**GWSPH Practicum FAQ**

**Student**

**What is a Practicum vs an Applied Practice Experience?**

Here at GW, the term Applied Practice Experience (APEx) is used as the umbrella term for two pathways- Practicum and Expediated Portfolio Review. A Practicum is an internship, volunteer or work experience that a student can apply learnings from their MPH program towards and/or learn skills that build upon their MPH learnings and could receive academic credit for.

A practicum consists of a pre-planned and approved practicum site and preceptor (supervisor), developing a practicum plan that includes three foundational competencies and two program specific competencies, a minimum of 120 **PROSPECTIVE** hours, use of the schools Practicum Tracking System, a midpoint attestation, final evaluation and two work products.

Each department has their own set of pre-requisites and their own practicum approval process. When speaking with peers, always make sure you are referencing only information that is relevant for your department.

**What do all of these cohorts mean? They are confusing.**

Due to changes required by our school’s accreditation body, changes to the practicum have been required over the years. This means that we currently have two separate cohorts of practicum students with their own requirements. These cohorts are shaped around when a student matriculated into their MPH program i.e. the term you started your MPH program.

1. The PubH 6022 cohort of students **began their MPH program between Fall 2019 to Summer 2021**. These students have two pathways to earn credit for their practicum experience:
   1. Completed PubH 6022 prior to Fall 2021- students who completed the course 6022 prior to Fall 2021 will only earn credit for that course once they have completed their practicum experience and uploaded finalized APEx Tracker and APEx Template.
   2. Completed PubH 6022 Fall 2021 or later- students who completed the course 6022 in Fall 2021 or later will receive credit for 6022 at the end of the term they are enrolled in the course, and during the practicum approval process will manually enroll in a zero-credit course, PubH 6000. Once a student’s practicum experience is completed, they will receive credit for 6000.
2. The PubH 6000 cohort of **students began their MPH program in Fall 2021 or later**. For students in this cohort, the course PubH 6022 is not a required pre-requisite for the practicum and students will need to manually enroll in a zero-credit course, PubH 6000, to receive credit for their practicum experience.

When a student meets with their Practicum team, they will confirm the cohort the student falls in.

**When during the MPH program can a student complete their Practicum?**

There is no set timeline that dictates when a student can complete their practicum experience. At a minimum, students need to complete all school, department, and program specific pre-requites. Because of the timing of each student’s unique MPH program, each student will be eligible to begin completing a practicum at different times. To have a clearer picture of your specific timeline, it’s suggested to connect with the Practicum team.

Once students have completed all pre-requites, students should reflect on their school, work, and personal commitments to determine what term would be the best fit for themselves to begin a practicum experience.

**What are the pre-requites that I need to keep in mind?**

Students should review the below table highlighting the pre-requisites based on your specific program.

