MPH STUDENT PRACTICUM MANUAL

By

PUBLIC HEALTH GRADUATE PROGRAM

COLLEGE OF HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

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PURDUE
HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

PUBLIC HEALTH
GRADUATE PROGRAM
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OVERVIEW

Introduction:

The Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) estimates that the nation will face a shortage of over 250,000 public health workers by 2020. The workforce has actually contracted since 2000 and this could accelerate as the economy improves and the greater than 100,000 public health workers eligible for retirement choose to exercise this option. Public health programs must triple their number of graduates to meet projected demands in the workforce. Thus, it is expected that there will be many and varied opportunities for practitioners in public health for the foreseeable future.

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education approved the request to award a Masters of Public Health (MPH) degree at Purdue University on October 5, 2006. The first students admitted to the program began in the Fall Semester of 2007. The program is offered through the College of Health and Human Sciences. It entails 42 hours of coursework, a practicum and a culminating project designed to meet or exceed requirements for accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). The Public Health Graduate Program (PHGP) is currently pursuing accreditation by this body.

Public health professionals are expected to hold a broad understanding of health issues and possess skills to address them. They must have proficiency in A) epidemiology to identify trends in the incidence, prevalence and manifestations of diseases and their management; B) biostatistics to quantify and objectively evaluate health trends and intervention approaches; C) health system administration and management to marshal resources to protect the health of the population; D) environmental health sciences to understand the threats of mismanagement and the opportunities by optimal stewardship of the environment on the health of the population; and E) behavioral and social sciences to recognize the feasibility and potential of preventive and remedial approaches for health promotion.

To acquire knowledge in each of these areas, students engage in relevant coursework. However, to strengthen this knowledge base and ensure it can be applied, training in public health includes participation in a practicum. This is a 400-hour work experience that is tailored to each individual’s area of interest. Such an experience is required by CEPH for program accreditation and by the University to ensure students are prepared to take leadership positions in the public health community.

The following guidelines, procedures and documents have been developed to assist students in identifying, selecting, designing and implementing an approved practicum experience. They are expected to meet or exceed CEPH practicum accreditation requirements.
**MPH Practicum Checklist**

**A. Pre-Practicum Steps and Procedures:**

- Setup meeting with PHGP Coordinator
  - Discuss practicum requirements and procedures
  - Review PHGP competencies
  - Brainstorm 3-5 potential practicum sites
- Contact 3 agencies for interest
- Select a site/s
- Complete practicum site paperwork
  - Complete Attachment A: Practicum Site Description Guidelines
  - Retrieve preceptor resume and job description
  - Coordinate with the PHGP Coordinator to complete Attachment B: MPH Practicum Memorandum of Agreement
  - Complete Attachment C: MPH Practicum Job Description
- Complete liability insurance application, Attachment E: Student Professional Liability
  - Submit liability insurance receipt to PHGP Coordinator
- Register for HHS 592: Public Health Practicum
  - The student must be registered for this course to receive credit prior to completion of the internship

**B. On-site Practicum Steps and Procedures:**

- Keep a daily log of activities and accomplishments
- Meet weekly with preceptor to receive performance feedback
  - The student must be registered for this course to receive credit prior to completion of the internship
- Submit 5 progress reports (each representing 80 hours of work) to PHGP Coordinator
  - Attachment G: MPH Student Practicum Progress Report Guidelines
- Meet with agency preceptor and PHGP Coordinator to review mid-term and final evaluations
  - Attachment F: Student Practicum Evaluation Form

**C. Post-Practicum Steps and Procedures**

- Submit final summary report
  - Attachment H: Guidelines for Practicum Summary Report
  - This report is to be submitted no later than two weeks after the practicum contractual end date. A three point deduction/day will apply for submissions after the due date.
- Execute practicum presentation and submit practicum packet
  - Attachment I: Guidelines for Practicum Summary Report Presentation
  - Submit Powerpoint for approval to the PHGP Coordinator 1-week prior to presentation
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. PRE-PRACTICUM:

MPH practicum sites should provide activities, programs and student opportunities that are consistent with real world work experience in the field of public health. It is desirable that these are particularly applicable to the student’s Purdue MPH area of concentration. The school has three areas of concentration: Family and Community Health; Environmental Health; and Health Statistics. In addition, agencies serving as practicum sites are encouraged to provide students with research opportunities, professional development, and public health training that will enhance the student’s overall MPH training. The agency will provide/designate a qualified preceptor to direct, manage and evaluate the practicum.

