Practicum Orientation

Office of Public Health Practice

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Welcome

This presentation will provide you with an overview of practicum and its requirements.
Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, you should be able to

• Understand the purpose and goals of practicum
• Explore practicum ideas and opportunities
• Understand the roles of each member of your practicum team
• Learn the steps to prepare for and complete your practicum
• Be familiar with the practicum learning contract
• Understand how practicum is graded
Practicum is an applied practice experience that is planned, supervised, and graded.

Practicum provides our students the opportunity to apply classroom education towards solving a real-world public health problem.
Practicum Requirements

All MPH and DrPH students must complete a practicum project and earn 3 academic credits in PH9997.

• MS and PhD students may also complete a practicum for academic credit.

• Students earn 3 academic credit hours for ~ 180 contact hours in the practicum experience.

• If approved by your faculty mentor and practicum director, you may register for more than 3 practicum credit hours. However, these additional credit hours do not count toward your degree.
Why is a Practicum Required?

- Practicum provides a setting for our students to demonstrate public health competencies.
- Public health practitioners have expressed strong interest in our practicum program.
- Practicum experiences help graduates find jobs in public health.
- The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body for schools of public health in the U.S., dictates that MPH and DrPH students attain public health competencies through applied practice experiences.
Why Do a Practicum?

Practicum is a unique opportunity for you to:

• Apply your classroom learning and acquired skills in a workplace setting
• Explore public health careers
• Define and refine your professional interests and goals
• Establish valuable contacts in the public health community
• Make a meaningful contribution to public health
• Be evaluated by public health practitioners
• Produce a final product that will increase your job prospects
Practicum consists of three stages...

- Plan Your Practicum
- Develop Your Learning Contract
- Complete Your Practicum
Planning well in advance is important for developing a successful practicum.

You should begin this planning at least one full semester prior to starting your practicum.

If planning a practicum outside the U.S., you should begin planning 8-12 months prior to starting your practicum.
Plan Your Practicum

1. Input from your faculty advisor
2. Consider your career interests, goals, and timing.
3. Explore practicum ideas and opportunities.
4. Review practicum requirements, including additional requirements for certain programs and concentrations.
5. Identify your preceptor and faculty mentor.
6. Contact your preceptor and faculty mentor to help plan your practicum.
Ideas for a Practicum

There are many ways to find a practicum. A few options include:

- Ask your faculty advisor or another faculty member for recommendations.
- Attend lectures by visiting guests and take advantage of other networking opportunities.
- Talk with your student peers, many of whom work or volunteer in the field of public health.
- Contact an organization that interests you and develop a practicum on your own.
- Review opportunities available at Find a Practicum: https://inside.uth.edu/sph/practicum/.
Find a Practicum

To search posted practicum opportunities...

Go to the Find a Practicum webpage on the UTHealth Intranet: https://inside.uth.edu/sph/practicum.

If you are not on a UTHealth computer, you will need to log into the UTHealth intranet using your network login and password.

Welcome to Practicum Search

Welcome to the new practicum search tool. To begin, please click here.

To search for a specific opportunity

Click here to view the General Opportunities list

Contacts with potential ongoing opportunities*

Note: The search tool (and learning contract) will open in a new window. Make sure you either disable any pop-up blockers or allow popups from http://sph.uth.edu.

* Contacts who have asked to be placed on our general opportunities list may not have an opportunity available every semester.
Ideas for a Practicum

Some ideas for a practicum project include

✓ Conduct a disease surveillance
✓ Design public health training materials or curriculum
✓ Design or implement a quality improvement project
✓ Design or conduct a survey on a public health topic
✓ Evaluate infection control measures
✓ Investigate shortfalls in a public health policy and recommend improvements
✓ Launch a public health advocacy campaign
Where Can I Do My Practicum?

- Government agency
- Healthcare facility
- Non-profit organization
- Health research entity
- Research institute
- Private company
While preparing for your practicum, you will collaborate with a practicum team.
As a graduate student, it is your responsibility to initiate the steps for your practicum. Developing the leadership skills to design and follow a project through to completion is one of the goals of this experience.

Specifically, your responsibilities include

- Complete this online orientation.
- Identify a practicum site and project that is appropriate for your major division and concentration.
- Select a preceptor and faculty mentor.
Student’s Role on Practicum

- Seek additional approvals for practicum projects with special considerations (discussed in the next section).
- Develop and submit your learning contract.
- Register for the practicum course.
- Follow the policies and procedures of the host organization.
- Complete the assigned practicum projects.
- Submit your final product(s).
- Complete a final evaluation.
What is a Preceptor?

**Preceptor**: a member of the organization hosting your practicum who agrees to supervise and mentor you during your practicum.

