

Applied Practice Experience (Practicum) Preceptor Guide

Thank you for taking the time to mentor the next generation of public health practitioners! We appreciate your dedication to UTHealth and our students! Please refer to the frequently asked questions below for information regarding our school and program. For any additional questions, please email The Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement (practicum@uth.tmc.edu).

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is a practicum?

The applied practice experience, or "practicum", is an applied learning experience that challenges students to design and complete a public health project in a supervised setting. The student will complete the practicum under the supervision of a preceptor (site supervisor) and a faculty mentor (School of Public Health faculty member).

What are the requirements of students in the program?

Students must:

- Create a project that is externally-facing and addresses topics relevant to public health
- Complete a minimum of 180 contact hours
- Develop and submit a [learning contract](#) outlining responsibilities and deliverables
- MPH Students: Develop two tangible final products (see examples below) that should benefit the organization
- DrPH Students: Develop one substantial final product that demonstrates doctoral-level work as well as one written reflection
- Obtain five [competencies](#)
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner

What are my responsibilities as a preceptor or supervisor?

As a preceptor, you should:

- Provide guidance for students as they develop their project and final products
- Assist with any onboarding requirements and training that the student needs prior to starting the program
- Supervise, oversee, and provide feedback on the student's project
- Deliver feedback to the student on their final products
- Complete the evaluation of the student and project at the end of the semester
- Contact the faculty mentor and/or Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement with any questions or concerns

What are the responsibilities of the faculty mentor?

They faculty mentor should:

- Connect students with practicum opportunities
- Approve of the practicum experience, deliverables identified, and the learning contract
- Oversee the experience and product development
- Review and grade final products and issue a grade to the school

What type of student is best for this project?

UTHealth 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). The MPH and DrPH degrees are required to complete a practicum and are considered practitioner-focused degrees.

Students will develop various skills in each major and degree. To view a list of these skills, please see the chart posted in the [Appendix](#).

UTHealth School of Public Health offers several majors by program:

- **Biostatistics:**
 - **MS:** The Biostatistics program provides training in research design, basic statistical theory, data analysis, computer applications, and statistical consultation.
 - **PhD:** The Biostatistics program emphasizes advanced statistical theory and application, statistical consulting and independent research and prepares students to be independent investigators in the development and application of biostatistical analyses to problems of human health and disease.
- **Community Health Practice**
 - **MPH:** Community Health Practice 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 the assessment of population health, the planning, implementation and evaluation of health programs in community settings, and appraisal of community-level effects of health policies and programs.
 - **DrPH:** The Community Health Practice 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.
- **Customized**
 - **MPH:** The Customized program grants students the flexibility to select cross-disciplinary coursework relevant to their public health area(s) of interest.
- **Environmental Science**
 - **MPH:** Environmental Sciences is designed to provide a foundation in environmental and occupational health sciences, in addition to the skills needed to function as a practitioner in a variety of public health settings.
 - **PhD:** The Environmental Sciences, Environmental Disease Prevention Track, prepares students to identify and measure disease agents in various environments, characterize these agents as human health hazards, and develop ways to mitigate their public health impacts.
 - **PhD:** The Environmental Sciences, Total Worker Health Track, builds upon occupational safety and health efforts to prevent workplace injury and illness with policies, programs and practices to promote worker well-being. Key elements of the program include research, practice-based training and interdisciplinary interactions with trainees in occupational epidemiology, industrial hygiene, and occupational medicine
- **Epidemiology**
 - **MPH:** The Epidemiology program 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.
 - **PhD:** The Epidemiology program builds mastery of epidemiologic concepts, theories and methodology; and significant capacity for independent study.

- **Health Economics and Health Services Research**
 - **PhD:** Health Economics and Health Services Research emphasizes the study of cost, access, outcomes, and quality within health care systems. Students focus on understanding decision-making processes among consumers, providers, institutions, and policy makers, and pursue advanced study that leads to original research.
- **Health Promotion and Health Education**
 - **MPH:** Health Promotion/Health Education 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.
 - **MPH:** 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.
 - **DrPH:** Health Promotion/Health Education emphasizes the development, implementation, and evaluation of 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.
 - **PhD:** Behavioral Sciences and Health Promotion focuses on behavioral and social determinants of health. It prepares scholars to integrate social and behavioral science theory to systematically design interventions and use state-of-the-art analytical approaches to assess their effectiveness.
- **Health Services Organization**
 - **MPH:** Health Services Organizations 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.
- **Healthcare Administration**
 - **MPH:** Healthcare Management 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 gain an appreciation of all aspects of management, including organizational theory, finance, operations management, law and strategy, which will help to improve organizational and community decision-making
 - **PhD:** Healthcare Management and Health Policy emphasizes leadership development within healthcare organizations, understanding the complexities of healthcare delivery while addressing costs and quality, and develops researchers who can ask relevant questions, identify answers and drive policy and organizational change.

How do I recruit a practicum student?

Any practicum position can be posted on Handshake, our career services platform. Additional information is available on the school's website under [Post a Practicum](#). The website will provide information on Handshake including a short guide on creating an account and posting a position.

