Careers in Speech and Language Therapy - Event notes, 19 Nov 2020

# Frequently Asked Questions

Having recently applied for your MSc, what do you think made your application successful?

* Focus on why that Uni appeals to you
* What from your personal experience has influenced your desire to study SLT
* Each uni offers its own special elements to the program - focus on these in the application
* Tailor your application
* Use the Careers department to discuss your application

As you are applying for SLT jobs after your masters, what do you really value having on your CV in terms of experience or what do you wish you had done more of to help you through the job application process?

* Good work experience - opportunities where you have worked with other professionals linked to the field (i.e. SLTs, teachers)
* Optional extra - on the UCL masters there is a chance to engage with additional options during the masters - do these as they show you are willing to go the extra mile
* The hardest bit is getting onto the SLT masters - if you can get on there you will be fine when it comes to applying for jobs

As our most experienced alumni in this field on this evening's panel, what are the best bits about the role of being a SLT and what are the greatest challenges in your experience?

* It's really interesting! You have an opportunity to make a real difference.
* Spotting things that are sometimes missed in a child’s development is really rewarding (i.e. being asked to assess a child who isn’t speaking properly and realising that they have a minor cleft palate that could be operated on and change their life)
* Working in a more functional way with older clients - i.e helping deaf athletes use their voice in a way that team members will understand while on the football pitch
* Challenges: Very varied, you're spinning a lot of plates all the time - you have to find the balance of doing a good job with doing a quick job - this can be draining

Are there opportunities to get experience with a SLT?

* It is possible to volunteer with a SLT
	+ It will depend on your local NHS trust. Robin suggested - if you have an understanding of Language and Linguistics already (i.e. from your studies), offer that in exchange for time shadowing, you will take notes on your observations and give them to the SLT to supplement their note own use - if you are a LLS student you will be able to do this. This will then be you offering to give something back and increase your chances of the SLT giving you the shadowing opportunity.
* SLT courses are often in pediatrics and adults - so get experience working with all ages if you can.
* Working with charities in the communities can give you good experience of working with people with communication difficulties.

# Are apprenticeships that will be equivalent to Masters degrees coming online?

# Yes - but be aware that there may be teething problems - but there has been investment into this - do your research, as with new ways there are often issues - do your due diligence in advance

How intense is the Masters - What is balance between theory and practical

* It's intense! Nothing like UG (UG - about 10 hours a week) - SLT is 9 - 5 every day in either lectures, workshops or tutorials with an hour for lunch
	+ Start of 1st year (is front loaded so theory heavy in 1st term):
		- 9-10 - self guided learning
		- Break
		- 3 hours lecture online
		- Lunch
		- Zoom lecture
	+ Placements are introduced as well - you have to work on these in parallel with theory
* Block placements - 4 days for 5 weeks or 5 days for 4 weeks - you will have coursework to do alongside these
* Exams in January and the Summer period
* It is manageable but tough
* Balance between theory and practical - there is a lot of theory to ground what you are doing (i.e. anatomy and physiology to base your practical on). Great to be able to put the theory into practice.

# Could you work part time while on your masters for funding?

# It VERY hard to fit it in - i.e. you could fit in ad hoc babysitting

# It is possible but you will be tired

# Sally in 2020/21: £9250 a year fees, 2 year course - can apply for UG funding to cover this. Can also apply for a loan from student finance. Also has a £2500 bursary from the NHS.

# How easy is it to get a job in SLT after your masters?

# Generally it is harder to get onto the course than get a job afterwards.

# Robin looks for:

# Don’t be afraid to sell yourself - brag about yourself! Knowledge, skills

# Practise interviews - so you feel less nervous and learn to handle the nerves - if you get through the masters you will know enough

# TIP: Practise walking into a room and introducing yourself - get comfortable at this :-)

# How much of your UG degree do you use in your day to day? Which modules are useful from UG

# Phonetics and Phonology and anything to do with Praat (software package) were both really helpful

# Being able to do a quick transcription really helps

# Approaching a language as a non native speaker is a really helpful insight - travel in another country so you understand what it's like to be having to rely on facial expressions and gestures

# Grammar module - understanding English grammar?? - understanding how language is structured is really helpful

# Conversation analysis

# Psycholinguistics

# Sally’s York Classmate studied - French and Spanish and now doing SLT at Sheffield (she could understand what it's like to not being able to understand everyone around you)

# What are the differences in working in the Public and Private Sector?

# Advantages in public - you tend to be working in a larger organisations so larger networks of support - this is really helpful

# You see lots of jobs going up on websites - i.e. a specific SLT in a school - you may be the only one working on this at that school. This would be hard as a 1st job.

# Private side can be more flexible - case loads typically larger and give you less flexibility in the public side

# In private side you may have more control over the support you want to buy in

# Get a good feel by talking to people in both sectors - go with your gut - if you are going to be working with a small team and you get a bad feeling in the interview, go with your intuition

# Are there opportunities to go into research with a SLT background?

# Yes - there are pathways out there - some where you study at a doctoral level while working - studying what you are doing for the rest of the week - academic institutions make up the rest of your salary

# Can do research with your team while working - not necessarily towards a doctorate

# Royal College of SLT - you can be a research champion

# Research is encouraged

# Top tips

* Applications for SLT are early - you need to be ready at the start of final year if you want to apply for straight after graduation. If you don’t then taking a year out to get more experience after you graduate is quite common (50 of a group of 60 have done this in the 2019/20 UCL programme). Working in a mainstream primary school with a TA is a really useful experience - you could also work as a specialist TA supporting children with communications difficulties.
* Don’t start on the Masters unless you REALLY want to do it - it's hard to get on to and it's hard work when you are on the programme - do your research before you apply. This is probably why the application process is so competitive - they need to identify who really wants to do it.
* When looking at masters programmes make sure it is an accredited course - so you are a qualified SLT at the end without conversion. Check if the course you are applying for gives you professional accreditation on completing i.e. with the [RCSLT (Royal College of SLT)](https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/become-a-speech-and-language-therapist#section-9) and [HCPC](https://www.hcpc-uk.org/) (Health and Care Professions Council)
* Follow SLTs on Twitter to get an insight into SLTs days!

Please note the views expressed are those of the panel members at the event. You should use the links provided, particularly the [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](https://www.rcslt.org/), for information about careers in this sector.

Additional notes:

* Job hunting: Entry level jobs are easier to find if you can be flexible about location and clinical specialism for your first job.
* Masters courses: You could also consider a BSc which provides the same content (a year longer in duration). It may be easier to get a place on a BSc and you will not be at a disadvantage when it comes to applying for entry level posts.