Table of Contents
Introduction..................................................................................................................................... 2
What is an MPH Practicum?........................................................................................................... 2
School-wide Practicum Standards ............................................................................................... 3
Roles and Responsibilities .......................................................................................................... 3
    Site Preceptor .......................................................................................................................... 3
    An Overview of the Practicum Experience .............................................................................. 4
        Prior to Student Placement: .............................................................................................. 4
        Interviewing and Selecting MPH Practicum Students .................................................... 4
Student Placement: ..................................................................................................................... 5
    The Practicum Plan ................................................................................................................... 5
    Supervising the Practicum Experience .................................................................................. 5
    Evaluating the Practicum Experience .................................................................................. 6
Practicum Website .......................................................................................................................... 6
    Using the Practicum Website ................................................................................................ 7
        Register: ........................................................................................................................... 7
        Add a Project: ....................................................................................................................... 8
        Add a Signature to a Plan ................................................................................................... 9
        Midpoint and Final Evaluations ....................................................................................... 10
Practicum Training ........................................................................................................................ 12
Financial Compensation ............................................................................................................. 12
Contacts ....................................................................................................................................... 13
Introduction

As a requirement established by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH),

All professional degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students’ areas of specialization.

(CEPH, School of Public Health Accreditation Criteria, Amended June 2005).

In accordance with these requirements, all MPH students in The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS) are required to satisfactorily complete a practice experience, known as a practicum, before graduation.

In the following pages, you will find a detailed description of the Practicum process and the role of a Site Preceptor. We hope this will facilitate your participation and ensure a solid partnership with the SPHHS. We thank you for your interest in participating in our program.

Since practical knowledge and skills are essential to a successful career in public health, a planned, supervised, and evaluated practicum is an essential component of a public health professional degree program. The goal of the practicum is to provide an opportunity for students to synthesize, integrate, and apply practical skills, knowledge, and training learned through courses, to gain professional experience in a public health work environment, and to work on public health practice projects that are of particular interest to not only themselves but the community at large.

The school’s location in the nation’s capital allows for a variety of unique experiences within a multitude of practicum sites. To help facilitate this experience, SPHHS has created this guidebook\(^1\) to give you an overall picture of the practicum experience.

What is an MPH Practicum?

The practicum is a partnership among SPHHS Students, The George Washington University, and sponsoring agencies/organizations. In this partnership, SPHHS is represented by Practicum Directors and sponsoring organizations are represented by Site Preceptors. Each party in this mutually beneficial relationship assumes certain responsibilities, performs specific functions, and

\(^1\) Individual departments and academic programs may have additional materials.
accrues benefits. The practicum is guided by a set of goals and objectives, which are based on the needs and resources of all parties involved.

A practicum provides the opportunity to integrate and apply classroom learning in a public health setting, enabling students to observe and learn from you, professionals in the field. Students will contribute to a community’s resources and to the solution of public health problems, while developing practical skills and personal confidence as a public health professional.

**School-wide Practicum Standards**

Although certain elements of the practicum vary by department, the following are practicum standards for all MPH students:

- The practicum must be conducted in a public health or related setting;
- The practicum must be supervised by an experienced public health or related professional;
- The student must complete at least 120 hours of work on-site; and
- Students will receive credit or no credit based on a Site Preceptor’s evaluation of their performance through a final evaluation.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

During the practicum the student will work under the supervision of the Practicum Director, their Academic Advisor, and the Site Preceptor, who agrees to directly supervise the student during the practicum experience. Decisions on the specific objectives, activities, and division within the organization are determined through discussions and agreements amongst the Site Preceptor, the student, and the Practicum Director. The roles and responsibilities of a Site Preceptor are outlined below.

**Site Preceptor**

1. Visit the Practicum Website
   
   [http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/index.cfm](http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/index.cfm) and Register. (See Register: for instructions)
2. Review and approve the Student’s Practicum Plan
3. Negotiate payment/stipend with Student, if applicable
4. Engage student in work and provide constructive feedback and guidance to the student
5. Provide guidance for professional conduct
6. Complete the following on the Practicum Website:
   
   a. Midpoint evaluation form in conjunction with the student
   b. Final site preceptor evaluation of student and practicum
7. Address student’s reports of problems, including site safety issues and/or harassment
An Overview of the Practicum Experience

What organizations can be MPH practicum sites?

In general, a practicum site has the following elements:

- Serves a public health or health services mission or supports a department with such a mission
- Addresses significant public health or health services problems
- Offers students the opportunity to learn from public health professionals in a supervised environment

The following provides a general overview of the processes involved in completing the practicum experience.

