

**Office of Public Health Practice**  
Environmental and Occupational Health Science  
Student Practicum Evaluations  
AY 2005-06

**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 2005-2006 academic year, 8 environmental and occupational health science 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 82% and 76% respectively.

**STUDENT RESPONSES**

**Division**

Environmental and Occupational Health Science (n=8)

**Primary Campus Location**

- 90% Houston
- 10% Dallas

**Type of Organization**

- 35% University/ College
- 25% Business
- 25% Government
- 15% Hospital

**Sites\***

- Sprimbox USA
- UT at Austin, Environmental, Health, and Safety
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Albemarle Group
- Texas Department of State Health Services

*Spring and Summer Semesters Only\**

**Practicum Topics\***

- Evaluation of NFPA 45 Code
- Industrial Hygiene
- Study of factors associated with submersion injury outcomes in Texas
- Radiation Overexposure Chart
- Heat Stress and Fire Fighters

*Spring and Summer Semesters Only\**

**Final Product**

- 62.5% Report
- 12.5% Promotional Material
- 25% Other

**Weekly Time Commitment by Student (Hours/Week)\***

- Two Environmental/ Occupational Health students spent 16 hours or more working on practicum related activities
- All Environmental/ Occupational Health students counted their practicum experience for 3 credit hours or more

*Spring and Summer Semester Only\**

**Source for Locating Practicum**

Faculty	5
Friend/Colleague/Student	0
Self-developed	1
Current employment	1
Email	0
OPHP Practicum website	1
Other	0

**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 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Developing skills to work as a team member	4.17	4.64
Navigating work environment to accomplish objectives	4.00	4.53
Developing problem-solving skills	3.97	4.49
Working with diverse groups and cultures	4.50	4.43
Understanding the structure of the community organization	3.83	4.38
Formulating an idea from conception to completion	3.88	4.38
Developing an understanding of public health practice	3.63	4.37
Developing leadership skills	3.96	4.32

**Student Satisfaction with Practicum\***

- All students reported that the practicum experience was effective
- All students reported that their practicum prepared them for job opportunities

*One Missing \**

**Recommendation of Site**

- All students reported that they would recommend their community site

**Student Contact with Preceptors during Practice Experience**

- 25% of Environmental/ Occupational Health students reported that they met with their community preceptor 16 times or more
- Face-to-face and email were the most common forms of communication
- All 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	4.83	4.86
Flexible and open to making changes to suit my needs as a student	4.63	4.76
Willing to offer suggestions and directions when needed	4.63	4.73
Available to answer questions and provide support	4.50	4.72
Helpful in accomplishing project milestones	4.25	4.64
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.38	4.61

**Student Satisfaction with Community Preceptors**

- All community preceptors were rated as above average with 25% rated as very good

**Faculty Sponsor Attributes**

Question	Rating on a Scale of 5.00 Average	SPH Average
Flexible to suit my needs as a student	3.88	4.63
Willing to offer suggestions when needed	4.75	4.60
Available to provide useful feedback concerning my work	4.50	4.46
Helpful in accomplishing project milestone	4.63	4.45

**Student Satisfaction with Faculty Sponsors**

- All faculty sponsors were rated as above average with 37.5% rated as very good

**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, 97% of the community preceptors reported that they would be willing to accept students for future practice experiences; and 97% of the students believed their practice experience was complimentary in preparing them for the job market.