# Preceptor Guide

*Thank you for taking the time to mentor the next generation of public health practitioners! Please refer to this guide for information regarding practicum at UTHealth Houston School of Public Health (SPH).*

## Contents

# Practicum at SPH

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health offers four graduate degrees - Master of Public Health (MPH), Doctor of Public Health (DrPH), Master of Science (MS), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Students seeking MPH and DrPH degrees are required to complete an applied practice experience.

The applied practice experience, also referred to as the "practicum," challenges students to design and complete a public health project in a supervised setting. Students complete their practicum under the supervision of a preceptor (site supervisor) and a faculty mentor (SPH faculty member). Practicum experiences can be paid or unpaid, in-person or remote, and occur during any semester (fall, spring, summer). Students most often fulfill practicum over a single academic term.

## Practicum Requirements

To fulfill their practicum requirements, students must
- address topics relevant to public health;
- pursue an experience with an externally-facing/community engagement component;
- complete a minimum of 180 contact hours and enroll in three cumulative academic credit hours;
- submit a learning contract outlining responsibilities, expectations, and deliverables prior to beginning the experience;
- develop high-quality deliverables that demonstrate at least five public health competencies.

Master's students must develop two tangible deliverables that benefit the organization. Doctoral students must develop one deliverable that demonstrates advanced academic work as well as a written reflection.

## Posting Practicum Opportunities
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health uses Handshake to promote practicum and employment opportunities. If you have a specific project in mind for a practicum or your organization would like to serve as an ongoing practicum host site for students, you can create an account and post positions on Handshake. The Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement hosts periodic Handshake training and an annual virtual career and practicum fair. Connect with UTHealth Houston School of Public Health through this link: http://go.uth.edu/uthsphhandshake4employers.

## Practicum Team

**Student**
The student is responsible for proposing, planning, arranging, leading, and completing the practicum.

**Faculty Mentor**
Each practicum requires a School of Public Health faculty mentor to approve, oversee the experience, and grade final deliverables. Faculty mentors can be the student's advisor or another faculty member with expertise in the practicum topic.

**Preceptor/Site Supervisor**
The preceptor, or site supervisor, is an employee or an authorized affiliate of the host organization. The preceptor oversees the practicum by training, supervising, and evaluating the student. A student's faculty advisor cannot serve as their preceptor. This individual should inform the student of any requirements such as testing, vaccinations, onboarding, or orientation. If the host organization requires an affiliation agreement with the university before the student begins their experience, please forward these requests to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement (practicum@uth.tmc.edu).

## Learning Contract

All practicum students are required to complete a learning contract, which includes
- student, preceptor, and faculty mentor name and contact information,
- start and end dates of the practicum,
- organization and site location information,
- project details, including schedule, hours, and daily responsibilities,
- public health competencies that the practicum addresses,
- deliverables that will be developed by the student.

Preceptors should discuss the project and review details prior to student submission of the contract. Preceptors will be asked via email to review and approve a student's learning contract. If needed, students may update learning contracts after original approval is received.

# Deliverables

Deliverables are most often written products or can be demonstrated using a written product.

| Example Final Products |
|---|
| **MPH Students** |

1. Assessments (e.g., community needs, stakeholder/capacity, program evaluation, etc.)
2. Strategic Communication Plans
3. Data Extraction, Collection, and Analysis Report
4. Grant Proposals
5. Journal Article
6. Lesson Plans
7. Analytical Memo, Issue Brief, Position Paper
8. New or Updated Protocols
9. Photos with Accompanying Explanatory Text (e.g., photovoice with a report)
10. Podcasts with Accompanying Explanatory Text
11. Non-academic Presentations (e.g., community meetings, training sessions, workshops, etc.)
12. Comprehensive Project Plan
13. Resource, Tool, or other Work Product for the Host Organization's Use (e.g., dashboard, data repository, manual of procedures, etc.)
14. Spreadsheets with Accompanying Explanatory Text
15. Surveys or Survey Questions, Focus Groups, Interviews, Town Halls, Listening Sessions, etc.
16. Training manuals
17. Videos with Accompanying Explanatory Text
18. Websites with Accompanying Explanatory Text
19.

