

# MPH Practicum Student Handbook

(Revised October 2017)

## Overview

### **Student Checklist 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 at the department level. For Amherst students, this is typically scheduled for October in your first year. For on-line students, the orientation may be available on-line. For Worcester campus students, this is included in the orientation meeting scheduled for late August, prior to the start of your first year. This meeting is facilitated by Department faculty. At the orientation session, the following are provided to you: (1) the overall goals and specific objectives of the practicum, (2) lists of previous placements, past contacts, and (3) new possibilities. You are encouraged to investigate potential placements on your own.

##### **Step 2. Complete the prerequisite course requirements.**

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

- For Biostatistics, Community Health Education, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Health Policy & Management, and Nutrition students: 3 of the 5 core courses:
  - Biostat 540 Introductory Biostatistics
  - EHS 565 Environmental Health Sciences
  - HPP 601 Application of Social and Behavioral Theories in Public Health Interventions
  - HPP 620 Principles of Public Health Practice
  - EPI 630 Principles of Epidemiology
- For Public Health Practice on-line students: All 5 core courses
- For Worcester MPH-Epidemiology students: 3 of the 5 core courses
- For Worcester MPH – General MPH students: All 5 core courses

##### **Step 3. Complete Form 1: 2017 Practicum Planning, submit and review with the Practicum Coordinator.**

Placements are arranged in consultation with the Practicum Coordinator. Although the Practicum Coordinator can provide you with appropriate guidance, the ultimate responsibility for obtaining a suitable practicum rests with you. You may also contact Risa Silverman, Director of the Office for Public Health Practice & Outreach, to learn about opportunities for working in the community, both to gain skills and share their expertise (please email [risa@schoolph.umass.edu](mailto:risa@schoolph.umass.edu) to set up a time).

**Step 4. Identify and meet with Practicum Sites/Practicum Site Supervisor.**

**Step 5. Complete Form 2: Practicum Scope of Work**

Your placement at your preferred site is subject to the approval of your Practicum Coordinator who must sign this form.

**Semester of the Practicum:**

**Step 6. Register for your department's 698 course and start the Practicum.**

Complete your 200 hour practicum.

**Step 7. Have your Site Supervisor submit Form 3: 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 form to the Practicum Coordinator. You will need to ensure that this is completed within the two week time frame.

**Step 8. Complete Form 4: Student Evaluation of the Practicum.** (online form)

Within two weeks of completion of the practicum, you are required to submit this evaluation, which involves a 10-page written report to the Practicum Coordinator. Please see the *Student Evaluation of the Practicum Form* for details.

**Step 9. Present your practicum.**

Using guidelines prepared by the individual department or concentration, you are required to prepare and make a presentation on your practicum.

- **For Amherst-based students:** Check with your department to find out date of final event. A symposium session will be scheduled each Fall. The session will be attended by all MPH students, Practicum Site Supervisor (if available), faculty advisors, and first-year MPH students.
- **For On-line students:** On-line students will post a PowerPoint presentation of no more than 15 slides and dialogue will occur through threaded discussions.
- **For Worcester Campus MPH students:** Worcester campus MPH students will present a PowerPoint presentation of no more than 15 slides at a place and time to be determined.

## **Practicum Site Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities (online with FAQs in a sidebar click?)**

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 practica 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.

**After I have finished my practicum, what next?** Students who are interested in building on the practicum are encouraged to complete an MPH Project. You are also encouraged to utilize your practica to prepare a poster for inclusion in the SPHHS Research Day, which takes place each March.

**How am I graded?** The practicum is graded on a pass/fail basis. In order to pass the practicum, your practicum file must contain all the items listed in Steps 1-13.

**What is a suggested timeline for the practicum?** The Practicum process usually starts in the Fall of your first year.



7. **Do you have a car?**      Yes      No

8. **Preferred location for practicum?** (select one)

Boston

Western Mass

No Preference

Other:

9. If you choose to, you can also send your resume, and a cover letter to the Practicum Coordinator and Risa Silverman, which describes the above. It can then be sent to potential preceptors to see if they are interested and have work.

10. 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 provide a comprehensive description of:

a. Current job functions, expectations, and projects.

b. Describe how your practicum will provide additional

activities outside of your job expectations. Be as specific as possible.



4. 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).

5. Signatures: **I agree with the goals of the practicum.**

Student Signature:

Date:

Practicum Site Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Proposed Dates of Practicum: From (mm/dd/yy):

To (mm/dd/yy):

Total Weeks:

Hours/week:

Practicum Coordinator Signature:

Date:

(Practicum Coordinator signature indicates approval of the planning process and scope of work)



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. Select N/A for those items you do not feel qualified to evaluate or for those items that did not apply to this experience.

	LOW		AVG.	HIGH		
<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Ambitious						
Takes the Initiative						
Enthusiastic						
Dependable/Reliable						
<b>Relationships with Others</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Able to accept suggestions & criticism						
Sensitive to cultural diversity						
Able to work as part of a team						
Respectful of others						
<b>Professional Qualifications &amp; Job Performance</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Command of technical subject matter						
Able to organize work/time						
Able to express ideas in writing						
Able to communicate ideas orally						
Knowledge of public health topics						
Able to research problems						
Accepts responsibility						
Potential for professional growth						
Overall quality of work						

7. The specific objectives of the practicum are for the student to achieve at least 5 of the foundational competencies. Please rank the student on the achievement of these competencies using, as a guide, the *Appendix: Foundational Competencies*.

Foundational Competencies (List number and description)	LOW		AVG.	HIGH		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	

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

9. Are you willing to have another UMass student placed with you?      Yes      No  
       If yes, are you willing to supervise another student?      Yes      No

Practicum Site Supervisor Signature:

Date:

**Form 4: Student Evaluation of the Practicum**

Student Name:

Student's Department:

Dates of Practicum: From (mm/dd/yy):

To (mm/dd/yy):

Total Weeks:

Hours/week:

Practicum Site Supervisor Name:

Practicum Site Supervisor's Title:

Agency, Organization, or Company:

1. Please **describe 5 competencies** that you gained from your experience in the practicum using the following framework (see appendix).

<b>Competency Area</b>	<b>Foundational Competencies (List number and description)</b>	<b>Activities in which you participated in order to achieve competencies in this area</b>

2. Write a **written report** on the practicum. This report is limited to 10 double-spaced pages.
  
3. Reflect on your experience in the practicum and indicate your judgment of the following on a scale of 1 (LOW) to 5 (HIGH) by circling the appropriate number next to each item. Select N/A for those items you do not feel qualified to evaluate or for those items that did not apply to this experience.

	LOW		AVG.	HIGH		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	
I was oriented to the site environment						
The site created an atmosphere of acceptance, friendliness and belonging.						
The Site Supervisor clarified my responsibilities.						
The Site Supervisor assisted in establishing goals and objectives for my practicum.						
The Site Supervisor demonstrated effective administrative methods and techniques.						
The Site Supervisor encouraged me to participate in departmental and/or program meetings.						
The Site Supervisor allowed me to take initiative and be creative.						
The Site Supervisor met with me at least weekly to discuss progress and/or problems.						
The Site Supervisor provided constructive criticism and guidance.						
The Site Supervisor served as an effective professional role model for me.						
Overall, how would you rate the learning experience you received?						
Overall, how would you rate your Site Supervisor?						

4. Attach a copy of any work produced for the organization

Student Signature:

Date:

Practicum Coordinator Signature:

Date:

## **Appendix: Foundational Competencies**

### **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