Approval Process for the MPH Practicum Experience

The MPH practicum experience and site location must be approved by the MPH Practicum Committee prior to acceptance and completion of any agreements or preparatory work for the practicum experience.

1. MPH Practicum Site/Agency Application Form

Practicum application requirements for MPH practicum approval status are presented in Attachment A: Practicum Site Description Guidelines (p. 10) of the student MPH manual. This form must be fully completed and reviewed by the MPH Practicum Committee and the PHP Coordinator for any potential sites of interest to the student for their practicum experience prior to completion of any additional preparatory work. Upon submission of the MPH Practicum Site/Agency Application. A copy of the identified preceptor’s resume must be submitted along with the Attachment A form. See below for preceptor requirements.

Deadlines for submitting MPH Practicum Site/Agency Application Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Deadline for Spring</th>
<th>Deadline for Summer</th>
<th>Deadline for Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attachment A</td>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>May 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A receipt of liability insurance</td>
<td>Upon accepting site</td>
<td>Upon accepting site</td>
<td>Upon accepting site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment B and C</td>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>June 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The student’s practicum site may be an agency different from the student’s current employer if employed in a public health setting, or may be the current employer. If the student selects his/her current employer as the site, then the activities must be different from his/her usual work. In addition, the preceptor must be someone other than the current employee supervisor.

Upon approval of the practicum experience, the following preparatory steps should be taken to complete the practicum application process. Please note that ALL steps must be completed prior to the start of the practicum experience.
2. **On-Site Practicum Preceptor:**
Approved practicum agencies will provide a qualified preceptor to assist applicants in the development of their practicum duties and responsibilities (job description), serve as a supervisor and mentor during the practicum, coordinate student evaluations and recommendations, and provide career professional development. Preceptors will exhibit significant professional public health experience and currently work as a public health professional (a current resume or curriculum vitae and job description must be provided).

Specific desirable preceptor qualifications, expectations and roles include:
- Affiliation and leadership roles in professional public health organizations at the local, regional, and/or national level;
- MPH degree preferred or related graduate degree or bachelor’s degree plus three years of public health professional experience.
- Assist student in progressing toward his/her specific career development objective over the practicum experience.
- Provide feedback and coordinate formal evaluations of student intern performance.

At a minimum, students will receive a formal mid-point and final evaluation that will be shared with the student and the PHP Coordinator, as well as informal weekly conferences to provide on-going performance feedback. (note: On site preceptors do not assign a grade for the practicum course requirement. On-site preceptor evaluations will, however, be critical components used by the PHGP Coordinator in assigning a final grade and in determining satisfactory completion of the practicum requirements.)

3. **Student Practicum Job Description:**
Once the practicum site has been approved, The agency, in concert with the student, the advisor, and the PHP Coordinator, will develop a detailed job description which includes responsibilities, tasks, objectives, student relevance, daily and weekly schedules, expected final product(s) and outcomes, and evaluation procedures and forms (see Attachment C: MPH Practicum Job Description Outline and Attachment C2 for an example job description). These include:
- Responsibilities and tasks:
  - Describes the primary role of the student regarding agency programs and initiatives;
- Objectives:
  - Lists specific objectives of the practicum experience and links them to one or more public health competencies (see, Attachment D: MPH Program Competencies);
- Student relevance:
  - statement of personal and career relevance
- Schedule:
  - Identifies duration of the practicum, total hours required, starting and ending dates, progression of responsibilities and tasks over the practicum experience;
- Weekly activities and responsibilities, if feasible.
4. **Student Professional Liability Coverage:**
Students completing a professional practicum experience for credit through Purdue University are required to purchase their own non-medical student professional liability coverage from the Purdue Risk Management Office (College of Health and Humans Science’s Business Office, Lambert 101) prior to the start of their practicum, which carries liability limits of $1,000,000/$6,000,000 (see **Attachment E: Student Professional Liability Coverage**). Liability coverage should be purchased after the site has been approved and you have been offered/accepted the practicum site.

