is very much in the public domain. It is therefore entirely reasonable that two different professions or practices that deal with hearing and sound would both utilize titles based on the root "audio," despite the fact that their particular scopes of practice may be entirely different from one another. Although the English-speaking public is likely to conclude that both audiologists and audioprosthologists deal with hearing and sound in some way, the two terms are different enough to apprise the public that the two practices are not the same. Compare this with audiologists who have an advanced academic degree (PhD, ScD or EdD) and are referred to as "Doctor" versus those with the newly minted AuD who refer to themselves specifically as a "Doctors of Audiology." It could be argued that the term "doctor" in any health-related field could be easily misinterpreted by the public as Medical Doctor.

## Consumer Protection

The issue of consumer protection is of major significance. Back in 1992, the Attorney General of the State of Florida issued an opinion regarding use of the term. The Florida Attorney General found that:

*“The use of the term “audioprosthologist” by itself, without any representation that services other than those authorized to be performed by a licensed hearing aid specialist are offered, would not appear to indicate that the individual is or holds himself out to be a licensed audiologist.”*

More recently, in 2004 the Attorney General for the State of Arkansas issued Opinion No. 2004-031 in response to the question of whether or not the use of the term "Audioprosthologist" violated Arkansas Statute A.C.A. Sec. 17-100-301, which states:

(a) No person shall practice or represent himself or herself as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in this state unless he or she is licensed in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

The Arkansas Attorney General’s opinion goes on as follows:

*“It is my opinion that the use of the title “Audioprosthologist,” in and of itself, is not misleading and does not constitute a violation of the law governing the licensure of speech-language pathologists and audiologists.”*

Most recently, the Oregon Attorney General has taken a position that is inconsistent with the Attorney General of Florida and the Attorney General of Arkansas. While we respect the Oregon Attorney General’s position, we do not agree. IHS is firm in its position that the term audioprosthologist, when properly utilized, is neither confusing nor misleading to the consumer.

## Commercial Free Speech<sup>1</sup>

No individual or profession owns the word “audio”. It is IHS’ position that the use of the term audioprosthologist, when properly used, is protected free speech under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Peel v Atty Registration and Disciplinary Committee of Illinois, 496 U.S. 91 (1990). See also, Ibanez v Fla. Dept. of Bus. and Prof. Reg., Bd of Accountancy, 512 US 136 (1994).

## Program Curriculum

Education of our membership is the single most important focus of IHS. The Audioprosthology (ACA) program is designed to enhance our membership’s ability to better serve the hearing impaired community. It provides an educational opportunity for those who engage in hearing aid dispensing and ensures that they practice at an advanced professional, technical, and ethical level. The ability to use the term audioprosthologist is earned, **NOT** purchased. An individual

must complete a 13-month course and a subsequent practicum prior to being granted this privilege. This academic program has been determined to be equivalent to 15 semester hours of upper level baccalaureate credit by the American Council on Education (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service. ACE will only evaluate courses of study that are comparable to the learning offered at the college level in terms of course content, learning methods, and assessment procedures. Over 1500 academic institutions accept the ACE credit recommendations. In our field, Spokane Falls Community College and Arkansas State University-Mountain Home have provided advanced standing for ACA graduates, accepted all ACA credits, and granted an automatic one-third fulfillment toward the requirements for the two-year associate's degree in hearing instrument sciences.

The ACA educational program contains five courses structured to conform to a semester-hour format common to universities. Each of the five courses is held over three two-day sessions (weekends) for a total of 42 classroom hours per course. The core faculty consists of individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in the academic and/or business world. It is the core faculty's responsibility to teach the courses in the ACA program, evaluate student performance and attainment of learning objectives, make suggestions about additional faculty, periodically review curriculum, and make recommendations for curriculum revisions in light of new knowledge, methodologies, and advancements in hearing aid engineering. Each course is described below.

### **Hearing Science (301)**

*Objective:* To develop understanding of the physics of sound, anatomy, physiology, and neurophysiology of the human auditory system and the principles of psychoacoustics.

*Learning Outcomes:* Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to apply the principles of sound to the actual measurement of acoustic signals; measure psychoacoustic perception of auditory signals; and identify anatomic structures and their interactions and contributions to the perception of sound.

*Instruction:* Major topics covered in the course are sound propagation and measurement; anatomical structures and physiological process involved in hearing; auditory disorders; and psychoacoustic assessment. Methods of instruction include lecture, discussion, audio/visual material, and written examination.