Ideally, your preceptor’s needs for service should closely align with your career interests and goals. Remember, one of the benefits of practicum is it provides you with meaningful work experience.
Preceptor’s Role on Practicum

• Assists you with proposing a practicum and final product(s) that address both your interests and the needs of the host site.
• Reviews and approves your online learning contract.
• Provides the necessary training and guidance for you to safely and successfully complete your practicum.
• Supervises your practicum.
• Completes an online evaluation of your performance at the end of the semester.
Faculty Mentor

Faculty Mentor (aka, faculty sponsor): Your faculty advisor or another UTHealth School of Public Health faculty member with whom you have an academic relationship or whose interests, research, or practice relates to your project.

Typically, your faculty advisor serves as your practicum mentor, but you may select another UTHealth School of Public Health faculty member for this role.
Faculty Mentor’s Role on Practicum

- Assists you with identifying a practicum.
- Assists you with defining your learning objectives and developing a meaningful final product(s).
- Reviews and approves the final learning contract.
- Monitors the progress of your practicum.
- If necessary, intervenes if you encounter problems with your practicum host site.
- Makes additional practicum assignments or inquiries, if needed, to evaluate your performance.
- Assesses your performance on the practicum and assigns a grade (pass, fail, or incomplete).
In the next slides, we’ll discuss additional approvals that may be required for your practicum.

When planning your practicum, it’s important to allow time for additional approvals that may be applicable to your academic concentration, practicum host site, or project activities.
Special Considerations

International Students

• Please read and follow the procedure for outlined on the **International Students** tab on the practicum website at [https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/](https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/).

• You must receive approval from the Office of International Affairs before you begin working on your practicum.

• OIA’s approval usually takes about 10 business days.
Special Considerations

International Travel for Practicum

Students traveling internationally for practicum must submit details of their travel for review and approval.

- **Before booking your travel, review the travel guidelines described on the Practicum Travel webpage:** https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/travel/
- You must allow adequate time to prepare, submit, and receive approval of these travel documents.
Special Considerations

International Travel Approval Timelines

• International travel requires approval from the Office of Public Health Practice and the SPH Dean’s Office. Travel lasting longer than 29 days also requires approval by the UTHealth President’s Office.

• Approval by all 3 offices usually takes about 6 weeks. At peak registration or travel times, this approval may take longer.

• Travel to countries under a U.S. State Department level 3 or higher travel advisory requires approval by the Office of Global Health Initiatives. This approval usually takes an additional 3 weeks.
# Special Considerations

## International Travel Approval Timelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of Travel</th>
<th>Requires Approval By</th>
<th>Estimated Time to Receive Approval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| <= 29 days               | 1.) Office of Public Health Practice  
                          | 2.) Dean’s Office                                        | 3-4 weeks                         |
|                          |                                                           |                                   |
| > 29 days                | 1.) Office of Public Health Practice  
                          | 2.) Dean’s Office                                        | 4-6 weeks (possibly longer during peak travel times) |
                          | 3.) UTHealth President’s Office                           |                                   |
| Travel of any duration to a restricted country* | Office of Global Health Initiatives, in addition to the offices above. | Additional 3 weeks |

*Refer to international travel guidelines for more information about travel to restricted countries.
Special Considerations

International Projects – Other Considerations

• In addition to your international travel approvals, the School of Public Health must request a program agreement with the organization hosting your practicum. This agreement is negotiated through the UTHealth Office of Global Health Initiatives.

• Please notify the Office of Public Health Practice at practicum@uth.tmc.edu of your intent to conduct an international project as soon as possible.

• As soon as we receive enough information about your project, we will initiate the request for a program agreement with the organization hosting your practicum.
Special Considerations

Human Subjects Research

• If your practicum activities will involve human subjects research, you will need to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before beginning your practicum.

• UTHealth’s Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) can help you determine if your activities involve human subjects research. Your faculty mentor can also advise you.

• See also materials on the practicum Orientation and Training Materials webpage.

• Full IRB review and approval can sometimes take several weeks or months.
Special Considerations

Human Subjects Education

• If your practicum project will involve human subjects research, you must complete a course in protection of human subjects before you can begin your practicum.

• To meet this training requirement, complete an online CITI course in human subjects research, which is free to UTHealth students.

• For step-by-step instructions to register for and complete the CITI course, refer to the "CITI Human Subjects and HIPPA Training" instructions on the practicum Orientation and Training Materials webpage.
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) Training

• If your practicum will involve working with protected health information (PHI), you must complete a course in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) training.

• To meet these training requirements, complete an online CITI course in human subjects research, which is free to UTHealth students.

• For step-by-step instructions to register for and complete the CITI course, refer to the "CITI Human Subjects and HIPPA Training" instructions on the practicum Orientation and Training Materials webpage.