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| **Department** | **Track/Program** | **Track/Program-Specific Pre-or Co- requisites (i.e., before or concurrent)** | **Track/Program-Specific Practicum Competencies.** |
| **Biostatistics & Bioinformatics** | Biostatistics | PubH 6002, 6003, 6021, 6853 | * Apply basic principles of biostatistics to contribute to the design, planning, and conduct of public health and biomedical studies. * Manage databases from public health and biomedical studies using statistical software, e.g., SAS®. * Analyze data by applying methodological concepts and interpret the results from public health and biomedical studies. * Communicate results from statistical analysis in layman's terms as a member of a multidisciplinary research team on public health or biomedical studies. * Identify and apply basic ethical principles pertaining to data confidentiality and interpretation of statistical results derived from public health and biomedical data. |
| **Environmental and Occupational Health (EOH)** | Environmental Health Science and Policy (EHS&P) | PubH 6011, 6021 | * Identify the adverse human health effects of chemical, biological, and physical hazards. * Conduct and interpret data analyses of environmental or occupational exposures or health outcomes. * Assess environmental or occupational exposures to evaluate the severity of a chemical, physical, or biological hazard and potential for prevention and control strategies to reduce exposure. * Evaluate observational studies that examine the relationship between environmental or occupational exposures and health, including biases and study limitations. * Demonstrate knowledge of processes through which science-based policies are developed to address environmental or occupational health issues. * Synthesize information to assess and manage environmental or occupational risks and engage in public health risk communication. |
| Global Environmental Health (GEH) | PubH 6011, 6021 | * Evaluate observational studies that examine the relationship between environmental or occupational exposures and health, including biases and study limitations. * Conduct and interpret data analyses of environmental and occupational exposures and health outcomes. * Assess environmental or occupational exposures to evaluate the severity of a chemical, physical, or biological hazard and potential for prevention and control strategies to reduce exposure. * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges. * Synthesize scientific evidence to inform global environmental health interventions and reduce and prevent environmental health related disease and injury. * Utilize frameworks for the design of culturally acceptable and contextually feasible global health interventions. |
| **Epidemiology** | Epidemiology | PubH 6002, 6003, 6021, 6247, 6853 | * Identify and assess patterns of diseases to postulate hypotheses and to identify strategies to evaluate the impact of health problems. * Plan and design an epidemiologic study to include observational or experimental design. * Evaluate epidemiologic studies and identify limitations and sources of bias. * Conduct and interpret data analyses from epidemiological studies to address research questions. * Manage datasets from epidemiological studies using statistical software. * Synthesize data and literature to communicate findings. |
| **Exercise and Nutrition Sciences (EXNS)** | Public Health Nutrition | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021, 6242 and EXNS 6611 | * Use appropriate nutrition assessment methods at the individual, community, or population levels. * Design, implement and evaluate food and nutrition programs and policies and their effects on population health outcomes. * Employ systems thinking to identify and address factors impacting the accessibility, availability, adequacy, and safety of the food supply. * Apply a policy, systems and environment approach to creating healthy food environments. * Utilize appropriate research methods to address public health nutrition issues and support food and nutrition-related policy development. |
| Physical Activity in Public Health | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021, 6242 and EXNS 6611 | * Describe the role of physical activity in the health and function of the general population. * Explain various physiological and psychosocial mechanisms that mediate the relation between physical inactivity and chronic disease morbidity and mortality. * Design physical activity interventions that are consistent with current social and behavioral theories. * Perform physical activity assessments using state-of-the-art technology * Apply statistical and epidemiological methods to develop and test hypotheses pertaining to physical activity and health and disease outcomes at the population level. * Design and evaluate interventions for improving physical activity at the community and population levels. * Integrate the science and practice of exercise science and public health in promoting an active lifestyle at the community and population levels. |
| **Global Health (GH)** | GH Epidemiology and Disease Control | PubH 6002, 6003, 6021, 6400,  6416, 6247, 6853 | * Conduct and interpret data analyses from epidemiological studies to address research questions * Plan and design epidemiologic studies including observational and experimental designs * Interpret and critique research and best practices to inform the development of evidence-based solutions for global health challenges * Analyze multilevel determinants in global health problems that form the basis for disease control strategies and interventions * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges * Analyze the ethical issues of global health programs, policies and research |
| GH Program Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation | PubH 6002, 6003, 6021, 6400,  6412, 6416, 6435, 6501 | * Utilize frameworks for the design of culturally acceptable and contextually feasible global health interventions * Conduct evaluation research with a particular focus on vulnerable groups or low- and middle-income contexts * Apply relevant quantitative tools to inform different audiences and public health topics * Interpret and critique research and best practices to inform the development of evidence-based solutions for global health challenges * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges * Analyze the ethical issues of global health programs, policies and research |
| GH Policy | PubH 6002, 6003, 6012, 6021,  6400, 6412, 6416, 6417 | * Identify and analyze evidence to design cultural and equity-specific global health policies in the appropriate context for the national, regional, and/or global health system or institutions * Explain the governance, organization, and policy-making of the current global health system architecture * Interpret and analyze health policies for health diplomacy * Evaluate the impact of the economic dimensions (cost, benefits, effectiveness, and financing) of global health policies, particularly in low- and middle-income countries * Interpret and critique research and best practices to inform the development of evidence-based solutions for global health challenges * Apply relevant quantitative tools to inform different audiences and public health topics * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges * Analyze the ethical issues of global health programs, policies and research |
| Humanitarian Health | PubH 6002, 6003, 6021, 6400,  6416, 6480 | * Interpret and critique research and best practices to inform the development of evidence-based solutions for global health challenges * Explain and analyze major problems and challenges in humanitarian and disaster settings and strategies to address them * Describe the institutional landscape and the governance in the aid system, and the interrelationship of foreign policy and health outcomes in humanitarian settings * Communicate public health and medical evidence on humanitarian and health emergency topics to a variety of audiences such as technical experts, lay population, policymakers, or other relevant stakeholders * Describe and address current main communicable, non-communicable, and other pathologies across the populations, geographic locations, and social and political contexts in the humanitarian and disaster settings * Apply relevant quantitative tools to inform different audiences and public health topics * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges * Analyze the ethical issues of global health programs, policies and research |
| **Health Policy and Management (HPM)** | Health Policy | PubH 6012, 6021 | * Identify and analyze health policy options to address public health and health systems problems, including their impact on equity. * Interpret and apply laws to health policy situations, considering relevant facts, equity, and the legal rights and responsibilities of stakeholders. * Apply microeconomic concepts and tools to analyze health policy questions. * Find, assess, and apply data (including statistics) and other evidence to do policy analysis and research. * Write and speak on health policy topics clearly and persuasively in different contexts for and on behalf of a variety of stakeholders. |
| **MPH@GW (online program)** | General MPH | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021 | * Develop a programmatic implementation and evaluation plan for a health promotion intervention. * Assess the functions, capacities, management and governance of governmental, international and non-state organizations that comprise health systems. * Apply appropriate theories toward the development, implementation, and evaluation of public health interventions to address health risks at the individual, interpersonal, community, and/or population levels and mitigate population health impact. * Apply commonly employed data management techniques using appropriate software tools. * Describe how health systems performance is affected by various approaches to health care organization, health law, health workforce development and health care financing. * Develop communication campaigns and strategies to disseminate health promotion information through media channels. * Investigate a public health issue through evidence-based methods, including a review of scientific literature. |
| Climate and Health (CH) | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021 | * Evaluate observational studies that examine the relationship between environmental or occupational exposures and health, including biases and study limitations * Assess environmental and/or occupational exposures that are linked with climate change and evaluate health hazards associated with them * Examine scientific approaches for studying the effects of climate change on human health. * Communicate the effects of climate change and sustainability actions on public health to varied audiences using evidence-based effective strategies. * Recommend strategies to prevent or control environmental or occupational exposures that are linked with climate change. |
| Global Health (GH) | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021 | * Interpret and critique research and best practices to inform the development of evidence-based solutions for global health challenges. * Analyze multilevel determinants in global health problems that form the basis for disease control strategies and interventions. * Develop strategies to meet the health needs of children globally * Recommend strategies to prevent and control environmental and occupational exposures that are linked with climate change * Apply multidisciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze, and address global health challenges. |
| Health Informatics and Analytics (HIA) | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021 | * Use appropriate health information technology (IT), informatics and data terms. * Demonstrate strategies that apply data and health IT structures, policies and processes. * Consult with stakeholders to identify health IT solutions and present results. * Apply concepts of health informatics to areas of population health. * Solve healthcare issues through the optimization of health IT, related data, and business processes. * Assess the implications of health information technology and related data and processes. |
| Women, Youth and Child Health (WYCH) | PubH 6002, 6003, 6007, 6011, 6012, 6021 | * Assess the individual, community, organizational and societal needs of women, youth, or children * Apply social and behavior change models and strategies that have been shown to be successful in improving the health and well-being of women, youth, or children. * Develop a behavioral change model-based strategy or intervention logic model to improve the health of women, youth or children. * Develop an evaluation plan for a behavioral change model-based strategy or intervention to meet the health needs of women, youth or children. * Apply a life course perspective to the health and well-being of women, youth, or children. |
| **Prevention and Community Health (PCH)** | Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC) | PubH 6007, 6021 | * Develop characterizations of communities and identify its health needs using the principles of COPC. * Build a community asset map using qualitative and quantitative information about community needs and assets. * Develop the ability to build partnerships and manage community health organizations by engaging stakeholders to implement community-based programs. * Develop an evaluation plan for a community-based intervention or COPC program. * Apply COPC processes and principles to address health disparities. * Provide health policy recommendations aimed at reducing health inequities in the US healthcare system. |
| Health Promotion (HPro) | PubH 6007, 6021 | * Assess the socioecological, psychosocial and behavioral health needs of communities and populations. * Develop and plan health promotion strategies and programs that are theory-based, evidence-informed, and culturally appropriate. * Implement, administer, and manage health promotion programs * Evaluate health promotion programs. * Use qualitative and quantitative research to inform the design of health promotion strategies and programs. |
| **Prevention and Community Health (PCH) Cont.** | Maternal and Child Health (MCH) | PubH 6007, 6021, 6550 | * Assess the individual, community, organizational and societal needs of women, adolescents, or children. * Develop policies or programs based on behavioral theory frameworks to improve health outcomes of women, adolescents or children. * Administer and implement policies or programs to improve health outcomes of an at-risk community. * Conduct evaluation and research related to the health and well-being of women, adolescents, or children. * Translate evidence and advocate for health and well-being of women, adolescents, or children. * Incorporate a life course perspective to the health and well-being of women, adolescents, or children. |
| Public Health Communication and Marketing (PHCM) | PubH 6007, 6021 | * Apply an ecological framework to assess and promote population health. * Utilize marketing research to develop and improve public health programs. * Develop and administer communication programs to promote individual and population-level behavior change. * Develop and administer marketing programs to promote individual and population-level behavior change and improve the health capacity of communities. * Develop and administer communication programs to promote the adoption of policies that enhance health. * Evaluate public health communication and marketing initiatives. |