| **DrPH Students** |
|---|

1. Grant application and or proposal for a major foundation or governmental agency
2. Evaluation plan for intervention within an external facing setting
3. Conduct the evaluation of an existing intervention and/or program
4. Conduct training that demonstrates the student's ability to assess a population's knowledge and needs; this includes the completion of a training manual and an evaluation report of the completed training
5. A health surveillance plan to monitor population health, health equity, and public health services
6. An epidemiologic analysis that identifies factors that affect population health and can be applied to the development or evaluation of disease control and prevention strategies
7. Conduct a qualitative analysis of a community-based participatory research project that leads to action-orientated results for community benefit and/or impact
8. Conduct a comprehensive assessment that includes identifying needs, resources, and policies impacting population health
9. Intervention plan that includes (logic model, theoretical framework, content, scope & and sequence and implementation plan)
10. A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency, and/or effort that considers the current organizational climate, public health goals, and objectives, new initiatives, and recommendations.
11. A policy analysis to evaluate the impact of health programs, policies, and systems.
12. A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, and effective ways to reach audiences; 2) includes concepts, messages, and materials representatives of the target audiences; and 3) includes strategies for testing and evaluating messaging and channels.

| **Prohibited Products** |
|---|

1. Reflection Papers (not allowed for MPH students)
2. Contact Hour Logs and Timesheets
3. Recipes
4. Scholarly Papers (for faculty to assess experience)
5. Poster Presentations (e.g., academic conference)
6. Other Documents Required for Academic Purposes

# UTHealth Houston School of Public Health Programs

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health offers several majors by department. The information provided below provides an overview of program components, skills developed, and educational outcomes of practicum students' degree programs.

The **Community Health Practice** **MPH** focuses on the application of public health sciences at the community level and emphasizes systematic analysis and appropriate use of quantitative and qualitative health data. Faculty and students are concerned with assessing population health, planning, implementing, and evaluating health programs in community settings, and evaluating community-level effects of health policies and programs. The **Community Health Practice** **DrPH** program prepares scholars to undertake evidence-based public health practice and emphasizes training in community-driven, grassroots, and intersectional applied research with a focus on addressing social inequity and systems-level change through the adoption of a trans-disciplinary framework.

A **Customized** **MPH** grants students the flexibility to select cross-disciplinary coursework relevant to their public health areas of interest. This program is mostly pursued by dual degree students concurrently enrolled in a separate master's, doctoral, or professional program with a partnering school or university.

The **Environmental Science** **MPH** is designed to provide a foundation in environmental and occupational health sciences, as well as the skills needed to function as a practitioner in various public health settings.

**The Epidemiology** **MPH** prepares students to put epidemiologic concepts and methods into public health practice, contribute to research studies in public health, and interpret scientific evidence relevant to public health.

The **Health Promotion and Health Education** **MPH** integrates the core public health disciplines with behavioral and social sciences. The curriculum emphasizes intervention methods for health promotion development and evaluation in a variety of settings. The Health Promotion/Health Education Dietetic Internship track dives into this area of concentration through didactic work, supervised practice, and their final specialty practice rotation with staff relief in an area of public health nutrition selected by each intern. The **Health Promotion and Health Education** **DrPH** emphasizes developing, implementing, and evaluating theory-based public health interventions in various settings. An important component of this degree program is the ability to communicate findings to policymakers and the public, and students are expected to contribute to and apply scientific discoveries through research.

The **Health Services Organization** **MPH** emphasizes the planning, management, and evaluation of health service systems, services, technologies, and policy. The curriculum includes health economics, decision analysis, health services research, public health, and legislative processes, survey research, outcomes research, quantitative methods, evaluation research, health disparities and vulnerable populations, health administration, economic and social determinants of health, utilization of health services, and ethical and legal aspects of public health.

**The Healthcare Administration** **MPH** is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in management in an interdisciplinary public health environment and a basis for understanding key managerial functions within the broad spectrum of public health systems. Students learn management, including organizational theory, finance, operations management, law, and strategy, which will help to improve organizational and community decision-making.

