What is the Practicum/Applied Practice Experience?

Students in the MPH program must demonstrate that they have attained competencies through applied practice experiences. This is typically done by completing a practicum, either during the summer or during an academic term. The practicum experience may involve work in 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. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be appropriate. A faculty-supervised lab setting is not appropriate for the applied practice experience.

Activities meeting the applied practice experience should be mutually beneficial to both the site and the student.

Steps for Completion of Practicum/Applied Practice Experience

One to Two Semesters Prior to the Practicum:

Step 1. Attend the Practicum Orientation Session

All MPH students are required to participate in a **practicum orientation** conducted by the Epidemiology program. This orientation is typically scheduled in the Fall for first-year MPH students and is facilitated by Epidemiology faculty. The orientation will include a discussion of the overall goals and specific objectives of the practicum, an overview of the practicum requirements and an introduction to the resources available to assist you in finding a practicum placement.

Step 2. Complete the prerequisite course requirements

The following prerequisite courses should be completed prior to the start of the Practicum:


This may not be possible for students in the accelerated (4+1) MPH program, please discuss with the Practicum Coordinator.
Step 3. Complete Form 1: Practicum Planning, submit and review with the Practicum Coordinator

Review Form 1: Practicum Planning with the Practicum Coordinator. You are ultimately responsible for identifying and securing a suitable practicum; however, many resources are available to help you in this process. After completing Form 1, you may reach out to Aimee Gilbert Loinaz (aimeegl@umass.edu) in the SPHHS Career Center, Risa Silverman (risa@schoolph.umass.edu) in the Office for Public Health Practice & Outreach, faculty members and other students.

Step 4. Identify and meet with Practicum Sites/Practicum Site Supervisor
Discuss what the practicum experience will be – including the competencies and work products.

Step 5. Complete Form 2: Practicum Scope of Work
Share this form (online) with the Practicum Coordinator for approval.

 Semester of the Practicum:

Step 6. Register for your department’s 698 course (3 credits)* and start the Practicum
Complete your practicum experience. As a guideline, you should plan on at least 80-100 hours of work.

*Students may wish to register for the 698 credits in the Fall semester even if they are engaged in practicum work over the summer. International students may need to register for one credit during the summer semester. Please check with the Practicum Coordinator for more details.

Step 7. Complete and submit at least two work products and Form 3: Matrix/ Work Products to demonstrate attainment of 5 MPH foundational and concentration competencies (see Appendix)

Students must complete at least two work products. Work products must meet both of the following criteria:

1. Be developed for the benefit of the practicum site
2. Demonstrate the application of at least five competencies (see Appendix)

It may take more than two products to demonstrate attainment of five competencies. Examples of work products include: materials that benefit professionals at the site (e.g., policy analysis statements, community assessments, grants), materials developed for the community served by practicum site (e.g., brochures, newsletters), and other projects assigned by the practicum supervisor. Work products are not limited to written materials and can include videos, multimedia presentations, spreadsheets or databases developed for use by the practice, websites, posters, photos, and other digital artifacts of learning.

Students should submit their work products and their completed Form 3: Matrix/Work Products to the Practicum Coordinator by the Friday of the last week of classes.
Step 8. Have your Practicum Site Supervisor submit *Form 4: Site Supervisor Evaluation of the Student's Practicum Performance (online form)*

Within two weeks of completion of the practicum, the Practicum Site Supervisor evaluates your performance and returns this online form to the Practicum Coordinator. You will need to ensure that this is completed within the two-week time frame.

**Step 9. Complete Form 5: Student Evaluation of the Practicum (online form)**

Within two weeks of completion of the practicum, you are required to submit this online evaluation.

**Step 10. Present your practicum**

You are required to prepare and make a presentation on your practicum experience.

The Practicum Coordinator will work on scheduling the presentations at the end of the Fall semester. The session will be attended by all MPH students. Practicum Site Supervisors, faculty advisors and other students are encouraged to attend.

**Practicum Site Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities**

The Practicum Site Supervisor should have:

- Substantial experience with the organization.
- A working knowledge & practical experience in the project areas assigned to you.
- An interest in and commitment to helping you.

In addition, the Practicum Site Supervisor:

- Establishes training goals and an evaluation procedure for you. This program should attempt to meet your needs for professional growth and allow sufficient time with the Practicum Site Supervisor to help you recognize the practice roles of your public health concentration.
- Monitors your activities through regular meetings and provides feedback.
- Helps you meet your goals and objectives for the practicum.
- Gives professional career development advice.
- Integrates you with the regular staff.
- Offers you a chance to learn new skills.
- Explains the structure and function of the agency.
- Helps you plan and execute specific programs/activities.
- Introduces you to other community agencies.
- Establishes a regular meeting time with you, sets standards for your reporting, and arranges for a substitute Site Supervisor during periods when the Site Supervisor will not be at the site.
Frequently Asked Questions

Is the practicum paid?