**Can I complete a Practicum after I graduate?**

Yes and no. Only a student who has completed all coursework except for <9 credits by the end of the Spring term, are eligible to take part in Spring graduation ceremonies and complete their practicum experience over the Summer term. Students who follow this pathway, will have their degree conferred at the end of August. This option is only available to those students finishing their practicum over the summer.

**Can I get waived out of the Practicum?**

No student is allowed to waive the APEx requirement. However, students who hold a Bachelor’s Degree and have five+ years of full-time public health experience between obtaining their degree and the start of the MPH program or who hold a Graduate Degree and have three+ years of full-time public health experience between obtaining their graduate degree and the start of the MPH program may be eligible to take part in an Expediated Portfolio Review. Students with extensive work experience should connect with their Practicum Team to discuss the EPR in their first year of the program.

**Can you combine the Practicum and the CE?**

Students are allowed to use the same experience for their Practicum and CE requirements. Students must notify their department’s Practicum and CE teams as early as possible that they are interested in combining the two experiences to receive approval and discuss considerations. It’s important to note that work products developed for the Practicum cannot be a student’s CE product.

**What topics can I complete my Practicum on?**

Students are encouraged to reflect on their career goals while planning for their practicum. A Practicum experience allows students to explore potential career pathways, apply knowledge and skills learned during your MPH program, expanding upon knowledge and skills, and build a professional network.