5. **Memorandum of Agreement Form:**
The agency will review and indicate the acceptability of the Purdue Memorandum of Agreement (see **Attachment B: MPH Practicum Memorandum of Agreement**), which will serve as a contractual arrangement between the agency and Purdue University. If this document is not acceptable, the agency will provide its parallel contractual model for Purdue’s review, revision and approval. Please note that revision of the original agreement may take 1-4 weeks. Students are not allowed to begin their practicum experience until all documents have been signed, reviewed, and resubmitted to the agency by the PHGP Coordinator.

6. **Course Registration: HHS 592 Public Health Practicum**
When all of the required documents have been completed (agency application (Attachment A), Job description (Attachment C), qualified preceptor resume and job description, signed agreement form by all parties, and liability insurance), the PHP Coordinator will enroll the student in HHS 592. Three credit hours will be given to the student for the practicum experience. The credit hours must be assigned to the semester of study the practicum will take place.

**B. ON-SITE PRACTICUM:**
Students are encouraged to perform all tasks and responsibilities throughout their practicum experience to the best of their abilities. High-level performance is not only assurance that the practicum experience will be fulfilled satisfactorily, but can be invaluable in terms of job search and employment beyond the completion of the MPH program. Prospective employers will seriously consider practical experiences, achievements, skills and competencies demonstrated in the public health field, and will also lean heavily on references that are able to reflect and support exemplary student practicum performance.

1. **Progress Reports** *(see **Attachment G: Student Practicum Progress Report Guidelines**)*
It is important that students be able to document and support practicum performance and achievements. It is highly recommended that students keep a daily log of their activities and copies of any materials, projects or programs that they are involved with. These will not only make the writing of progress reports and the practicum summary report and presentation much easier, but will also be invaluable additions to the student’s professional portfolio.

- Students will be required to submit five progress reports that identify duties, responsibilities, and objectives performed through their field experiences.
Each progress report is to be submitted to the Public Health Program (PHP) Coordinator no later than 3 days after approximately 80-hours of work experience. Because every student will have different submission dates, it is the student’s sole responsibility to ensure that each 80-hour report is submitted via blackboard no later than 3 days after completion of 80 hours.

Each report should reflect 80 hours (report 1 = 80 hours, report 2 = 160 hours, report 3 = 240 hours, report 4 = 320 hours, report 5 = 400 hours)

Send an e-mail to the PHGP Coordinator after submitting each report onto Blackboard.

The Scope of Work form (see Attachment G2) must be submitted along with the first report.

Late submissions will result in ½ credit.

It is required that students utilize the outlines provided on the course content page of blackboard to complete all reports/assignments. Use attached Progress Report template on Blackboard.

Reports must follow all guidelines addressed in the progress report template.

Reports must be titled from 1-5 depending on the report number (i.e. Report 1 must be submitted under Report 1).

Professionalism in writing is expected (i.e. take out any extra white space, tables, etc.). Ensure that your typing, spacing, and letter type are organized and professionally formatted. Reports may be given to the agency preceptor of the designated site as samples of the student’s work.

Practicum students, except in pre-identified cases, will submit all material via blackboard where all feedback and points for assignments will be posted. It is important to understand that your writing and organizational skills in your reports are part of the grading scheme for this course. (Each report is worth 5 points)

2. On-site Preceptor Evaluations

Students and onsite preceptors are required to have a weekly conference to monitor progress, review student performance strengths and weaknesses, and maintain on-going communications for current expectations and future progress and tasks. Two performance evaluations (see Attachment F: Midterm Evaluation and Attachment F3: Final Evaluation) will be completed by the agency/site supervisor that reflects the student’s performance in relation to their assigned duties, responsibilities, and degree of professionalism (midterm and final).

