

Graduate Program in Public Health



THE APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE GUIDE

Note: The information in this Applied Practice Experience Guide applies to students who entered the Program in Fall 2018 or later. Students who began the Program prior to Fall 2018 should reference the previous guide, which is available on Blackboard.

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THE APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Description

The Applied Practice Experience (APE) provides the student with an opportunity to translate theory into practice within a professional public health setting. Students will implement and practice lessons learned in the classroom, gaining exposure to new and exciting prospects for future professional development. It is a planned, supervised, and evaluated field-based experience that can take place at a variety of agencies and organizations, involving some level of community engagement. The Applied Practice Experience enables students to achieve many of the competencies necessary to be successful public health practitioners.

The student will be supervised and evaluated by an on-site preceptor. The preceptor should have an advanced degree in public health or a related field, or considerable experience and/or certifications in the field of public health.

There are abundant opportunities for the student to meet the goals and objectives of this requirement. Applied practice experiences may involve governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings, or appropriate university-affiliated settings. To be appropriate for applied practice experience activities, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners.

Students participate in a field-based experience (practicum or internship) for 150 hours or more to satisfy the Applied Practice Experience. With approval, this requirement may be satisfied in other ways, such as through course-based activities, activities linked to service learning, or co-curricular activities. Please check with the Office of Public Health Practice for eligibility.

Eligibility & Timing

Students are eligible to begin the Applied Practice Experience after completion of fifteen credits in the Program. Students must be in good academic standing in order to begin the APE.

Ideally, the Applied Practice Experience is completed between the student's first and second year, but eligible students are welcome to complete the APE at any time throughout the year. The duration of the APE is determined between the student and the preceptor, taking into consideration the student's schedule and the needs of the practice site.

REQUIREMENTS

The Applied Practice Experience is a requirement for the Master of Public Health degree. All requirements and documentation must be completed and submitted to the Office of Public Health Practice before the student can earn his or her degree. Below is a list of the requirements. A description of each requirement is on p. 4 and 5. Please refer to p.10, *Step-by-Step Process for Completing the Applied Practice Experience*, for more details.

Requirements for the Applied Practice Experience:

- Attendance at an APE Information Session
- Submission of the APE Proposal and Proposal Form
- Registration for MPH0092 Applied Practice Experience- 3 credits
 - Students who matriculated before Fall 2017 will register for MPH0090 Practicum- 0 credits
- Completion of a minimum of 150 hours at an approved practice site
- Completion of a minimum of two work products
- Attainment of at least 5 competencies
 - At least 3 competencies must be Foundational Competencies
- Submission of the APE Postscript Report
- Completion of Final Evaluation
 - Submission of the Preceptor Evaluation
 - Submission of the Competency Assessment
 - Participation in a Checkout Meeting with the Office of Public Health Practice

Information Session

Students must attend an APE Information Session prior to initiating their APE. There are three sessions throughout the academic year (Fall, Spring I & Spring II). Students who are unable to attend a scheduled session can schedule a meeting with the Office of Public Health Practice. Students should attend the session held in the term in which they matriculated in the Program.

Proposal

All students are required to submit an Applied Practice Experience Proposal and a Proposal Form signed by the student, preceptor and track advisor. The proposal should include a description of the following: your anticipated project activities, roles and responsibilities; a thorough description of the site, including the preceptor's role within the site; learning objectives; a description of each work product and the program competencies to be achieved for each product; expected duration of the APE. Please write your proposal using the outline developed by the Program. The proposal is developed in consultation with your preceptor, and must be pre-approved by your track advisor and the Office of Public Health Practice prior to initiating the APE. Students must submit a draft of the APE Proposal to the Office of Public Health Practice for review. Students may be asked to modify the proposal until it satisfies the APE criteria. Once the final proposal is complete, students will obtain signatures from their preceptor and specialty track advisor on the Proposal Form. The Proposal Form serves as an agreement between the student and preceptor. Students will submit the final proposal and signed proposal form to the Office of Public Health Practice. **Students are not permitted to begin the APE until the proposal and signed proposal form have been submitted and approved by the Office of Public Health Practice. Any activities completed prior to obtaining approval by the Office of Public Health Practice will not count towards the APE.**

Registration

Students must register for MPH0092 Applied Practice Experience- 3 credits for the term in which their APE is beginning. Students who matriculated prior to Fall 2017 will register for MPH0090 Practicum- 0 credits. If the practice experience is starting in between registration periods, the student will register during the next available registration period. Students must receive approval from the Office of Public Health Practice in order to complete their registration (Pre-requisites: APE Proposal and Proposal Form).