The only requirement that students need to keep in mind when considering the topic, organization, or project is that a student needs to be able to identify five competencies to apply or learn at a potential site.

**What are these competencies and how do I know that I can apply or learn them?**

All accredited schools of public health must adhere to a list of 22 foundational MPH competencies and each department and some programs have their own subset of competencies that measure student’s knowledge and skills within the public health field.

For the practicum, three foundational competencies are to be selected and two program-specific. When reviewing a job description, scope of work, terms of reference, or a list of tasks and responsibilities, students should compare the descriptions against the below list of competencies. Can you see a clear connection between your tasks and responsibilities to the competencies- are you conducting a quantitative analysis and will be a part of the team selecting a methodology? Is there a competency that measures this?

Your Practice Team evaluates opportunities on if a student could either 1) learn the competency based on the tasks listed or 2) apply the competency to meet those tasks. Consider your practicum site as a place to either display your already gained knowledge in public health or an opportunity to further learn skills in public health.

If students are unsure about which competencies would be met at a potential site, they can share the SOW/TTR/job description with their Practice Team and they will confirm. Please see page 23 of th[e Student](https://gwu.box.com/s/301usd8uasf7e2yorwg6jqb5mwvxbu4k) [Applied Practice Experience Guidebook](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4586/files/2024-08/gwsph_mph_student_applied_practice_experience_guidebook_2024-2025.pdf)to find your Practice Team’s contact information.

# CEPH MPH Foundational Competencies

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| **Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health** |
| 1. Apply epidemiological methods to settings and situations in public health practice 2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context 3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate 4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice |
| **Public Health & Health Care Systems** |
| 1. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings 2. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and systemic levels |
| **Planning & Management to Promote Health** |
| 1. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health 2. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design, implementation, or critique of public health policies or programs 3. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention 4. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management 5. Select methods to evaluate public health programs |
| **Policy in Public Health** |
| 1. Discuss the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence 2. Propose strategies to identify relevant communities and individuals and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes 3. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations 4. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity |
| **Leadership** |
| 1. Apply leadership and/or management principles to address a relevant issue 2. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges |
| **Communication** |
| 1. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors 2. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation to a non-academic, non-peer audience with attention to factors such as literacy and health literacy 3. Describe the importance of cultural humility in communicating public health content 4. Integrate perspectives from other sectors and/or professions to promote and advance population health |
| **Systems Thinking** |
| 1. Apply a systems thinking tool to visually represent a public health issue in a format other than standard narrative |

**How do I find a Practicum opportunity?**

Students can find their practicums through a multitude of resources. Students have found their practicums at International NGOs, bilateral and multilateral organizations, foundations, associations, corporations, local NGOs, institutes, Universities, and tons of other locations.

A great first place to start developing your search strategy is by using the [How to Find a Site](https://gwu.app.box.com/file/1233327782938) resource on our webpage. The graphic will help you to narrow down your options based on your specific interests.

By sharing your interests, goals, experience, and strengths with your Practice team, they can direct you to organizations and individuals who might be of interest to you. The Practice Team will also connect you to a list of organizations, job boards, associations, conferences, and young professional groups to dive into.

Another great place to seek out guidance on your search process is the School of Public Health Career Services team, your Program Directors and Academic Advisors, and your peers. The GWSPH is shaped around working adults and you will most likely find that a majority of your classmates are already working in some capacity in public health, they might know of upcoming opportunities you could take part in.

Additionally, students may be allowed to use their place of employment towards their practicum experience as long as they can develop 2 work products and met a minimum of five competencies.

**How long does it take to find a Practicum Site?**

It currently takes students between 3-6 months to identify and secure a Practicum opportunity. It’s best to begin searching for a Practicum the Semester or Two Quarters (MPH@GW) before you want to begin your Practicum.

**Wait, I have to submit work products? What types of work products can be applied to a Practicum?**

A deliverable is a tangible work product created during the course of your APEx. After completing the field experience hours, you are required to submit a minimum of two deliverables to GWSPH to support the five competencies selected in your APEx proposal. If you will be working with confidential data during your APEx, you should discuss the deliverable(s) with your Site Preceptor prior to submitting your proposal and determine how you will submit the deliverables in an appropriate format.

Sample Deliverable Work Products are: Community Health Assessment Report, Impact Evaluation Plan or Analysis, Health Education Curriculum Plan, Intervention and Implementation Plan, Literature Review, Analyses Report Budget, Vendor Selection, Contract, and/or Supply Chain Analysis Report, Program Evaluation Report, Technology Platform or Application Design Proposal, Risk Assessment Analysis Report, Strategy Document (assessment/research, process map, etc.), Research Study Proposal, Monitoring and Evaluation Tool Development, Project Management Plan (work-plan, Gantt chart, stakeholder map, etc.),

Program Management Plan (evidence-based design, stakeholder analysis, budget, etc.), Survey Design & Development Plan, Quality Improvement Plan.

Note: If your deliverables change during the course of your APEx, you must update your APEx proposal and inform your Practice Team.

**Who can be a Preceptor?**

* Demonstrated experience and/or expertise related to the student’s learning objectives.

o This will be evidenced by the student preceptor justification statement and student submitted preceptor CV/resume.

