

Office of Public Health Practice
Epidemiology
Student Practicum Evaluations
AY 2008-09

INTRODUCTION

A practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated “hands-on” experience that allows students to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom. The practicum is directly related to the academic goals and professional interests of the students. The practicum is population based and addresses a need identified by the host organization. The practicum is an essential part of the curriculum and is a requirement of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body of Schools of Public Health.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, 71 Epidemiology students completed a practicum evaluation. Students and community preceptors completed evaluations at the end of the semester. About two weeks before the end of the semester, Survey Monkey™ formatted evaluation forms were sent to students and community preceptors via email. Students and preceptors were contacted three times after the electronic evaluations were distributed. The average annual response rates for students and community preceptors were 96% and 93% respectively.

In an effort to increase response rates, students and preceptors were contacted three times after the electronic evaluations were distributed.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Division

Epidemiology (n = 71)

Type of Organization

- 46.5% Hospital/Clinic
- 22.5% University/College System
- 8.5% State/Regional Health Department
- 5.6% Other/Combination
- 4.2% Government
- 4.2% International
- 4.2% Local Health Department
- 1.4% Business/Corporate
- 1.4% Community Service Organization
- 1.4% Foundation

Final Product

- 45.1% Report
- 16.9% Combination
- 11.3% Presentation
- 9.9% Journal Article
- 7.0% Instrument/Protocol
- 5.6% Thesis
- 4.2% Training Procedure/Manual

Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)

- 53 Epidemiology students spent 12 hours or more per week working on practicum related activities, 8 students spent 8-11 hours per week
- 65% of Epidemiology students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more, 20% registered for 1 credit hour

Source for Locating Practicum

Faculty	22
Self-Developed	19
Current Employment	13
Office of Public Health Practice	6
Friend/Colleague/Student	5
Other	3
Combination	2
Internship/Career Fair	1

Effectiveness of Learning Experience

As indicated in the table below, students reported that their practicum provided an effective learning experience across eight competencies

Question	Rating on a scale of 1 to 5 Average	SPH Average
Developing skills to work as a team member	4.59	4.57
Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives	4.58	4.48
Developing problem-solving skills	4.51	4.50
Working with diverse groups and cultures	4.48	4.50
Understanding the health goals of the organization	4.46	4.55
Formulating an idea from conception to completion	4.57	4.45
Developing an understanding of public health practice	4.59	4.49
Developing leadership skills	4.34	4.28

Student Satisfaction with Practicum

- 92% of students reported that the practicum experience was effective, with 69% indicating that the practicum was very effective as a learning experience
- 67 students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

Recommendation of Site

- 68 students reported that they would recommend or highly recommend their community site

Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience

- 66% of students met with their community preceptor 10 times or more
- Face-to-face was the most common form of communication
- 99% of students reported that the weekly commitment was appropriate

Community Preceptor Attributes

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Experienced in his/her field of work	4.86	4.81
Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student	4.75	4.76
Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed	4.69	4.75
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.69	4.76
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.51	4.59
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.54	4.66

Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors

- 97% of community preceptors were rated as good with 85% rated as very good

Faculty Sponsor Attributes

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.41	4.46
Flexible to suit my needs as a student	4.42	4.51
Willing to offer suggestions when needed	4.42	4.52
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.35	4.42
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.31	4.34

Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors

- 99% faculty sponsors were rated as average or better, with 32% rated as good and 61% rated as very good

Student Abstract eBook

- Students composed abstracts to summarize their practicum experiences. Published abstracts can be found on the Office of Public Health Practice website: <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/practica/default.aspx?id=5432>

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation demonstrates the win-win nature of applying classroom learning to the “real world.” Students overwhelmingly reported that the practice experience helped them develop problem solving skills and become more familiar with public health practice. Community preceptors were highly impressed with the students’ skills, motivation, maturity, and initiative. Overall, all the community preceptors reported that they would be willing to accept students for future practice experiences; and all the students believed their practice experience was complimentary in preparing them for the job market.