

**REALLY GOOD STUFF**

# A signature pedagogy for speech-language pathology education

## 1 | WHAT PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?

Signature pedagogies are unique teaching methods that define how knowledge is acquired in professional fields.<sup>1</sup> However, there is limited research on the signature pedagogies in speech-language pathology education to inform curriculum development. A signature pedagogy helps to establish a clear identity for the course including the educational philosophies and methods. This ensures a clear, consistent and evidence-based learning, teaching and assessment framework, which supports students' transition to practice, aids development of professional ways of thinking and doing, and guides development of skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and clinical competence.

## 2 | WHAT WAS TRIED?

In 2022, we aligned and enhanced curriculum approaches in our undergraduate speech-language pathology programme at a regional Australian university, using Shulman's<sup>1</sup> signature pedagogy framework.

The **implicit structure** is shaped by core discipline professional and competency standards, as well as the disciplinary code of ethics.

The **deep structure** addresses the academic-practice disparity between theory and clinical practice, which may hinder students' transition to practice. The curriculum integrates theory with practical learning opportunities across the course, enabling students to apply their knowledge in active learning experiences. The curriculum is underpinned by constructivist and transformational learning theories, fostering students' professional identity as speech-language pathologists (SLPs). Three interdependent pedagogies distinguish this approach:

1. **Pedagogy of experiential education:** Students engage in diverse, hands-on learning throughout the programme, moving from knowledge recall to application, evaluation, and reflection on practice.
2. **Relational pedagogy:** This approach emphasises the importance of building relationships for effective learning, aligning with social constructivist theories and speech-language pathology's focus on person, family and community-centred care.

3. **Culturally responsive pedagogy:** The programme integrates Western epistemologies with Indigenous knowledge systems, creating a supportive and culturally safe pedagogical environment. It prioritises diverse voices, particularly in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The **surface structure** consists of active learning activities, instructional strategies, and assessments that align with the implicit structure. These include work-integrated learning, simulations, authentic assessment, critical reflection, peer learning and case-based learning, all informed by a blended learning philosophy and models for guided inquiry.

## 3 | WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED?

Our signature pedagogy has contributed to a more cohesive curriculum and improved approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Strategies such as online guided learning materials, case-based learning and authentic assessment have enhanced student engagement and supported deeper learning. Feedback from students and success data appear to indicate positive outcomes. For example, university surveys show a consistent upward trend in reported overall course experience. Students' also frequently report that activities such as case-based learning help consolidation of their learning. Within our academic team, the development of our signature pedagogy has fostered greater collaboration and coherence in teaching and assessment approaches. To support development and implementation we recommend: (1) engaging collaboratively with faculty, students and employers; (2) aligning the signature pedagogy with disciplinary thinking and practices; (3) ensuring adaptability so the core pedagogical principles can be applied and adapted across contexts or cohorts. Our next steps include developing student-centred resources to clearly communicate our signature pedagogy and embedding into marketing to highlight our course's distinctiveness and attract prospective students.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Frances Cochrane:** Conceptualization; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing; investigation; project administration.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Open access publishing facilitated by James Cook University, as part of the Wiley - James Cook University agreement via the Council of Australian University Librarians.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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## REFERENCE

1. Shulman LS. Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*. 2005; 134(3):52-59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027998>

**How to cite this article:** Cochrane F. A signature pedagogy for speech-language pathology education. *Med Educ*. 2025;1-2. doi:[10.1111/medu.15739](https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.15739)