* Is not an immediate/first-degree relative and/or does not have a conflict of interest that prevents them from objectively providing feedback on student performance.
* Is not a current GWSPH MPH student.
* Generally, has 3-5 years of experience.

**What do Preceptors do?**

A preceptor is someone who will guide and mentor a student while they are completing their practicum experience at the site.

Their primary responsibilities are to:

* Review the GWSPH [Preceptor Practicum Guidebook](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4586/files/2024-08/gwsph_mph_preceptor_practicum_guidebook_2024-2025.pdf)and [Preceptor’s Handshake User Manual](https://gwu.app.box.com/file/1218509549808?s=7u8pdi6z7svcjmlh7487eos1m271nql9)
* Review and approve your APEx Proposal
* Complete the Oversight Endorsement Form
* Engage with you on site and provide constructive feedback and guidance including but not limited to skill acquisition and professional conduct
* Complete the Final Site Preceptor Evaluation
* Negotiate payment or stipend with you, the student, if applicable
* Support the students request to apply their approved Accommodations at site
* Address any reports of concerns including but not limited to site safety issues and/or sexual harassment

**What is an APEx proposal?**

The APEx proposal outlines your practicum experiences activities, time commitment, preceptor’s commitment, competencies, and deliverables.

Within your APEx Proposal you will need to demonstrate:

* 1. How you will attain the required 5 competencies.
  2. How the work you will complete is prospective.
  3. How the work will be accomplished (i.e. activities) in 120+ hours of direct or indirect labor.
  4. How the work will benefit your Practicum site and/or the clients their site serves.
  5. How the work will result in at least 2 work products that demonstrate and allow assessment of your competency attainment.
  6. An attestation that you will not work outside your approved Scope of Work (SoW).

**What is the approval process for the Practicum?**

As mentioned before, each department has their own process for approving a practicum.

Following securing a practicum, students may complete the next seven steps depending on the students department to begin logging any practicum hours. The steps below can take between 2-4 weeks to complete and receive approval to begin hours. If a student has a set start date for their experience, then the student needs to begin the approval process well in advance of that date.

1. Complete APEx template for approved opportunity and send to Practice Team for review.
2. After APEx template is approved by Practice Team, you will login to Handshake and request an experience using the Experiences feature on the Career Center page.
3. Preceptor will review and approve in Handshake.
4. Practicum Director will review and approve in Handshake.
5. During step 3, your preceptor will complete the Oversight Endorsement Form. The process by which you will receive the form varies by department, so be sure to check with your Practicum Director.
6. Submit signed Endorsement form to the Office of Research Excellence (ORE) portal along with the APEx proposal (downloadable via Handshake).
7. Receive ORE determination email; your Practice Team will inform you that you may proceed with logging any prospective hours from that point onwards.

**Who is involved in the approval process?**

Students will primarily communicate with their Practice Team during the approval process and their preceptor. APEx proposals will initially be sent to the student’s preceptor, who will review it and approve it. Then, the proposal will be forwarded on to the Practicum Director who will also review and approve it. Please see page 23 of the [Student Applied Practice Experience Guidebook](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4586/files/2024-08/gwsph_mph_student_applied_practice_experience_guidebook_2024-2025.pdf)to find your Practice Team’s contact information.

**How long is the approval process?**

The full approval process can take 2-4 weeks to complete before students are allowed to begin logging any practicum hours. Any hours that are worked prior to that approval **CANNOT** count towards the 120hour requirement.

**How do I know when I’m approved to begin logging hours?**

After a student has submitted their APEx proposal and signed Endorsement form to the Office of Research Excellence, students should expect 7-10 working days to receive a Determination Email. This email will inform a student if they are allowed to proceed with their practicum experience or if the student is required to proceed through the official IRB at GW.

If the Determination Emails does not include your Practice Team, please forward the email to them. As soon as the Practice Team receives the Determination Email, they will notify the student and preceptor that as of that day hours can be logged prospectively.

**That doesn’t seem fair that hours have to be prospective, how do I use a multi-month or term long internship as a practicum if all my hours have to be prospective?**

By our accreditation body, all practicum experiences must be prospective to allow for the University to measure your attainment of competencies within your MPH program. Students can secure long-term internships that begin before they complete the APEx approval process, however any hours worked before the date they receive their Determination Email cannot count towards academic credit.

Practicum hours can be carved out a longer-term internship/experience. Such an experience can start before the practicum, end after the practicum or both. There have been plenty of students who have begun an internship and two months in started officially logging practicum hours, and proceeded to work for weeks or months after completing their 120 practicum hours at the same site.

**Does that mean I can’t start an internship until I’ve met all of the pre-requisites, if I want to use it towards my practicum?**

No. Students who are completing their pre-requisites can begin a long-term internship experience and once they have completed their pre-requisites, notify their Practice Team to begin the approval process to use that internship towards their practicum.

Students are highly encouraged to secure multiple internships and volunteer opportunities throughout their MPH program prior to and after they complete their practicum. Not only does this build a stronger resume, allow for opportunities to develop your skills, and build your professional network, it also allows you to further explore the work environments and tasks that most interest you to help shape the direction you go in professionally.