Agencies and organizations may provide paid or unpaid practicum opportunities. There is no guarantee of financial support for you during your practicum. However, the Department will assist you in finding paid placements whenever possible.

Can I do the practicum at my current job?

If you can do a practicum only in your regular place of employment, the assignment must extend beyond your regular work duties and allow application of knowledge and skills acquired through the MPH course of study.

Can you provide an example of how to complete Form 3: Matrix/Work Products that demonstrates MPH competency achievement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice-based products that demonstrate MPH competency achievement</th>
<th>Competency as defined in CEPH (Council on Education for Public Health) Criteria D2 and D4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis; strategy analysis; PowerPoint presentation...</td>
<td>4. Interpret the results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis; strategy analysis; PowerPoint presentation...</td>
<td>5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis; strategy analysis; PowerPoint presentation...</td>
<td>15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis; strategy analysis; PowerPoint presentation...</td>
<td>HPM conc comp 2: Analyze the ethical assumptions and components underlying health policy decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis; strategy analysis; PowerPoint presentation...</td>
<td>HPM conc comp 4: Present a strategy for addressing a health policy challenge, including the likely impact on efficiency, quality, effectiveness, costs, and equity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After I have finished my practicum, what next?

Students who are interested in building on the practicum are encouraged to complete their MPH Project on a related topic. You are also encouraged to utilize your practicum to prepare a poster for inclusion in the SPHHS Research Day, which takes place each spring.

How am I graded?

The practicum is graded on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis. In order to pass the practicum, your portfolio must contain all the items listed in Steps 1-10. The portfolio should contain at least two work products (described in Step 7) and Form 3: Matrix/Work Products that demonstrates how you achieved 5 competencies.

What is a suggested timeline for the practicum?

The Practicum process usually starts in the fall of your first year.
Form 1: Practicum Planning- SAMPLE FORM
PLEASE COMPLETE GOOGLE FORM

https://forms.gle/rNUExWSpubRZ2vG76

Finding your practicum is a good experience in itself. You are your best resource, along with the supports offered by the School. This form is not mandatory, but can be a valuable planning tool as you begin your search. Please complete it before seeking assistance finding a placement!

Name: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

1. Department (please circle): HPM CHE EHS BIO EPI

2. In which semester of your MPH are you? 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

3. Health Topics of interest (e.g., obesity, HIV/AIDS etc.):

4. Populations/communities of interest (e.g., women, Latinos, LGBT, etc.):

5. Setting of interest (e.g., community health center, federal agency, health department, hospital, non-profit agency, etc.):

6. Skills you want to cultivate (e.g., evaluation, needs assessment, training, media, etc.):

7. Detail earlier jobs you have held, highlighting any health-related experience. Also indicate any interviewing, data collection or abstracting, data management, computer knowledge and/or data analysis experience (include any experience at SPHHS as well).

8. Exact timeframe for completing your practicum (start/end times, hours per week):

9. Preferred location for practicum:

10. Transportation concerns:

If you choose to, please attach your resume and a cover letter.

If you are seeking a practicum in your regular place of employment, the assignment must extend beyond your regular work duties and allow application of knowledge and skills acquired through the MPH course of study. Please plan to provide a comprehensive description of your current job functions and projects. You will also be asked to describe how your practicum will provide additional activities outside of your usual job expectations.
Form 2: Practicum Scope of Work – SAMPLE FORM
PLEASE COMPLETE GOOGLE FORM
https://forms.gle/yxXz3inSqqWhZX5J6

Student information
Name: __________________________ Email: __________________________
Degree program (please circle): MS MPH
Dept/Concentration (please circle):
    BIO CHE EPI EHS HPM PHP Worcester MPH
Practicum Coordinator: __________________________
Semester and year of Practicum: __________________________

1. Select the competencies you’d like to address for the practicum. By the end of this Practicum, I will have achieved the following competency(ies) (see Appendix):

2. Does your practicum site require you to possess any specific licensure and/or certification?
   _____No   _____Yes If yes, please describe.

3. Are there any other special considerations that should be taken into account?

4. Name of Practicum Site Supervisor: __________________________
   Practicum Site Supervisor’s Title: __________________________
   Agency, Organization, or Company: __________________________
   Address: __________________________ Phone: __________________________
   Email: __________________________
   Attached Supervisor CV:   Yes   No
   **Alternate supervisor (if necessary)**
   Name __________________________ Phone: __________________________

5. Practicum Administration:
   Plan for interacting with your Practicum Site Supervisor.

   Please note that if you will not always be working alongside your supervisor, please also include a brief statement about how you will interact with your supervisor during the practicum (e.g., weekly, over the phone).
6. Signatures: I agree with the goals of the practicum.