Prior to Student Placement:

Site Preceptors need to submit the Site Preceptor Application and Site Application online through the SPHHS Practicum Website. As part of the Site Preceptor application, you will be required to submit a one-page biosketch or resume with the Site Preceptor application. The Departmental Practicum Director will then review and approve these materials.

After verification/approval, a login will be e-mailed to you and you may submit your Preceptor Project Description on the Practicum Website for students to review.

Note that in order to submit a Project Description on this site, you must first submit a Site Preceptor and Site Application, and subsequently receive a login code.

Interviewing and Selecting MPH Practicum Students

SPHHS students will be able to view projects, but not contact information, posted on this site. Practicum Directors and students will then discuss potential placements. When a placement is identified, the Practicum Director or student will contact you.

The selection of MPH practicum students by your site can occur in two ways:

1. A student can express interest in your project and discuss this with the Practicum Director.
2. The Practicum Director can help match your needs to potential practicum students.
Student Placement:

The Practicum Plan

A student will work with the Site Preceptor, Academic Advisor and Practicum Director to design, review, and approve the Practicum Plan. As part of the plan, the Site Preceptor and the student will identify learning objectives, related to the student’s program-specific competencies, for the practicum experience. The student will submit the Plan online for review and approval by you and the departmental Practicum Director and Academic Advisor. All Site Preceptors need to approve the plan by logging on to Practicum Website.

Learning objectives are statements of what the student will achieve during the practicum or will be able to do once the student has completed the practicum. You will evaluate these objectives at the mid-point and the final evaluation of the practicum.

Learning objectives must:

• Be linked to the student’s program-specific practicum competencies (Program-specific competencies are listed here: http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/progcorecomp.cfm
• Build the student’s professional skills
• Be prepared in conjunction with and approved by the Site Preceptor, Academic Advisor and Practicum Director.

Examples of appropriate learning objectives (LO) are as follows:

(1) Competency: Assess environmental and occupational exposures  
LO: Use air monitoring equipment correctly for taking meaningful workplace samples.

(2) Competency: Apply knowledge of global health patterns and determinants in support of global health research.  
LO: Conduct a needs assessment in response to avian influenza in Uganda.

(3) Competency: Assessing the methodology and quality of research results.  
LO: Synthesize and summarize health care policy news as it relates to children, low-income families, and Medicaid.

Supervising the Practicum Experience

In this stage of the practicum experience the student will work under your guidance to carry out the practicum project in accordance with the expectations set forth in the Practicum Plan. The
practicum will entail a minimum of 60 hours of fieldwork per credit hour; 120 hours for most MPH programs. The practicum may be completed in as little as three weeks, one semester (14 weeks), or up to 2 semesters (28 weeks).

While the student is onsite, the student will be required to login to the Practicum Website and track contact hours. As the hours are completed, the system will track and subsequently prompt the student and Site Preceptor to fill out required, time-sensitive materials such as the Midpoint and Final Evaluations.

**Evaluating the Practicum Experience**

There are two types of evaluation that will be completed for the practicum: a mid-point evaluation that will be completed during the practicum and a final evaluation that will be completed at the end of the practicum experience.

The midpoint evaluation will be completed with the student and any changes to the Practicum Plan must be submitted by the student to the Practicum Director and Academic Advisor.

The final evaluation of the practicum experience will be judged for credit or no credit by the Academic Advisor based on the evaluation and recommendation of the Site Preceptor and the Practicum Director. The student will see and review the Site Preceptor’s final outcome evaluation, without the preceptor’s responses about the program or website.

**Practicum Website**

The Practicum Website provides you with one location for:

- Policies and requirements
- Required forms
- Program-specific materials
- Listing of practicum opportunities
- Tools and resources

*All Forms must be filled out electronically and submitted to this site.* Practicum Training sessions will be available to provide you with an overview on how to use this site and address any questions you may have. Instructions for the primary site functions you will use are below.
Using the Practicum Website

The direct address of the site is: [http://sphhs.gwu.edu/studentres/practicum](http://sphhs.gwu.edu/studentres/practicum)

The site can also be accessed by visiting the SPHHS homepage ([www.gwumc.edu/sphhs](http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs)). It is the first item under the Student Resources link on the left. If you have any questions, please contact the SPHHS Webmaster, James Kraetz, at [kraetzja@gwu.edu](mailto:kraetzja@gwu.edu).

Register:

1. Register as a “Preceptor” **AND** your “Site”

   Go to: [http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/practicumapply.cfm](http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/practicum/practicumapply.cfm)

2. Click “Preceptor” and fill out form.

3. Select the appropriate Department/Concentration (your student, if you have one already, can give you this information).