**Are there deadlines to keep in mind for my practicum?**

We do not have any term specific deadlines related to the Practicum except that the practicum must be completed within one year. Practicums are allowed to extend across terms and begin and end when it is relevant for the student and the site.

Students who plan to graduate the same term they are completing their practicum experience, need to have their whole practicum package (hours, deliverables, evaluations) submitted no later than two weeks before the end of the term or earlier if a PubH 6022 Practicum cohort student. This allows for time for the student’s credit to be applied, and their profile to be audited in time to graduate.

**How do I register for the Practicum course?**

During the APEx approval process, students will be walked through the registration process per their specific cohort. You can find descriptions of the different cohorts and their requirements on Page 2 of this document.

**What is the difference between the IRB vs Student Project Oversight Endorsement Process?**

The IRB is an ethical review of projects involving human-subject research and an IRB number is required for any project that includes human-subject research.

While the Student Project Oversight Endorsement process is the GWSPH’s mini-version of the IRB. It’s a screening tool to best guide students through any possible need for an IRB review.

The Office of Research Excellence (ORE/GWSPH) under the Office of the Dean is responsible for providing oversight in connection with all research and research-related activities carried out under the auspices of GWSPH. As of Fall 2019, all projects related to school requirements (dissertation, MPH Culminating Experience, MPH Practicum, Biostatistics Consulting Practicum, Field Lab Experience, independent study, etc.) require oversight and tracking. This is not only for human protection/IRB reasons but also so GWSPH can track the types of projects being conducted by students and ensure oversight.

While all projects require submission to the Student Project Oversight Portal, not all projects require IRB approval. The DGH Practicum Team will advise students on whether or not official IRB approval is required for their practicum. Student projects that require IRB review and approval should be submitted to an IRB depending on the projects location and who is involved. Once approval is obtained, which can take months to process, it should be uploaded into the Student Project Oversight portal by the student. Students may proceed with project implementation after obtaining the go-ahead from ORE/GWSPH. **NOTE:** Students may not start projects until either a determination that ‘no IRB review is needed’ is issued OR written IRB approval has been received from ORE/GWSPH.

**I need to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), an Affiliation Agreement (AA), or the like for my Practicum site. How can I do this?**

Connect with your Practice Team to secure a template to share with your site. Obtaining an executed agreement can take upwards of many months, so be sure to reach out to your Practice Team early in advance of your Practicum to ensure that the process is timely.

**Is the Practicum for Credit or a Letter Grade?**

The Practicum is a Credit/No Credit course, no letter grades will be provided for any of the deliverables or the final course ‘grade’. Depending on the quality of deliverables, suggestion of the preceptor, and state of the Practicum Package, students may receive no credit for their experience.

**How do I get credit for the practicum?**

Credit is applied once a student has fully submitted their whole Practicum Package, their preceptor has approved the final evaluation and has completed their final evaluation, and the Practice Team has reviewed all documentation, and the grading period has opened for that term – usually at the end of the term.

**Who is responsible for applying credit?**

Depending on the practicum cohort you fall under there are two pathways for a student to receive credit. 1) Practice Teams enter credit to Banner for those students enrolled in PubH 6000.

2) The Practice Team informs the PubH 6022 facilitation team to apply credit for a student who receives their credit through the PubH 6022 cohort on a monthly basis. Students in this cohort can see their credit applied up to a month after their name is submitted to the PubH 6022 facilitation team only if all assignments have been submitted to the 6022 Assessment folder – including the APEx Tempalte and APEx tracker.

**How much time do I have to complete the Practicum?**

It is expected that students complete their Practicum within one year of beginning the experience.

**Can I extend into another term to complete my hours?**

Students are not required to complete their practicum hours within one term. However, in cases where the student is completing their Practicum hours during a term when they are not enrolled in any other courses, a Continuous Enrollment form may be required. Students are allowed to enroll in a Continuous Enrollment twice during their academic program. If this is the case for you, talk to your Practice Team.

**Are there special considerations for international students?**

Students who hold a F-1 visa have some restrictions as it relates to their practicum. These restrictions can vary by individual and can be confirmed by scheduling a meeting with the International Student Office. Most often, this looks like securing a CPT and enrolling in a Professional Praxis to be eligible to begin logging Practicum hours. Following submission of all documentation for the CPT, the approval process can take 10 working days. Only students who are in active status for one academic year are eligible to apply for CPT and while residing in the US, the site must have a US-based address.

**What about Practicums abroad?**

At this time, GW is allowing students to complete a Practicum aboard.

The process for international practicums can add another month to the Practicum approval process. Students are required to submit a Practicum plan and get it approved by their Practice Team and ORE before completing a detailed travel registration form with the Office of International Programs (OIP), which can only be submitted after their Practicum Plan has been approved by all parties. Meet with your Practice Team early to ensure timely submission, review, and approval of your practicum Plan by your department and by OIP.

Registration of travel through OIP must be 30 days prior to departure.

**Where do I learn more about the practicum?**

To learn more, schedule a meeting with your Practice Team, watch an [APEx 101 session](https://gwu.box.com/s/o2mkvrtg8bx5fndzl9ocayxlh3ptklhb) or access additional Practicum resources like the [MPH Student Applied Practice Experience Guidebook](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4586/files/2024-08/gwsph_mph_student_applied_practice_experience_guidebook_2024-2025.pdf)by visiting GW’s .

