MPH STUDENT PRACTICUM MANUAL

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OVERVIEW

Introduction:

The Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) 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).

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 200-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 the practicum instructor
  - 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: MPH Practicum Site Overview & Competency Descriptions
  - Retrieve preceptor resume and job description for new preceptors
  - Coordinate with the practicum instructor to complete Attachment B: MPH Practicum Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
  - Complete Attachment C: MPH Practicum Job Description
- Obtain complete liability insurance, Attachment E: Student Professional Liability
  - Submit liability insurance form to the practicum instructor
- Register for PUBH 6070: Public Health Practicum
  - The student must be registered for this course to receive credit prior to beginning 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 and complete Attachment G2
- Complete a Work Plan (after 50 – 70 hours of work)
- Submit 2 progress reports (each representing 80 -100 hours of work) and a Work Plan
  - Attachment G: Progress Report
- Meet with agency preceptor to review mid-term and final evaluations and arrange midterm meeting
  - Attachment F: Student Practicum Evaluation Forms

**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 may apply for submissions after the due date.
- Execute practicum presentation and submit practicum packet
  - Attachment H: Summary Report
  - Attachment I: Presentation Guidelines
  - Submit PowerPoint 1-week prior to presentation
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. MPH 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 Master of Public Health Program at Purdue 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.

Students must identify 10 competencies to cover during their practicum experience. At least three of these competencies must be core competencies in three different categories. The remaining seven may be a mixture of concentration and core competencies.

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 (Attachment A):
   Practicum application requirements for MPH practicum approval status are presented in Attachment A: Competency Descriptions.
   This form must be fully completed and reviewed by the MPH Director of Experiential Learning for any potential sites of interest prior to completion of any additional preparatory work. A copy of the identified preceptor’s resume must be submitted along with the Attachment A form for new preceptors. See below for preceptor requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadlines for submitting MPH pre-practicum forms for MPH students:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipt of liability insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment C</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 (i.e. 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 for new preceptors).

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 MPH Practicum Instructor, 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 be critical components used by the practicum instructor 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 and student will develop a detailed job description which includes projects, related activities, expected final product(s) and outcomes, selected competencies and evaluation procedures (see Attachment C: MPH Practicum Job Description Outline).

Students must indicate the **10 competencies** selected as being covered during their practicum experience. At least three of these competencies must be core competencies in three different categories. The remaining seven may be a mixture of concentration and core competencies.

4. **Student Professional Liability Coverage:**
Students completing a professional practicum experience for credit through Purdue University are required to show proof of professional liability coverage prior to the start of their practicum (see Attachment E: Student Professional Liability Coverage). Students can purchase their own non-medical professional liability insurance from the Purdue Risk Management Office (this is coordinated through the PHGP). Proof of liability coverage should be presented after the site has been approved and you have been offered/accepted the practicum site.

If students decide not to purchase their own professional liability insurance from Purdue, they...
must show proof of coverage from another organization. Students must have secured at least $1M of coverage.

5. **Memorandum of Understanding Form:**
   The agency will review and indicate the acceptability of the Purdue Memorandum of Agreement (see *Attachment B: MPH Practicum Memorandum of Understanding*), 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 practicum instructor.

6. **Course Registration:** PUBH 6070 Public Health Practicum
   When all of the required documents have been completed (i.e. MPH Site Overview and Competencies: Attachment A), Job description (i.e. Attachment C), qualified preceptor resume and job description, signed agreement form by all parties, and liability insurance), the student will be eligible to enroll in PUBH 6070. 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. MPH 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. **MPH Practicum Work Plan (see Attachment G2)**
   At the onset of the MPH Practicum, MPH students complete a Work Plan, which provides a detailed description of the projects that you will be completing onsite during your practicum experience. The work plan will include the goals and objectives for you practicum as well as the competencies your work will address. The Work Plan should provide a summary of your planned practicum. The Work Plan is submitted after the completion of 50 – 70 hours of work. The Work Plans is worth 6 points.

2. **Progress Reports (see Attachment G: Progress Report)**
   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 materials. 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. (Each report is worth 6 points)

❖ Students will be required to submit 2 Progress Reports that identify duties, responsibilities, and objectives performed through their field experiences.
❖ Each progress report is to be submitted to the practicum instructor no later than 3 days after approximately 80-100 hours of work experience. Because every student will have different submission dates, it is the student’s sole responsibility to ensure that each 80 - 100 hour report is submitted via the course learning management system (i.e., Brightspace, Engage) no later than 3 days after completion of 80 hours.
❖ Each report should reflect 80-100 hours (Report 1 = 80 – 100 hours, Report 2 = 160 - 200 hours, etc.)
❖ Late submissions may result in ½ credit.
❖ It is required that students utilize the outlines provided to complete all reports/assignments. Use attached Progress Report template on the course learning management systems (e.g., Brightspace, Engage).
❖ Reports must follow all guidelines addressed in the progress report template.
❖ Reports must be titled from 1 -2 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 need to be distributed to the agency preceptor of the designated site with each submission.

Practicum students, except in pre-identified cases, will submit all material via their course learning management system (i.e. Brightspace, Engage). Do not email documents to your practicum instructor. All feedback and points for assignments will be posted through the online course. It is important to understand that your writing and organizational skills in your reports are part of the grading scheme for this course.

3. 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: Mid-Term Evaluation (10 points) and Attachment F3: Final Evaluation (15 points)) 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 practicum instructor sends the midterm and final evaluation documents to the agency preceptor at the start of the internship. The student intern is responsible for following up with the preceptor to ensure the midterm evaluation and final evaluations are completed.
❖ The student needs to meet with the preceptor to discuss the midterm evaluation and
upload a copy of the midterm evaluation.

- As soon as possible, the student needs to schedule a midterm meeting with the preceptor and practicum instructor.
- The student will need to complete Attachment F2: Midterm Self-Evaluation (5 points) and submit to the practicum instructor one week prior to the onsite meeting.

C. MPH POST-PRACTICUM:

1. Practicum Summary Report (20 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. Students who are planning to graduate earlier than the due date may need to submit the practicum summary earlier than two weeks. The student should work with the practicum instructor to ensure all paperwork is submitted within their individual timeframe.

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: Presentation Guidelines). 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: Presentation Evaluation Form). Presentations from students enrolled in the online degree may follow a different schedule.

   Presentation structure:
   - Title slide. Your name, practicum site/s, and concentration (if available).
   - Background information (1-2 slides)
     - Practicum site name and location
     - Preceptor’s name
     - Mission of the organization.
     - Target population
   - Practicum description (4-6 slides)
     - Responsibilities/tasks
     - Expected final projects/outcomes
     - Student relevance.
   - Personal Reflection (1-2 slides)
     - Self-evaluation of experience/Lessons learned
     - Reflection of program competencies and how they relate to the field
     - A favorite or most beneficial experience/accomplishment of practicum
   - Closing (1-2 slides)
     - Acknowledgements/thank you/questions

3. Practicum Packet (5 Points)
   Your practicum materials must be submitted to the practicum instructor by the day of the Practicum Report Presentation.
   - Students will submit the packet within their OneDrive MPH portfolio
4. **Final Grade**
   The practicum instructor will complete the grading form (see Attachment K: Grading Form) to assign final grades. The final grade will then be submitted for the P Public Health Practicum.

**D. REQUESTING A REDUCTION IN HOURS**

Students may petition for a modification in the 200-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 20-hour reduction for every year of full-time public health related work up to a maximum reduction of 40 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 40-hour reduction of hours toward the ultimate completion of 200 hours of MPH practicum experience.

**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 practicum instructor 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.