Work Products

Students are required to complete at least two work products. Most students complete their work products at a single site as part of a practicum/internship. The work products are determined by the student and the preceptor, and should be mutually beneficial to both the student and the site.

Examples of work products include written assignments, journal entries, projects, videos, presentations, spreadsheets, websites, or posters. Specifically, your work product might be a training manual, policy analysis, curriculum, grant proposal, needs assessment, educational materials, program evaluation, literature review, surveys, guidelines, etc.

Students must demonstrate attainment of five competencies through completion of the Applied Practice Experience. At least three of these competencies must be Foundational Competencies. Students will consult with their specialty track advisors to identify appropriate competencies. Competency attainment is assessed through the final work products. Foundational and Track-Specific Competencies can be found in the Student Handbook and on Blackboard.

All work products must be uploaded to Blackboard within course MPH0092 Applied Practice Experience. The materials will be added to the student's portfolio for the final assessment.

Postscript Report

Once you have completed your experience, you are ready to submit the Applied Practice Experience Postscript Report. The postscript report includes a detailed description of your experience, and a self-assessment of the accomplishment of the goals, learning objectives, and competencies set forth for each work product in the beginning of the project. Please write your postscript report using the outline developed by the Program. The postscript report must be submitted to your preceptor, to your track advisor, and to the Office of Public Health Practice.

Evaluation

Preceptor Evaluation

All students must be evaluated by their preceptor. Students are evaluated on their professionalism, performance, application of public health concepts, and achievement of competencies. The preceptor must complete the APE Preceptor Evaluation. Students are responsible for initiating the evaluation and for submitting the evaluation to the Office of Public Health Practice.

Competency Assessment

Specialty track advisors review the final work products to assess the extent to which the student has attained each competency. Students will receive a rating of 'exceeded,' 'met,' or 'not met' for each competency.

Checkout Appointment

Students are required to schedule a checkout appointment with the Office of Public Health Practice to review their final work products, preceptor evaluation and competency assessment. Students will give a brief oral presentation about their practice experience, and will discuss how they achieved each competency through completion of their work products.

To schedule the checkout appointment, please contact christine.cortalano@mssm.edu.

The APE Proposal Outline and Form, Postscript Report and Evaluation are located in the MPH Student Organization on Blackboard.

IDENTIFYING A PRACTICE SITE

Finding a practice site is much like finding any other internship or job. Location should not necessarily be a limiting factor. While there are an abundance of public health agencies and organizations in and around New York City, the Applied Practice Experience may be completed at sites across the country or around the world.

In the past, students have met this requirement by working at the community level, for example, in East Harlem; at the city level, working with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; and at the international level, working on a disaster relief project in a foreign setting. Whatever the student's choice, the focus is on immersion into the setting selected. The student is responsible for identifying a field placement opportunity and securing a practice site. There are several resources in place for identifying a practice site. These include:

- Office of Public Health Practice
- Specialty Track Advisor
- Friday Finds (weekly bulletin)
- Blackboard Resources (Potential Placement Sites; Public Health Internship Programs; Featured APE Opportunities)

Be proactive and build your network. Reach out to agencies and organizations directly. You can also contact course directors and faculty across ISMMS as they may be able to connect you to individuals and organizations within their networks.

Be creative. Identify potential sites that are working on issues of interest to you, and that align with your career objectives. Reach out and discuss the possibility of hosting an MPH student. Some organizations may already offer graduate-level internships. Search for these positions using online job boards, or by searching the organization's website.

Completing the APE in a Place of Employment

A student employed in a public health setting may choose to submit a work product (developed by the student) that originates from their place of employment. Students must obtain approval from the Office of Public Health Practice.