**Handshake:**

**Where can I find resources for the Practicum tacking process in Handshake?**

All students should refer to the [APEx Student Resources page](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/student-resources) under the “APEx Resources” drop-down menu for Handshake Manuals and Checklists listed by department.

**How do I create an account on Handshake?**

All GWSPH students have a Handshake account pre-made for them upon matriculation. You will log in to Handshake using your GW SSO login credentials. If it is your first time logging in, you may have to submit your GW SSO credentials and complete/verify your profile before having access to your account.

**How do I sign in to Handshake?**

You will log in to Handshake using your GW SSO login credentials.

**Why do I have to track my experience through Handshake?**

All GWSPH students completing a Practicum must track their experience through Handshake so that GWSPH can apply credit to the student’s record.

**What forms do I have to submit through Handshake?**

**\*NOTE:** Students should refer to the [Student Handshake Manual](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/student-resources) for an in-depth overview of the Handshake process including visuals and additional description and speak with your Practice Team to understand your department’s nuances related to the Practicum.

All students must submit the following:

* Practicum Plan
* Midpoint Attestation
* Final Evaluation

**Who has to approve my forms in Handshake?**

Both your preceptor and your department’s assigned Practicum Director will review and/or approve all forms you submit through Handshake.

**What forms does my preceptor have to submit through Handshake?**

Your preceptor must review and approve your Practicum Plan, fill out an Endorsement Form that you will use for the GWSPH ORE process, and complete a preceptor version of the Final Evaluation.

**How will my preceptor access Handshake to review my documents?**

Preceptors **DO NOT** have to create their own Handshake accounts. At each step in the Handshake process, your preceptor will receive emails prompting them to complete forms in addition to a unique link that will take them directly to the form. Your preceptor must click the link and fill out any pending forms or approvals within 15 business days. It’s recommended that you connect with your preceptor as soon as you submit your plan in Handshake to flag to them that an email with a link/button to approve should be in their inbox shortly. Preceptors will also have access to the [Handshake Preceptor Manual](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/preceptor-resources) that they can reference while using the system.

**How do I submit my Practicum Plan in Handshake?**

After working with your Practice Team to create your Practicum Plan, complete the following steps:

* Log in to Handshake using your SSO credentials.
* Click “Career Center” on the top right menu on Handshake.
* Select “Experiences”.
* Click the blue “Request an Experience” button.
* Select “[Your department or Program] Practicum Plan” from the drop-down menu under “Experience Type”.
* Input your site information, preceptor and Practice Team (reviewer) details, Practicum logistics, and your Practicum Plan.

o A successful submission will direct you to your Practicum Overview.

**How do I know which term to select in Handshake?**

When filling in your Practicum Plan, select the term in which you will be completing your Practicum (i.e. if you are submitting your experience request in Spring 2023 but plan to complete your Practicum during Summer 2023, select Summer 2023).

**Handshake is not allowing me to request an experience. What should I do?**

If the “Request an Experience” button is grayed out or you are otherwise unable to submit an experience request, please reach out to Handshake Support chat function on the website.

**How do I upload my preceptor’s resume or printed LinkedIn profile to Handshake?**

After submitting your Experience Request:

* Navigate to the “Experiences” feature within Handshake and select “View Details” of your Practicum Experience.
* On the “Details” page of your Experience, select the blue “New Attachment” button.
* Upload your preceptor’s resume or printed LinkedIn profile page

**How do I assign a reviewer, and who do I assign?**

You will provide your preceptor's name and email, and they will automatically be assigned as a reviewer for your profile. The secondary reviewer is your department Practicum Director (PD), who is assigned by your department and program. You can find your [Practice Team Contact Information by Department](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/student-resources)on the Office of Applied Public Health (OAPH) webpage or on page 23 of the [Student Applied Practice](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4586/files/2024-08/gwsph_mph_student_applied_practice_experience_guidebook_2024-2025.pdf) [Experience Guidebook.](https://gwu.box.com/s/301usd8uasf7e2yorwg6jqb5mwvxbu4k)

**My preceptor said they didn’t receive an email from Handshake to review/approve my Practicum Plan and/or Final Evaluation, what should I do?**

If your preceptor did not receive an email from Handshake, please reach out to sphprac@gwu.edu with your Preceptor in CC. We will do our best to troubleshoot for you or bring in the Handshake support team to resolve the issue.

**How do I know when my Practicum Plan is approved?**

After both your Preceptor and your Practice Team have approved your Practicum Plan, you will receive an email notifying you. **\*NOTE:** If you receive any emails from Handshake that are for a Midpoint Attestation or Final Evaluation, save these emails for use when you have reached 60 hours and 120 hours at your Practicum site. You should only complete these at the middle and end of your Practicum project.

**What if my Practicum Plan is not approved?**

If you do not receive an approval email for your requested experience, your Practice Team will reach out and work with you individually to fix your Practicum Plan. In this case, after speaking with your Practice Team, you will need to edit your plan using the “Learning Objectives” or “Comments and Activity” tab on your Practicum Overview page. You then must let your Practice Team know when it is ready for a second review.