*ACE Credit Recommendation:* In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, 3 semester hours in Introduction to Hearing Science.

### **Introduction to Audioprosthology Management (302)**

*Objective:* To understand management strategies as they relate to patient needs, marketing approaches, and legal aspects of business practices.

*Learning Outcomes:* Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to emulate workable management strategies to ensure effective patient care and effective business practices.

*Instruction:* Major topics covered in the course are the basics of communication, awareness of self, value clarification, marketing strategies, analysis of buyers behavior, products and pricing, promotion, advertising, sales strategies, computerized accounting and records systems, American judicial system, confidentiality issues, malpractice, corporations,

partnerships, sole proprietorship, and employee/ employer liability. Methods of instruction include lecture, discussion, classroom exercises, and written examination.

*ACE Credit Recommendation:* In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, 3 semester hours in Audioprosthology Practice Management.

### **Audiology (401)**

*Objective:* To understand the theory and practice of auditory assessment, auditory diagnosis, principles of pure tone and speech audiometry, speech science; to understand the intrinsic relationships, developments, and disorders involving language, speech, and hearing.

*Learning Outcome:* Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to apply the relationship between hearing and speech/language development to persons with hearing loss; recognize communication disorders of the hearing impaired; perform routine audiometric examinations and interpret results as they apply to hearing aid dispensing and the communicative needs of the patient; perform hearing aid evaluations; and explain advanced audiometric procedures.

*Instruction:* Major topic covered in the course is audiometric assessment. Methods of instruction include lecture, discussion, and written examination.

*ACE Credit Recommendation:* In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, 3 semester hours in Principles of Audiology.

### **Principles of Hearing Aids and Auditory Rehabilitation (402)**

*Objective:* To understand the terminology and classification of communication disorders of the hearing impaired; understand auditory habilitation and rehabilitation; recognize patient behavior and/or symptoms that warrant referral to appropriate specialists; and demonstrate advanced skill in the selection, fitting, and verification of hearing instruments and assistive listening devices.

*Learning Outcome:* Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to apply the principles of aural rehabilitation to the fitting and adaptation of amplification devices for the hearing impaired; evaluate the electroacoustic function of hearing instruments; compare earmold acoustics and determine the best fit for each patient; and integrate assistive listening devices into an individualized auditory rehabilitation plan.

*Instruction:* Major topics covered in the course are phonetics and speech/language development as they relate to persons with hearing loss; etiology and classification of communication disorders; processes of communication; strategies in auditory rehabilitation; laws governing rights of persons with hearing loss; earmold acoustics; and electroacoustic characteristics of hearing instruments. Methods of instruction include lecture, discussion, and written examination.

*Credit Recommendation:* In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, 3 semester hours in Principles of Hearing Aids and Aural Rehabilitation.

### **Practicum (403).**

*Objective:* To enhance clinical skills and knowledge in assessing hearing loss for the evaluation and selection of hearing instrument fitting and post-fitting care.

*Learning Outcome:* Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to demonstrate a high level of competency in audiometric evaluation, the selection and fitting of hearing instruments, and post fitting care.

*Instruction:* Major topics covered in the course are the evaluation, selection, and fitting of hearing instruments. Methods of instruction include practicum, review of an extensive clinical portfolio, and supervisors' reports.

*ACE Credit Recommendation:* In the upper division baccalaureate degree category, 3 semester hours in Clinical Practicum.

### **Course Requirements**

*Attendance:* Students are required to attend all classes. Absences must be approved by the instructor in advance. If a student needs to be absent for any one of the 13 two-day sessions, that student will be required to submit an extra assignment and to pass any examinations given for that learning session. If a student needs to be absent for any two-day session, that entire session must be taken at another venue in its entirety and a grade of 70% or better must be earned.

*Class Assignments:* Each student must complete all class assignments with a grade of 70% or better. Students are expected to have all required texts available to them. Recommended texts are optional and provide supplemental, not required, information.

*Grading:* All courses require a minimum grade of 70% to pass that class. Failure requires that the course be repeated.

### **Transcripts**

Official transcripts are available to each student who completes the ACA through the ACE Transcript Service in Washington, DC.

### **Trademark**

The United States Patent and Trademark Office has granted Trademark protection to the American Conference of Audioprosthology, and to ACA.

### **Comments**

IHS is firmly committed to promoting the provision of the highest quality services to the hearing impaired community by, in part, providing quality educational opportunities to its members. The Audioprosthology program is an excellent example of this commitment. Simply stated, the program trains hearing health professionals to better care for those in need of hearing help.

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