## Skills by Program and Degree

The following table shows a list of skills that can be linked to potential deliverables (final products) by department and degree. Since deliverables are unique and determined by the combination of competencies, setting, preceptor, and student, what follows are suggestions only.

| Skills by Program and Degree | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **MPH** | **DrPH** |
| **Environmental Health** | • Conduct risk characterization<br>• Describe effectiveness of regulatory programs<br>• Evaluate function, structure, and financing of environmental programs | |
| **Epidemiology** | • Apply data collection and management skills<br>• Evaluate problem in terms of magnitude, person and time<br>• Appropriately interpret measures of disease frequency and association | |
| **Health Promotion/Health Education** | • Conduct needs assessment<br>• Apply a systematic planning framework<br>• Describe a place to evaluate a health promotion intervention | • Select and apply relevant theoretical change methods<br>• Analyze data from non-randomized research designs using advanced statistical methods<br>• Develop a theory-guided research proposal |
| **Dietetic Internship** | • Use EAP to review a nutrition topic<br>• Develop a public health nutrition intervention based on community needs<br>• Communicate patient cases using professional nutrition standards | |
| **Community Health Practice** | • Compare and contrast program planning models<br>• Collaborate with community organizations on social justice initiatives<br>• Examine the role of leadership in public health | • Develop grant or fellowship proposal with community partner<br>• Apply community-based frameworks in developing and evaluating community-based interventions<br>• Utilize evidence-based decision tools and strategies to influence population health |
| **Health Services Organization** | • Prepare a detailed policy analysis to assess alternative policies<br>• Describe internal and external validity strengths and limitations of health policy evaluations<br>• Understand and apply microeconomic theory in market system | |

# Public Health Competencies

UTHealth Houston School of Public Health is accredited by the Council for the Education of Public Health (CEPH). CEPH requires all students to demonstrate at least five competencies in their practicum. A minimum of three must be program-specific foundational competencies. Practicum products should benefit the organization and demonstrate student competency. Students are responsible for creating unique products that meet the objectives of the setting. Products can be written materials, including proposals, literature reviews, instruments, presentations, business plans, policy briefs, and brochures, or they may be documentable events, classes, videos, or workshops. The table below enumerates the competencies by degree. Competencies that cannot be validated with a written product are shaded and should not be used in a student's contract (although they may be important skills in a given setting.)

| Public Health Competencies | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **MPH** | **DrPH** |
| **1** | Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice. | Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community, and population) levels |
| **2** | Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context. | Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis, or evaluation project to address a public health issue |
| **3** | Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming, and software, as appropriate. | Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health |
| **4** | Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy, or practice. | Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders, and other partners |
| **5** | Compare the organization, structure, and function of health care, public health, and regulatory systems across national and international settings. | Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies |
| **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. | Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values, and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems |
| **7** | Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities' health. | Create a strategic plan |
| **8** | Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs. | Facilitate shared decision-making through negotiation and consensus-building methods |
| **9** | Design a population-based policy, program, project, or intervention. | Create organizational change strategies |

| Public Health Competencies | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **MPH** | **DrPH** |
| **10** | Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management. | Propose strategies to promote inclusion and equity within public health programs, policies and systems |
| **11** | Select methods to evaluate public health programs. | Assess one's own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities including cultural proficiency |
| **12** | Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence. | Propose human, fiscal and other resources to achieve a strategic goal |
| **13** | Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes. | Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal |
| **14** | Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations. | Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue |
| **15** | Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity. | Integrate knowledge of cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs |
| **16** | Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making. | Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied stakeholder interests in policy development and analysis |
| **17** | Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges. | Propose interprofessional team approaches to improving public health |
| **18** | Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors. | Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs |
| **19** | Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation. | Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational or community settings |
| **20** | Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content. | Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices |
| **21** | Perform effectively on interprofessional teams. | |
| **22** | Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue. | |

## Have a Question?

Questions or concerns can be sent to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement at practicum@uth.tmc.edu. We also hold a weekly virtual office hour on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. CST and welcome all.