**Do I have to log/submit hours?**

All GWSPH students completing a Practicum must complete a total of at least 120 hours at their Practicum site. Some departments require that students track hours while others do not. Be sure to stay updated with your department Practice Team’s guidance.

**How do I complete the GWSPH Student Project Oversight Process using Handshake?**

All GWSPH MPH students who are completing a Practicum (**\*besides students in the Health Policy department**) must have their Practicum Plan reviewed by the GWSPH Office of Research Excellence (ORE) to determine whether or not the project constitutes Human Subjects Research. In order to do this, students must submit their Practicum Plan in addition to an Endorsement Form to the [GWSPH Student Project Oversight Portal.](https://cri-datacap.org/surveys/index.php?s=T3783HC8Y4) Before submitting to the portal, students should:

* Log in to Handshake using your SSO credentials
* Click “Career Center” on the top right menu on Handshake
* Select “Experiences”
* Under the main “Experiences” tab, select the “View Details” button of your approved Practicum experience
* Once the page is open, select Ctrl+P on your keyboard to print a copy of your Practicum plan to your desktop as either a Word doc or PDF. You will upload this document to the portal.
  + Name your Practicum Plan: **Your First and Last Name\_Practicum Plan**
* Next, you will complete one of the following depending on your department:
  + Option 1 (Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Global Health, MPH@GW): Download the Fillable Endorsement from under “Attachments” and email it to your preceptor. Have them complete the form, and then email it to your Practice Team for their signature. They will share a fully signed version back to you that you will use when uploading to the portal.
  + Option 2 (Environmental & Occupational Health, Exercise & Nutrition Sciences, Prevention & Community Health): Your preceptor will have downloaded a Fillable Endorsement when reviewing your Practicum Plan and will email it to you once they approve your plan. Email it to your Practice Team for their signature. They will share a fully signed version back to you that you will use when uploading to the portal.
* Once your Endorsement form is fully signed and your Practicum Plan is saved to your computer, navigate to th[e Student Project Oversight Portal,](https://cri-datacap.org/surveys/index.php?s=T3783HC8Y4) respond to the survey questions and upload your saved Practicum Plan and the Endorsement form that was emailed to you by your Practice Team. The survey is more than one page and you will receive a confirmation email if your submission was successful.
  + \*NOTE: Approvals from the ORE take anywhere from 48 to 72 hours. Only after you have received a determination email from the ORE may you officially begin your Practicum hours.

**How do I know when I can start working with my Practicum site?**

You may only start counting hours towards your 120 required Practicum hours AFTER you have received a determination from ORE. **NO hours before the determination email can count towards your required 120 hours.**

**How do I submit my Midpoint Attestation in Handshake?**

* To access the Midpoint Attestation, you should do one of the following once you have reached at least 60 hours or have reached the midway point of your time at your Practicum site:
  + 1) Refer to the email you got after your Practicum Plan was approved and click the link/button for the Midpoint Attestation OR
  + 2) If you don’t have access to the initial email, reach out to your Practice Team and let them know you are ready to complete the Midpoint Attestation. They will send you an email containing the link/button through Handshake.
* Once you have clicked the link, complete your Midpoint attestation. Your responses will NOT be seen by your Preceptor, only your Practice Team.
* Only your department Practice Team will see the results of your Midpoint, no responses will be shared with your preceptor.

**How do I know when my Midpoint Attestation has been approved?**

Midpoint Attestations do not require approval in the Handshake system. If you raised any concerns in your Attestation your Practice Team will reach out to you individually.

**How do I submit my Final Evaluation in Handshake?**

* To access the Final Evaluation, you should do one of the following once you have reached at the end of your time at your Practicum site:
  + 1) Refer to the email you got after your Practicum Plan was approved and click the link/button for the Final Evaluation OR
  + 2) If you don’t have access to the initial email, reach out to your Practicum Team and let them know you are ready to complete the Final Evaluation. They will send you an email containing the link/button through Handshake.
* Once you have clicked the “Take Final Survey” button, complete the survey.
  + If you need to review your Practicum Plan before completing the survey, login to your Handshake account and navigate to the “Experiences” feature to review the “Details” and/or “Learning Objectives.”
* After completing all three pages of the Final Evaluation, select the green “Submit Evaluation” button.

**How do I upload my Deliverables in Handshake?**

All GWSPH students completing a Practicum must submit at least two Deliverables through the Handshake system. In order to do so, students should do the following after submitting their Final Evaluation:

* Navigate to the “Experiences” Feature within Handshake and select “View Details” of your Practicum Experience.
* On the “Details” page of your Experience, select the blue “New Attachment” button.
* Upload your Deliverables, one at a time. Be sure to click the green “Create Attachment” button.
* All attachments must be a word doc or pdf.

**How do I know if my Final Evaluation and Deliverables have been approved?**

Wait to hear from your Preceptor or Practice Team if there are any questions about your Final Evaluation or Deliverables. If you do not hear from them, check your Handshake profile to see if everything was approved indicating you will receive credit for the Practicum/APEx.