How do I onboard a student?

Onboarding will be different for every organization. If the organization requires UTHHealth to complete an affiliation agreement or other paperwork, please send that paperwork to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement (practicum@uth.tmc.edu). The paperwork will be routed to the proper channels and returned. Once fully executed, please provide a final copy. All students are required to have health insurance and are covered under the UTHHealth certificate of liability. If trainings, vaccination records, background checks, or other requirements are needed, please contact the student.

Who do I contact with questions?

Questions or concerns can be sent to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement at practicum@uth.tmc.edu, the practicum director, Dr. Kimberly Baker at Kimberly.Baker@uth.tmc.edu, or the student's faculty mentor. This information will be available on the student's learning contract.

Appendix

Learning Contract

All practicum students are required to complete a learning contract online. Preceptors should discuss the project with the student and will have the opportunity to review the details.

The learning contract includes:

- Student name and contact information
- Preceptor name and contact information
- Faculty mentor name and contact information
- Start and end dates of project
- Site location and organization information
- Project details, including daily responsibilities
- Five competencies that will be demonstrated in the deliverables
- Deliverables that will be demonstrated and developed by the student

Competencies

UTHealth School of Public Health is accredited by the Council for the Education of Public Health (CEPH). CEPH requires all students to demonstrate five competencies in their practicum deliverables.

MPH Foundational Competencies

Competency	Examples of acceptable products
MPH-1: Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A proposal that benefits the organization that includes a methods section.▪ A literature review relevant to the practicum organization.▪ An evaluation plan for a program conducted by the practicum organization.
MPH-2: Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A proposal for the organization that includes quantitative or qualitative data collection methods.▪ An organization or program evaluation plan that includes data collection plans.
MPH-3: Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A paper, presentation or poster that includes the analysis and results sections. The product must demonstrate the student analyzed quantitative or qualitative data.
MPH-4: Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A paper, presentation or poster that includes a results and conclusion section.▪ A literature review that includes evidence tables of data analysis results.
MPH-5: Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A paper that compares the organization, structure and function of your practicum site with similar organizations across a variety of settings.
MPH-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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A paper discussing how structural bias, social inequities and racism impact health equity.

Competency	Examples of acceptable products
MPH-7: Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A needs assessment of the practicum organization or the population they serve.
MPH-8: Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A paper describing how cultural values and practices are incorporated into organizational programs, policies, or practices.
MPH-9: Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A paper describing the design of a population based-policy, program, or intervention with evidence to support the innovation or policy.
MPH-10: Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A business plan or proposal for resource allocation or management of an existing or new proposal.
MPH-11: Select methods to evaluate public health programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An evaluation plan of a new or existing program associated with the practicum organization.
MPH-12: Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A policy brief that delineates the methodology used to develop the proposed policy, including the role of ethics and evidence.
MPH-13: Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A proposal to increase stakeholder involvement or building coalitions to support the organization or program.
MPH-14: Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letters, editorials, or other written materials that advocate for policy change.
MPH-15: Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An impact evaluation of a policy that impacts the organization.
MPH-16: Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A strategic plan that includes vision, mission, decision making guidance, and empowering and influencing stakeholders.
MPH-17: Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.	<p><i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i></p>
MPH-18: Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An analysis of the pros and cons of various communication strategies for various audiences for the practicum organization.
MPH-19: Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This criterion can be met if sharing information both in writing and orally.
MPH-20: Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A communication plan that incorporates cultural competence principles.
MPH-21: Perform effectively on interprofessional teams.	<p><i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i></p>
MPH-22: Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A written product that incorporates systems thinking tools into understanding a public health issue relevant to the organization.

DrPH Foundational Competencies

Competency	Associated “High Quality” Products
DrPH-1. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A health surveillance plan to monitor population health, health equity, and public health services • An epidemiologic analysis that identifies factors that affect population health and can be applied for the development or evaluation of disease control and prevention strategies • Conduct a qualitative analysis of a community-based participatory research project that leads to action orientated results for community benefit and/or impact
DrPH-2. Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis or evaluation project to address a public health issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation plan for an intervention within an external facing setting • Conduct the evaluation of an existing intervention and/or program • A policy analysis to evaluate the impact of health programs, policies, and systems.
DrPH-3. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A health surveillance plan to monitor population health, health equity, and public health services • An epidemiologic analysis that identifies factors that affect population health and can be applied for the development or evaluation of disease control and prevention strategies • A policy analysis to evaluate the impact of health programs, policies, and systems.
DrPH-4. Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders and other partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a qualitative analysis of a community-based participatory research project that leads to action orientated results for community benefit and/or impact • A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations.
DrPH-5. Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, 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
DrPH-6. Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems	<i>Cannot be demonstrated through a written product</i>