Completing the APE in an Academic Setting

To be appropriate for applied practice experience activities, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. Projects within an academic institution such as ISMMS, particularly within an academic department or faculty-supervised lab setting, would not be appropriate for the applied practice experience unless the projects involve engagement with a community partner or setting. Please contact the Office of Public Health Practice for questions on site and/or project eligibility.

Global Health Summer Experience

The Global Health Summer Experience is a competitive fieldwork opportunity where students travel to one of our project sites around the world to gain hands-on experience working in a global health setting. Under the guidance of an ISMMS faculty advisor and an on-site mentor, students tackle some of the most challenging public health issues facing our world today.

The application for the Global Health Summer Experience opens in the Fall Term, following a Global Health Summer Information Session. Students in all specialty tracks are welcome to apply. Students who participate in the Global Health Summer Experience with the Graduate Program in Public Health may use this experience to fulfill the APE requirement. Students who choose this option are still required to adhere to all APE requirements. All requirements for the Applied Practice Experience and Global Health Summer Experience must be completed and submitted to the Office of Public Health Practice in order to receive credit for the APE.

A Foundation for the Culminating Experience

Often times, the Applied Practice Experience can serve as the basis for the Culminating Experience, completed in the second year of the Program. It is useful to start thinking early on about how the APE might develop into a master's thesis, manuscript or capstone project. Please make sure to discuss with your track advisor and the Office of Public Health Practice as you develop your plan. The APE and Culminating Experience are separate requirements for the MPH Degree. You should refer to the Culminating Experience Guide for more details.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Student

1. Attend an APE Information Session.
2. Identify and secure a site/project.
3. Develop the APE Proposal and obtain approval by the Office of Public Health Practice before the APE begins.

4. Register for MPH0092 Applied Practice Experience or MPH0090 Practicum.
5. Maintain an activity log to record all hours contributed toward the APE, and the specific activities performed.
6. Participate in progress meetings with the preceptor as requested.
7. Notify the Office of Public Health Practice if there are significant changes to the nature and scope of the APE so that it may be re-evaluated.
8. Complete a postscript report. Submit the report with the *Preceptor Evaluation Form* to both the preceptor and track advisor.
9. Upload all work products through Blackboard.
10. Submit the signed proposal form, postscript report and completed evaluation to the Office of Public Health Practice.
11. Schedule a checkout appointment with the Office of Public Health Practice.

Specialty Track Advisor

1. Assist students with identifying potential sites and provide advice to students about site selection.
2. Provide guidance in the development of the proposal.
3. Review overall progress of the student during the APE, as needed.
4. Complete a competency assessment at the end of the APE.

Office of Public Health Practice

1. Manage student field placements and maintain student portfolios.
2. Develop, maintain and communicate APE opportunities.
3. Orient students to the Applied Practice Experience.
4. Review APE proposals for approval, and provide feedback as necessary.
5. Send a confirmation email to the preceptor once the proposal is approved.
6. Assist the student and/or preceptor in resolving any issues that may arise during the APE.
7. Review and evaluate the postscript report, preceptor evaluation and work products to ensure successful completion of the APE.
8. Conduct checkout appointments.

Preceptor

1. Provide technical and administrative oversight to the student throughout the Applied Practice Experience.
2. Work with student to suggest appropriate work product(s).
3. Sign the APE Proposal Form (an agreement between the preceptor/host site and MPH student).
4. Orient the student to the practice site, including policies and procedures.
5. Regularly schedule check-in meetings with the student and provide feedback and guidance.
6. Evaluate the student's progress at the end of the experience with the *Preceptor Evaluation* form.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

The Office of Public Health Practice is available to support students throughout the Applied Practice Experience process. We offer advisement, orient students to the APE process, assist with identifying and developing APE opportunities, determine eligibility, review and approve proposals, and provide support to students and preceptors throughout the APE.

The Office of Public Health Practice is located in the CAM Building, 5th Floor West, D5-141.

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Office hours: available on MARC, or by appointment

Step-by-Step Process for Completing the Applied Practice Experience

This timeline outlines the necessary steps to complete the APE requirement.