• If you will be working with PHI at a site external to UTHealth, ask your preceptor if your host organization provides site-specific HIPPA training.
Special Considerations

If you are in any of the following concentrations of study, verify with your concentration advisor that your practicum is suitable for your concentration:

- Global Health
- Health Disparities
- Leadership Studies
- Maternal and Child Health
- Physical Activity and Health
Special Considerations

There are also special practicum provisions for the programs listed below. Please contact the Office of Public Health Practice for additional information, if you participate in any of these programs.

- Archer Fellows
- Community Health Practice (CHP) Core III
- DrPH STEER MD/MPH
- Texas Tech MD/MPH
Onboarding Requirements

Some host organizations, especially medical facilities, have onboarding requirements that students must complete before working at their site. These requirements may include

- Immunizations
- Health Screenings
- Drug Screenings
- Background Checks
- Training (i.e. HIPPA training, human subjects education)
- Confidentiality Statements
- IRB approval

Ask your preceptor if you will be required to complete any onboarding requirements before you can begin your practicum.

Meeting these requirements could delay the start of your project. Please plan accordingly.
The Learning Contract is an agreement between you, your preceptor, and your faculty sponsor that identifies your practicum’s learning objectives and outlines your work.
Before you can register for the Practicum course, you must submit your learning contract online through the practicum system.

To ensure an on-time approval, submit your learning contract **at least 1 week prior** to the regular registration deadline.

The learning contract requires approval by

- Your preceptor
- Your faculty mentor
- Office of Public Health Practice
Learning Contract

In the next slides, we’ll look briefly at each section of the learning contract.

To begin your learning contract, login to the online practicum system at https://sph.uth.edu/practica/external/learning_contract/login. Your login username and password is the same as your UTHealth network username and password.

You may save your work, log out of the system, and return to your learning contract multiple times until you’ve submitted the contract for approval.

Save your work often! Save before submitting your learning contract.
Learning Contract

In the first section of the learning contract, indicate how you communicated with your preceptor and faculty mentor while planning your practicum.

New Learning Contract

Before Proceeding

Please indicate how you have communicated with your community preceptor and faculty sponsor.

I have communicated with my Community Preceptor in the following ways:
- [ ] Face to Face
- [ ] Email
- [ ] Phone

Other

I have communicated with my Faculty Sponsor in the following ways:
- [ ] Face to Face
- [ ] Email
- [ ] Phone

Other
Learning Contract

In Part I, provide information about your program and your preferred phone number, as shown below.

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**Part I: Student Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>Select a Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Part II, select the essential public health services in which your preceptor has experience. You may need your preceptor’s assistance to complete this section.

### Part II: Community Preceptor Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Select the Essential Services of Public Health in which your community preceptor has work experience. This can be from current or past employment. Select all that apply.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Monitor** health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. **Diagnose and investigate** health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. **Inform, educate, and empower** people about health issues.
4. **Mobilize** community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. **Develop policies and plans** that support individual and community health efforts.
6. **Enforce laws and regulations** that protect health and ensure safety.
7. **Link** people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. **Assure** competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. **Evaluate** effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. **Research** for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Learning Contract

In Part III, provide the start and end date of your practicum and the estimated total hours per week: the number of weeks x number of hours should equal about 60 or more hours for each hour of academic credit (180 hours for a 3-hour course).

Select the term that best describes your practicum setting and indicate how you found your practicum. In most cases, preceptors do not provide a stipend for practicum. If your practicum will require you to travel internationally, indicate this here.
In Part IV, enter the name and contact information for your faculty mentor (sponsor).

### Part IV: Faculty Sponsor Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Part V, provide the details shown below for your practicum. These fields are described in greater detail on the next two slides...

### Part V: Project Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>Please read the competencies from the degree program you are in for this semester – MPH or DrPH. In checking this box and submitting this learning contract, you agree to work toward the cross-cutting competencies during your practicum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Product</td>
<td>Describe what you will create or complete for your final product. Additionally, describe how your final product will be used by your host organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Contract

Project Title:

A succinct title that describes your practicum.

Competencies:

• Descriptions of the capabilities needed to apply a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities. The practicum experience allows students to formally demonstrate attainment of competencies.

• Acknowledge the competencies that apply to your degree program (MPH or DrPH).
Learning Objectives:

• Clear statements of what you will accomplish by the end of your practicum.

• Learning objectives should be specific, measurable, and observable.

• For help with writing learning objectives, refer to the guide and examples on the practicum orientation and training materials webpage: https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/orientation-training-materials/.
Learning Contract

Final Product:

• All learning contracts must propose at least 1 final product.

• Students enrolling in practicum for the spring 2019 and later semesters must complete at least 2 final products.