Competency	Associated “High Quality” Products
DrPH-7. Create a strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations.
DrPH-8. Facilitate shared decision making through negotiation and consensus-building methods	<i>Cannot be demonstrated through a written product</i>
DrPH-9. Create organizational change strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, 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 Intervention plan that includes (logic model, theoretical framework, content, scope & sequence and implementation plan)
DrPH-10. Propose strategies to promote inclusion and equity within public health programs, policies and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervention plan that includes (logic model, theoretical framework, content, scope & sequence and implementation plan) A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations.
DrPH-11. Assess one’s own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities including cultural proficiency	**Completed through the required self-reflection component**
DrPH-12. Propose human, fiscal and other resources to achieve a strategic goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant application and or proposal for a major foundation or governmental agency A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations.
DrPH-13. Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant application and or proposal for a major foundation or governmental agency A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations. Conduct a comprehensive assessment that includes identifying needs, resources and policies impacting population health

Competency	Associated “High Quality” Products
DrPH-14. Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention plan that includes (logic model, theoretical framework, content, scope & sequence and implementation plan) • A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, 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
DrPH-15. Integrate knowledge of cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention plan that includes (logic model, theoretical framework, content, scope & sequence and implementation plan) • A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, 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 • A policy analysis to evaluate the impact of health programs, policies, and systems.
DrPH-16. Integrate scientific information, legal and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied stakeholder interests in policy development and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations. • A policy analysis to evaluate the impact of health programs, policies, and systems.
DrPH-17. Propose interprofessional team approaches to improving public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic plan that incorporates guiding decisions and actions for an organization, collaborative, agency and/or effort that considers current organizational climate, public health goals and objectives, new initiatives and recommendations. • Conduct a 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
DrPH-18. Assess an audience’s knowledge and learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive assessment that includes identifying needs, resources and policies impacting population health • A strategic communication plan that 1) identifies a community program, segmented audiences, 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

Competency	Associated “High Quality” Products
DrPH-19. Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational or community settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a 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
DrPH-20. Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a 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

Skill Set by Major

Students in each program and major have skills they achieve during their educational experience. While these skills are specific to each program, they do not represent the skill set of each individual student.

Department of Biostatistics and Data Science

Master of Science (MS)	Biostatistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use appropriate statistical methods and models to analyze data Outline statistical analysis strategy Use probability distributions and theory of statistical inference 	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Biostatistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a simulation study to show a method’s effectiveness Use a unified methodological and theoretical framework to analyze data Use advanced computing techniques 	

Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics and Environmental Sciences

Master of Public Health (MPH)	Environmental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct risk characterization Describe effectiveness of regulatory programs Evaluate function, structure, and financing of environmental programs 	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Environmental Sciences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraise different types of hazards based on sources and routes Compare and communicate different mitigation strategies for environmental hazards Develop, implement or evaluate a total worker health strategy or intervention 	
Master of Public Health (MPH)	Epidemiology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply data collection and management skills Evaluate problem in terms of magnitude, person and time Appropriately interpret measures of disease frequency and association 	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Epidemiology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a research proposal to design, conduct, and interpret results of study Select and apply appropriate multivariable statistical analysis techniques in study Apply causal inference theory and principles of epidemiology to interpret data 	

Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Behavioral Science and Health Promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a methodologically rigorous theory-informed research plan • Conduct a psychometric analysis to test the properties of a measurement instrument • Critique and justify selection of theoretical framework to explain determinants of health 	
Master of Public Health (MPH)	Health Promotion/Health Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct needs assessment • Apply systematic planning framework • Describe a place to evaluate a health promotion intervention 	
Master of Public Health (MPH)	Health Promotion/Health Education -Dietetic Internship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use EAP to review a nutrition topic • Develop a public health nutrition intervention based on community needs • Communicate patient cases using professional nutrition standards 	
Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)	Health Promotion/Health Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and apply relevant theoretical change methods • Analyze data from non-randomized research designs using advanced statistical methods • Develop theory-guided research proposal 	

Department of Management, Policy and Community Health

Master of Public Health (MPH)	Community Health Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast program planning models • Collaborate with community organization on social justice initiatives • Examine role of leadership in public health 	
Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)	Community Health Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop grant or fellowship proposal with community partner • Apply community-based frameworks in developing and evaluating community-based interventions • Utilize evidence-based decision tools and strategies to influence population health 	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Health Economics and Health Services Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a survey research design and analytic strategy to solve public health issue • Identify and critique strategies for measuring “quality” and effectiveness in healthcare • Develop data analytical study designs and apply econometric and statistical regression methods to analyze and draw inferences 	
Master of Public Health (MPH)	Health Services Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a detailed policy analysis to assess alternative policies • Describe internal and external validity strengths and limitations of health policy evaluations • Understand and apply microeconomic theory in market system 	
Master of Public Health (MPH)	Healthcare Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and analyze quality, safety, and financial performance measures • Synthesizes organization opportunities and challenges • Selects, integrates, and evaluates organizational resources 	
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Healthcare Management and Health Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a research-based framework to evaluate quality and safety performance measures in healthcare • Analyze the importance of financial transactions within the healthcare delivery systems and its impact • Assess research questions, study designs, sources of evidence and research methodologies appropriate for management and policy research 	