GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PUBLIC HEALTH

PRACTICUM HANDBOOK
(MPH0090, 0 credits)

Revised Fall 2014
The Public Health Practicum (MPH0090, 0 credits)

**Background:** The Practicum experience provides the student with an opportunity to implement and practice lessons learned in the classroom, offering the possibility to integrate knowledge and expose the student to new and exciting prospects for future professional development. The Practicum experience offers students an opportunity to achieve many of the competencies necessary to be successful public health practitioners. In many cases, the Practicum provides students with the opportunity to serve a community.

**Description:** The Practicum experience is a planned, supervised, and evaluated practical experience that can take place at a variety of agencies and organizations. There are abundant opportunities for the student to meet the goals and objectives of this requirement. The only limit is the student’s ability to be creative, while, of course, ensuring applicability to the field of Public Health.

The practicum:

- Is coordinated and developed by the student, the preceptor, and the track advisor.
- Must be **pre-approved** by the track advisor prior to the start of the practicum.
- Should be a minimum of 150 hours with measurable learning objectives.
- Must include an initial proposal by the student which outlines the goals and objectives of the experience and includes an agreement signed by the student, the preceptor and the track advisor (*Practicum Proposal Form*). This proposal should be submitted to the Program Office before the practicum experience is begun by the student.
- Must be registered for by the student during the academic term in which the practicum begins the project (MPH0090).
- Includes a final postscript report with a self-assessment of the accomplishment of the practicum experience, goals, and objectives set forth by the student in the beginning of the project. (*Practicum Postscript Report*).
- Includes a final student evaluation by the preceptor and advisor (*Practicum Preceptor Evaluation form*).
Roles and Responsibilities:

A. Student roles and responsibilities
1. Identify potential practicum sites based on previous experience, career goals, and career interests. The advisor will assist with identifying opportunities, a prospective site, and potential preceptor. The preceptor should be a public health practitioner, or an experienced professional in a closely related field.

2. Develop a plan including learning objectives, competencies, timelines, milestones, and deliverables (Practicum Proposal form). This plan should be reviewed with your track advisor and preceptor for approval and signature.

3. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain an activity log to record all hours contributed toward the practicum experience, and the specific activities performed.

4. During the practicum experience, participate in any necessary review meetings with preceptor as required by either the preceptor or track advisor.

5. Complete a final Practicum Postscript Report. This report should be submitted with the Preceptor Evaluation form to both the preceptor and track advisor. The preceptor and advisor should review the postscript report when evaluating the practicum experience.

B. Track Advisor role and responsibilities
1. Assist students with identifying prospective sites.

2. Provide advice to students about site selection and the development of the practicum proposal and plan.

3. Review overall progress of the student during the practicum experience, as needed.

4. Advise students on requirements of practicum experience.

5. Evaluate student progress at the end of the practicum by reviewing the practicum postscript report and signing off on the Practicum Evaluation Form.

C. Preceptor roles and responsibilities
1. Provide technical and administrative oversight to the student throughout the practicum experience.

2. Provide periodic feedback and guidance to students as needed.

3. Review and evaluate the student’s progress at the end of the experience with the Practicum Evaluation form.
Competencies & Learning Objectives

Students are asked to identify competencies and develop learning objectives (*Practicum Proposal Form*). A list of competencies can be found in the *MPH Student Handbook*.

The learning objectives are specific, measurable objectives that are formulated to determine what the student anticipates gaining from the practicum experience.

Example: Identify evidence-based strategies for teen pregnancy prevention by conducting a literature review.

What competencies will be covered during the practicum experience?

Example: Utilize descriptive and inferential statistical methods to critically evaluate and interpret scientific evidence from public health reports and published studies.

Frequently Asked Questions:

*When can I begin the practicum?*

In general, we suggest that students register for their practicum experience after completing at least one to two terms in the program.

*Is it necessary to get my advisor’s approval to begin the practicum?*

YES. The practicum proposal and plan must be pre-approved by the track advisor and signed off on by the preceptor before the student can embark on the field experience.

*How do I find a practicum placement?*

Finding a practicum placement is much like finding any other internship or job. The student is responsible for working with the track advisor to identify a field placement opportunity. However, many other people and resources can assist you. This might include other faculty members, the Program Office, and other students.

Be creative. Identify agencies and organizations that are working on health issues of interest to you and your career objectives. Location should not necessarily be a limiting factor and be sure to check out local, regional, and national agencies many of which offer internships for graduate students. However, do not commit to any placement or internship without the approval of your track advisor first!

The Program Office also provides a list of previous practicum placements of previous students and a list of potential organizations and agencies that might be of interest to public health students.
May I complete the Practicum experience at my place of employment?

It is preferable for students to gain field experience at a site that broadens public health knowledge, thus requiring a new and different experience than that of a student’s current employment. However, in rare instances, students may complete the practicum experience at their place of employment if the activities are distinct in nature and timing from regular working activities. A preceptor must still agree to oversee the experience and the track advisor must approve of the plan.

Do I register for the practicum?

Yes. Students should register for the practicum using the course code MPH0090. Students should register for the practicum in the academic term in which the practicum is beginning. The practicum is 0 credits.

Can I still graduate if my practicum isn’t completed?

No. All practicum requirements must be completed before the student can earn his or her degree.

Am I required to present my practicum?

Although a formal presentation is not required, students are encouraged to present their practicums at the end of the academic year during the Student Thesis/Capstone presentation event.

Is the practicum requirement ever waived?

Almost never. In rare circumstances, the practicum experience may be waived if the student has documented actual practice experience in the field.

I am currently in a residency program with a similar field experience requirement. Am I considered for a waiver?

Generally residents in Preventive Medicine and Occupational & Environmental Medicine satisfy the practicum requirement through their residency requirements. In this case, the resident should submit the Alternative Practicum Fulfillment form in lieu of any other required practicum forms.

I am participating in the Summer Global Health Experience. Am I considered for a waiver?

No. However, students may use the Summer Global Health Experience for their practicum experience. Students who choose this option are still required to adhere to the practicum requirements. All forms, evaluations and the Practicum Postscript Report must be submitted to receive credit for the practicum experience.