Introduction to Practicum

Office of Public Health Practice

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Learning Objectives

• Define practicum
• Identify the basic steps for developing and completing a practicum project
• Recognize factors that influence your practicum timeline
• Find resources to help you plan your practicum
Alison Winters
Safe Mothers, Safe Babies (SAFE)

Jingwei Fan
Baylor College of Medicine


Source: Alison Winters. “Global Health Experience from Austin, Texas.” Stories from the Field. The University of Texas School of Public Health Student Practicum Experiences. Summer 2012 – Regional Campuses
What is a Practicum?

**Practicum** is an applied practice experience that is planned, supervised, and graded.

Practicum provides students an opportunity to work closely with public health professionals and apply their classroom education to real-world public health problems.
Who Must Complete a Practicum?

• All MPH and DrPH students must complete a practicum.
• MS and PhD students may also complete a practicum for academic credit.
• No waivers.
Academic Credit

- Both degrees require **3 academic credits** in practicum
- **3 academic credit hours** = minimum 180 contact hours in the practicum experience
- More than 3 academic credit hours in practicum **do not** count toward your degree.
Why Should YOU Do a Practicum?

10. Explore public health careers
9. Define/refine professional interests & goals
8. Acquire skills in a workplace setting
7. Be evaluated by public health practitioners
6. Because our accredditor (CEPH) requires a practicum of all MPH & DrPH students
5. Demonstrate your attainment of public health competencies
4. Establish valuable contacts in the public health community
3. Produce a product that will increase your job prospects
2. Make a meaningful contribution to public health
1. Get a job!
Matthew Duncan
Indoor air quality in a midrise building

Robert C. Oth, MD, PhD
Decision-Analytic Modeling Project
Compared effectiveness of CT vs MRI for children undergoing cancer surveillance

Practicum Project Examples

• Conduct a disease surveillance
• Design public health training materials or curriculum
• Implement a quality improvement project
• Evaluate infection control measures
• Investigate shortfalls in a public health policy and recommend improvements
• Launch a public health advocacy campaign
Practicum consists of three stages...

1. Plan Your Practicum
2. Develop Your Learning Contract
3. Complete Your Practicum
Prior to beginning your practicum, you will select

• a **faculty mentor** to guide your practicum

• an **organization** to host your practicum

• a **preceptor** at the host organization
How to Find a Practicum

- Attend lectures or other networking opportunities
- Review “Find a Practicum” on the practicum website
- Ask your faculty advisor or another faculty member
- Talk with your student peers
- Contact an organization that interests you
Practicum Timeline

• Plan *well* in advance.
• Plan at least one full semester prior to your practicum start date.
• For an international projects, plan about 8-12 months in advance.
Suggested Timeline

**Semester 1**
- Explore ideas
- Discuss ideas with faculty advisor
- Identify potential preceptors & faculty mentor

**Semester 2**
- Begin to plan project
- International projects: 8-12 months
- Develop & submit learning contract
- Register for practicum course

**Semester 3**
- Work on and complete project
- Evaluate experience
- Update CV or resume

**Semester 4 +**
- Maintain contact with preceptor

OPHP = Office of Public Health Practice = Practicum office
Other Considerations

• **International students**: At least 2 weeks for Curricular Practice Training approval.

• **Host site prerequisites**: Some organizations require a criminal background check, orientation or training, or specific agreements for our university to review and approve.

• **International projects**: At least 6 months for approval of preceptor agreements and about 8 weeks for travel approval.
Linda Garcia

Investigated the etiology of an outbreak of unexplained kidney disease in sugarcane workers in Nicaragua

Key Elements

With the assistance of your faculty mentor and preceptor, you will

1. Select 5 public health competencies

2. Define at least 2-5 learning objectives

3. Complete at least 1 final product*

* Students who register for practicum in spring 2019 and later semesters must complete at least 2 final products.
Completing Your Practicum

Your faculty mentor will assign a pass or fail grade based on

- ✔ Learning objectives
- ✔ Final products
- ✔ Any additional work assigned by your faculty mentor
- ✔ Preceptor’s evaluation of your work
Please visit the Practicum website for resources to help you plan and complete your practicum: https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/.
Please complete the online Practicum Orientation at least one semester prior to your practicum: https://sph.uth.edu/practicum/orientation-training-materials/.

**Orientation**

Complete this Practicum Orientation prior to starting a learning contract for your practicum.

This orientation explains the purpose and goals of a practicum. It provides information to help you plan your program, complete a learning contract, and register for the practicum course.

**Practicum Presentations**

- **Introduction to Practicum**: This brief introduction, intended for new students, discusses the basic requirements for a practicum.
- **International Practicum**: This presentation explains the approval processes for an international practicum.
- **How to Write Practicum Learning Objectives (April 3, 2018)**: This presentation describes an approach to writing learning objectives for practicum. See also the learning objectives worksheet, examples, and CEPH Competencies under “Other Training Materials” below.
Thank You!

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

This practicum mailbox is checked each business day and is the quickest way to receive a reply to your question.