- The PHGP Coordinator will send a midterm evaluation to the agency preceptor upon receipt of the 2nd progress report. The final evaluation will be sent to the agency preceptor upon receipt of the 4th progress report. The agency preceptor is encouraged to review the evaluation with the student and provide a hard copy of the evaluation to the student.
- After the second report is submitted, the student needs to arrange a meeting with the preceptor and PHGP Coordinator to discuss the mid-term evaluation.
- The student will need complete Attachment F2: Midterm Self-Evaluation and submit to the PHGP Coordinator one week prior to the onsite meeting.
C. POST-PRACTICUM:

1. Practicum Summary Report (30 Points)
Students are required to submit a practicum summary report (see H: Guidelines for Practicum Summary Report) after the practicum experience. This report is to be submitted no later than two weeks after the practicum end date which appears on the contract. A three point deduction/day will apply for submissions after the due date.

2. Practicum Report Presentation (15 Points)
All MPH students must complete an oral presentation summarizing their public health practicum experience (see pp. 28-29, Attachment I: Guidelines for Practicum Report Presentation). The Public Health community is invited to attend the presentations which typically take place during dead week of the semester following the completion of the practicum. (see pp. 30, Attachment J: Practicum Summary Report Presentation Evaluation Form).

Presentation structure:
- □ Title slide
- □ Background slide(s) – 1-2 slides describing the organization and/or specific program; including public health issue the organization/program addresses.
- □ Student’s position – 1 slide; briefly describing the primary role during practicum.
- □ Project/program description – 4-6 slides describing project/program aims, activities, outcomes, & conclusions.
- □ Public health skills utilized – 1 slide
- □ Public health skills the student wants to further develop – 1 slide
- □ Acknowledgments – 1 slide thanking who the student worked with.

3. Practicum Packet
A practicum packet must be submitted to the PHGP Coordinator by USB drive on the day of the Practicum Report Presentation. The student should arrive 30 minutes early to complete this task.
- ❖ Late submissions will result in a 10-point deduction from the overall practicum performance points (100).
- ❖ Ensure the layout is professional, organized, and uses the same font in all materials.
- ❖ All materials must be labeled (page numbers) reflected on the index.
- ❖ Submit an electronic copy on a USB drive before presentations begin.

Required Format – MPH Practicum Packet
- □ Cover Page: Agency, Semester and Year of Practicum, Name
- □ Index: of Materials and Page Numbers where they are located
- □ Copy of Appendix A: MPH Practicum/Agency Site Description
- □ Copy of Appendix C: MPH Practicum Job Description Outline
- □ Progress Reports (1-5)
- □ Practicum Summary Document
- □ Practicum Presentation: 6 slides/page with Presentation to Public Health Community information:
  Date:
4. **Final Grade**

The PHGP Coordinator will complete the grading form (see Attachment K: PHP Coordinator Grading Form) and obtain comments and a signature from the Director of Public Health. The final grade will then be submitted for the HHS 592 Public Health Practicum.

**D. REQUESTING A REDUCTION IN HOURS**

Students may petition for a modification in the 400-hour requirement if one of the following two criteria is met:

1. The student is currently employed in a public health related setting (e.g. health department) and is required to provide public health related service as part of their professional position.

   Students with a current public health related position can request a 100-hour reduction for every year of full-time public health related work up to a maximum reduction of 200 hours (e.g., for 2 years of full-time work).

2. The student was employed in a public health related organization at some time in the past 5 years, and obtained at least 1 year of continuous, full-time experience.

   Students with past public health related work experience can request a 100-hour reduction for every year of full-time work up to a maximum reduction of 200 hours.

**Procedures for Petitioning for a Reduction in Hours**

1. The student will draft a brief (e.g., 1-page) written request that clearly describes the specific justification for the reduction in hours (i.e., current or past public health related experience), and includes the practicum job description and a brief statement indicating how the practicum is different from current or past public health related positions. The request should be signed and dated by the MPH student.

2. The written request will be submitted to the Public Health Coordinator and the Purdue PHGP Practicum Committee for review.

   The Committee will promptly review the request and will vote on acceptance/denial of the reduction in hours. A simple majority vote is required for resolution of the request.