- 1) Attend the Applied Practice Experience Information Session.
Students who are unable to attend a scheduled session can schedule a meeting with the Office of Public Health Practice.
- 2) Identify potential sites/projects based on previous experience and future career goals.
The Office of Public Health Practice and Specialty Track 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. Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to identify and secure a practice site.
- 3) Develop the APE Proposal.
Work closely with the preceptor to identify your work products, project roles and responsibilities, and discuss your proposed experience with your specialty track advisor.
 - a. Using the proposal outline provided, submit a draft of your proposal to the Office of Public Health Practice for review, and make any requested revisions.
 - b. Review the final proposal with your track advisor and preceptor for approval and signature (APE Proposal Form).
 - c. Submit the completed proposal and signed proposal form to the Office of Public Health Practice for approval prior to the start of your APE.
- 4) Register for the Applied Practice Experience.
- 5) Complete the Applied Practice Experience:
 - Completion of at least two work products
 - Attainment of at least five competencies
- 6) Complete the APE Postscript Report.
This reflection paper is completed at the end of your APE.
 - a. Write your postscript report using the outline provided.
 - b. Submit your postscript report to your preceptor and track advisor with the evaluation form (see step 7).
- 7) Submit the Preceptor Evaluation and Competency Assessment
 - a. Ask your preceptor to complete the evaluation. Provide him/her with a copy of your postscript report and work products.
 - b. Submit the evaluation, completed by your preceptor, with attached postscript report and work products to your track advisor for your competency assessment.

- 8) Upload your postscript report, signed evaluation, and work products to Blackboard within course MPH0092 Applied Practice Experience.

- 9) Schedule a Checkout Appointment
You are ready for your checkout appointment once you have completed your Applied Practice Experience. Contact christine.cortalano@mssm.edu to schedule your checkout appointment. Prepare to participate in a discussion about your experience and competency attainment, and submit your final hard copy documents (Postscript Report, Preceptor Evaluation/Competency Assessment, supporting documents, work products).

FAQs

When should I register for the Applied Practice Experience?

Register for the APE in the academic term in which your experience will begin. You might find that you intend to begin your APE in between registration periods. In this case, you should register for the APE during the next available registration period. The APE Proposal must be submitted and approved by the Office of Public Health Practice in order to complete your registration.

Can I complete my APE at the Icahn School of Medicine?

To be appropriate for applied practice activities, sites and/or projects situated within academic settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. Students may not pair with ISMMS faculty members on individual research studies to complete the APE. If you are not sure if a particular site and/or project within ISMMS is appropriate for the APE, please contact the Office of Public Health Practice.

Can a paid experience count as my APE?

Yes. You are welcome to use a paid internship opportunity to fulfill the APE requirement.

For my APE, I am completing a program evaluation for the local health department. Will this also satisfy my Culminating Experience?

No. We encourage students to use the APE as a foundation for the Culminating Experience, but the two projects are separate academic requirements.

How many competencies do I need to address for each work product?

Students must attain at least five competencies (three of which must be foundational) throughout their Applied Practice Experience. Students demonstrate competency attainment through completion of their work products. A minimum of five competencies is required for completion of the APE (not five per work product).

Can I complete all work products at the same practice site?

Yes. Students are encouraged to complete all work products at the same practice site; in some cases, students may be approved to complete their work products at multiple sites. If you are collaborating with multiple sites to complete your APE, you will need to complete a proposal, postscript report and final evaluation for each site.

My practice site will not permit me to share my work product because it contains sensitive information. What do I do?

If appropriate, you can redact confidential information from your work product. If this is not an option for you, you may produce a summary report or poster describing your actions and processes in creating the work product. The report must be submitted to both the practice site and the Office of Public Health Practice.

When should I schedule my checkout meeting?

You are ready to schedule your checkout appointment when your APE is complete. Your APE is completed once you have demonstrated attainment of at least five competencies as shown through completion at least two work products.

I'm experiencing an issue with my preceptor/site. Who can I talk to about this?

If you are experiencing issues with your preceptor or site, please contact the Office of Public Health Practice. We will provide advisement on the best way to move forward, and mediate if necessary.

I'm applying for an internship and would like assistance with my resume/CV and other application materials. Where can I go for help?

The Graduate Program in Public Health offers consultations for resume feedback and interview preparation. Please contact Kelly Gentry, Manager of Career Services and Alumni Relations, to set up an appointment: Kelly.gentry@mssm.edu. Students may also visit to the Office of Public Health Practice for guidance.