• Your final product(s)
  ✓ Should be a tangible representation the work completed during your practicum
  ✓ Should be of value to both you and the preceptor
  ✓ Should represent graduate-level work
Examples of Final Products:

- Well-written report
- Manuscript suitable for publication
- Scientific journal article
- Detailed training manual and a comprehensive protocol
- New or redeveloped protocol
- Survey instrument
- Training materials

For more ideas, see the list of final products on the Orientation and Training Materials webpage: [https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/orientation-training-materials/](https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/orientation-training-materials/).
In the final section of the learning contract, indicate how often your practicum team intends to meet.

After you’ve completed each section, submit your learning contract.

Your preceptor and faculty mentor will receive an e-mail request to review and approve (or reject) your learning contract.
Register for Practicum

- The practicum team will review your learning contact after it has been approved by your faculty mentor and preceptor.
- Please allow a minimum of 3 business days for this administrative approval.
- Once your learning contract has been fully approved, the practicum team will e-mail you a registration code.
- Register for Practicum PH 9997.
Register for Practicum

• You will receive 1 academic credit hour for approximately 60 hours of practicum experience or 3 credit hours for 180 practicum hours.

• All MPH and DrPH students must complete 3 practicum credits to graduate. While enrolling in additional credit hours can enrich your public health experience, only 3 practicum credit hours count toward your degree.

• When registering in myUTH, be sure to select the correct number of credit hours, as myUTH defaults to only 1 credit hour.
Once your learning contract is fully approved, you may register for the practicum course and begin your practicum.

If you are an international student, remember that you must receive approval from the Office of International Affairs before beginning your practicum.
Complete Your Practicum

- Conduct the activities and meet with the practicum team, as described in your learning contract.
- Work toward completing the learning objectives described in your learning contract.
- Complete your final product(s) and send a copy to your preceptor and faculty mentor.
- Complete any additional assignments set by your faculty mentor.
Communication is Key

- The Office of Public Health Practice sends “welcome,” “mid-semester,” and “end-of-semester” messages to each student registered for practicum during the semester. These messages will be sent to your **UTH e-mail account**.

- To make substantial changes to your learning contract, please notify your faculty mentor and send the changes to **Practicum@uth.tmc.edu**. Your faculty mentor should approve substantial changes (such as changing a final product).

- Reach out to your faculty mentor or the Office of Public Health Practice (**practicum@uth.tmc.edu**) if you encounter problems with your practicum.
Completing Final Products

Contact Your faculty mentor about a timeline for submitting your final product(s) and other assignments.

Most final products should be completed 1-2 weeks prior to the end of the semester.

Send a copy of your final product(s) to your faculty mentor and preceptor. You do not need to send a copy to the Office of Public Health Practice.
Incomplete Practicum

If you are unable to complete your practicum hours and/or your final product(s) during the semester you enrolled, consult with your faculty mentor.

- If your faculty mentor is in agreement, he/she can assign a grade of incomplete and you may complete your practicum the next semester.

- Notify the Office of Public Practice that you complete your practicum next semester.

- You **must** complete your practicum before you can receive credit for the course. Keep this in mind if you plan to graduate in the same semester that you enrolled in practicum.
Practicum Grade

At the end of the semester, your faculty mentor will assign a pass or fail based on

- Achievement of your learning objectives
  - Your faculty mentor may assign additional coursework or request more information to determine if you are meeting these objectives.

- Completion of your final product(s)

- Preceptor’s evaluation of your work
  - The Office of Public Health Practice will e-mail a survey to your preceptor.
  - The Office of Public Health Practice will forward a copy of the preceptor’s completed evaluation to your faculty mentor.
At the end of the semester, you’ll receive an e-mail asking you to complete an online survey to evaluate your opinion of the practicum program and solicit your ideas for improving the program.
For more information and resources, please go to the School of Public Health home page and click the Practicum tab.
Practicum Website

Resources on our website include

- Step-by-step guidance for students
- Guidance for preceptors
- Guidance for faculty mentors
- Help with writing learning objectives
- Guidance for international students
- Guidelines for international travel
- List of practicum opportunities
- Frequently asked questions
- And more

Resources on our website include:
- Practicum
- Prospective Students
- Current Students
- Faculty & Staff
- Alumni

What is a practicum?
A practicum is a unique learning experience that is planned, supervised, evaluated, and graded. Practicum experiences allow students the opportunity to apply classroom education towards a real-world public health problem in a work setting. Each practicum experience is tailored to the student and the community practitioner. Each practicum experience is at least one full position that is planned and approved by the community practitioner and the faculty mentor before the student begins the experience. Students have the option to undergo several practicum experiences.
Questions?

Please e-mail any questions about your practicum to Practicum@uth.tmc.edu.

This mailbox is checked regularly and is the quickest and most reliable way to receive a reply to your question.
Thank you for reviewing this presentation!

Good luck with your practicum. We truly hope it is a rewarding experience!