

NZSTA DYSPHAGIA COMPETENCY APPROVAL

Rationale for requiring dysphagia competency

Dysphagia is considered a core entry-level range of practice for speech-language therapists in New Zealand. Applicants seeking NZSTA membership must prove dysphagia competence. Prior to acceptance of dysphagia competency, an application is carefully appraised by Professional Standards with the support of NZSTA Expert Advisors in Dysphagia and/ or Paediatric Feeding.

There are a number of types of evidence that may be accepted:

1. NZSTA-approved qualifying programme education

Many Universities offer adequate dysphagia education in their qualifying programmes. Programmes accredited under ASHA, SAC, IASLT, SPA and NZSTA have all been approved by the NZSTA. No further evidence of dysphagia competence is required.

2. Non-approved qualifying programme education

All other qualifying programmes have not been approved and the education provided at qualifying level needs to be carefully appraised by Professional Standards with the support of NZSTA Expert Advisors in Dysphagia and/ or Paediatric Feeding prior to acceptance of dysphagia competency. NZSTA will request full details of the course including learning objectives, hours and details of teaching, reading lists, details of educators, and assignments.

3. Post-graduate continuous professional development

For those without sufficient qualifying programme education, further education and / or evidence of clinical competency development is required.

The NZSTA has a number of national and international dysphagia courses that have already been appraised and are approved. Evidence of attendance of any of these courses is considered adequate evidence of competency. A list of currently approved post-graduate courses is available on request.

In some circumstances, in-house or less formalised education may be accepted on an individual basis. Evidence may include:

- in-house competency programmes
- certificates of attendance at continuing professional development events
- letters of reference
- log of (supervised) clinical hours
- contributions to dysphagia quality improvement, research, education
- independent reading and appraisal of literature
- de-identified evidence-based case studies

Additional requirements for RCSLT Certified Members

For members of RCSLT who graduate from an RCSLT (UK) accredited programme from 2026 onwards, dysphagia content is now included in the programme - this is called Proficient.

Anyone who graduates prior to 2026 will need to provide dysphagia competency at either Level B (if used old framework) or Proficient (if used new framework). Either is acceptable to NZSTA.