Student Signature:_______________________________ Date: ______________

Practicum Coordinator Signature:________________________ Date: ______________
(Practicum Coordinator signature indicates approval of the planning process and scope of work)

Practicum Site Supervisor ____________________________

Dates of Practicum: From: ___________ To: ___________

Total Weeks: _______ Hours/week: ______________
Form 3: Matrix/Work Products

Name of Student: ___________________________________________
Department: _________________________________________________
Dates of Practicum: From: _______ To: _______
Total Weeks:_______ Hours/wk: _______
Name of Practicum Site
Supervisor: _________________________________________________
Practicum Site Supervisor’s Title: ________________________________

Agency, Organization, or Company: _____________________________

Please provide a numbered list and brief description of the work products in your Practicum Portfolio:
Please **describe at least 5 competencies** that you gained from your experience in the practicum using the following framework (see Appendix). At least 3 of the competencies must come from the 22 MPH foundational competencies. The other 2 can be from either the MPH foundational competencies or the Epidemiology concentration competencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Competency</th>
<th>Work products in portfolio that demonstrate application or practice of competency</th>
<th>Practicum Coordinator Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Form 4: Site Supervisor Evaluation of the Student’s Practicum Performance – SAMPLE FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE GOOGLE FORM

Name of Student: ____________________________________________
Student’s Department: ________________________________________
Dates of Practicum: From:_______ To:_______ Total Weeks:_______ Hours/wk: ______
Name of Practicum Site Supervisor: ______________________________________
Practicum Site Supervisor’s Title: ______________________________________
Agency, Organization, or Company: ______________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________ Phone: __________________
Email: ________________________________________________________

1. Give a brief description of the experiences provided for the student by you and your organization.
2. What type of project did the student perform? Was it completed to your satisfaction?
3. What were the positive aspects of the practicum for you and/or your organization?
4. What were the challenges of the practicum for you and/or your organization?
5. Are there any areas of our student’s educational background that you feel could be added to, improved, or made more complete? What are these?
6. Indicate your judgment of the student’s work on a scale of 1 (LOW) to 5 (HIGH) by circling the appropriate number next to each item. Circle NA for those items you do not feel qualified to evaluate or for those items that did not apply to this experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>AVERAGE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes the Initiative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable/Reliable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships with Others</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>AVERAGE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to accept suggestions &amp; criticism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to cultural diversity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to work as part of a team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful of others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualifications &amp; Job Performance</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>AVERAGE</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command of technical subject matter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to organize work/time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to express ideas in writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to communicate ideas orally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of public health topics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to research problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for professional growth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. What recommendations do you have regarding our Practicum placement policies?

8. Are you willing to have another University of Massachusetts student placed with you?  
   _____Yes _____No  If yes, are you willing to supervise another student _____Yes _____No

Practicum Site Supervisor Signature: __________________________________________________________

Practicum Site Supervisor Title: ___________________________  Date: _______________
Form 5: Student Evaluation of the Practicum -SAMPLE FORM

Name of Student: ______________________________

Department: ________________________________

Dates of Practicum: From: ________ To: ________

Total Weeks: ________ Hours/wk: ________

Name of Practicum Site 

Supervisor: ________________________________

Practicum Site Supervisor’s Title: ________________________________

Agency, Organization, or Company: ________________________________

Reflect on your experience in the practicum and by rating your level of agreement on the following scale. Select NA for those items you do not feel qualified to evaluate or for those items that did not apply to this experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>AVERAGE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was oriented to the site environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site created an atmosphere of acceptance, friendliness and belonging.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor clarified my responsibilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor assisted in establishing goals and objectives for my practicum.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor demonstrated effective administrative methods and techniques.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor encouraged me to participate in departmental and/or program meetings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor allowed me to take initiative and be creative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor met with me at least weekly to discuss progress and/or problems.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor provided constructive criticism and guidance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Site Supervisor served as an effective professional role model for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate your overall satisfaction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how would you rate the learning experience you received?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how would you rate your Site Supervisor?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email your practicum coordinator a copy of your portfolio. The portfolio must include at least 2 work products produced for your practicum site and Form 3: Matrix/Work Products that describes how the work products demonstrate the attainment of 5 competencies. These materials must be submitted to the Practicum Coordinator by the Friday of the last week of classes.

Student Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Practicum Coordinator Signature: ______________________ Date: ____________
Appendix

MPH Foundational Competencies
Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) Criteria D-2

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health
1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice

Public Health & Health Care Systems
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

Planning & Management to Promote Health
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

Policy in Public Health
12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

Leadership
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Communication
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

**Interprofessional Practice**
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

**Systems Thinking**
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

**Epidemiology MPH Competencies**

1. Compare epidemiology research findings from a published journal article with how findings are described in a published health claim or media report
2. Design an epidemiologic study and articulate the strengths and limitations of the study design
3. Critique published epidemiologic research using a knowledge of study design and analysis, including limitations and validity
4. Synthesize material from various sources, including peer-reviewed literature, to formulate a research question
5. Connect questionnaire data collection to data management and prepare data for analysis