4. Select your “Site” if your Organization is already registered.
   
   a. If your Organization or “Site” is not registered, fill out the Site portion of the application

5. Click “Submit”.

6. Once you are verified, you will receive a username and password.
Add a Project:

1. Once you get your password, log into the site here:  
   http://sphhs.gwu.edu/studentres/practicum/index.cfm

2. Click “Add a New Project”, and fill out the form (please use as much detail as possible).

3. Click “Submit” on the bottom of the form.

4. Please notify the student after you submit. The system is designed to “match” projects and students, so the student will need to submit their plan against your project.

5. Once the student submits their plan, you and the Practicum Director will get an automatic notification to verify the plan. To verify, log in and click the “sign” button at the end of their plan.

6. If you have any questions, please contact Jacqueline Arnold at arnoldja@gwu.edu.
Add a Signature to a Plan

1. Once a student has submitted their plan, they will need you to sign the plan in order for them to log hours.
2. Log In and click “Plan Information” and review the Plan.
3. Under Practicum Agreement on the Plan, click “Sign” next to Preceptor Signature.
Midpoint and Final Evaluations

1. Sign in to the Practicum Website.
2. Click on “Evaluations” (for Mid-point Evaluation) or “Final Evaluation” in the Left-hand Menu.
3. Click on the appropriate student name:
   a. For the **Midpoint Evaluation**, click “Sign” to approve the evaluation *after* you have discussed the evaluation with the student. The student will not be able to log hours until she or he has received your approval.
   b. For the **Final Preceptor Evaluation**, evaluate the student’s overall performance on a scale of 1-5 (5 being Excellent), and click “Sign” to confirm. The student’s grade will be based partially on your evaluation of her or his performance.
View of Final Preceptor Evaluation:

[Image of Preceptor Evaluation form]

- Rating Scale:
  1 = Unsatisfactory  2 = Poor  3 = Acceptable  4 = Good  5 = Excellent

- Student
  A. Please evaluate the student's performance throughout the Practicum. Evaluate each item using the scale of 1-5 listed above.
  Professional
  *1. Was reliable (attendance, punctuality, etc.)
  *2. Demonstrated appropriate professional behavior
  *3. Was motivated and demonstrated initiative as needed
  *4. Worked independently as needed
  *5. Completed projects in a timely manner
  *6. Demonstrated the ability to solve problems effectively

- Interpersonal
  *7. Expressed ideas effectively in oral communications
  *8. Expressed ideas effectively in writing
  *9. Worked well with others
  *10. Solicited and/or accepted feedback and utilized suggestions

- Knowledge and Skills
  *11. Acquired the level of knowledge necessary to perform the project
  *12. Used available resources to complete the practicum
  *13. Demonstrated the ability to transfer public health knowledge and skills to address practical issues

- B. Did the student meet the learning objectives stipulated in the Student Practicum Plan (found below)?
  Yes [ ]
Practicum Training

You are highly encouraged to participate in the Site Preceptor Practicum Training prior to hosting a student on-site. This training will be offered throughout each semester.

The training takes one and a half hours and provides information on your role and responsibilities as well as use of the Practicum Website.

Financial Compensation

Participation in the practicum is not predicated on the availability of remuneration but on the quality and value of the educational experience. Financial compensation for the practicum, if available, is a matter to be negotiated between you and the student prior to the commencement of the practicum experience.

The possibility of payment is not a consideration in the approval of the practicum. In most cases, because of the limited duration and nature of practicum placements, they are unpaid. However, preceptors are advised that the student must pay tuition to the University for a two-credit hour course (approximately $2,000) in order to receive credit for the practicum.
## Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicum Directors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental and Occupational Health</td>
<td>Peter LaPuma</td>
<td><a href="mailto:plapuma@gwu.edu">plapuma@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-1734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology and Biostatistics</td>
<td>Ann Goldman, Amanda Castel, Elizabeth Truskowski (Coordinator)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anning@gwu.edu">anning@gwu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:acastel@gwu.edu">acastel@gwu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:lizzi@gwu.edu">lizzi@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-4581, (202) 994-8325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise Science</td>
<td>Alex Dickman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alexbld@gwu.edu">alexbld@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-6280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Health</td>
<td>Elizabeth Lee, Ashleigh Black</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lizlee@gwu.edu">lizlee@gwu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:ashblack@gwu.edu">ashblack@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-3795, (202) 994-1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Policy</td>
<td>Debora Goldberg, Lara Cartwright-Smith</td>
<td><a href="mailto:goetzdc@email.gwu.edu">goetzdc@email.gwu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:laracs@gwu.edu">laracs@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-8958, (202) 994-8641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services Management and Leadership</td>
<td>Robert Burke</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bobburke@gwu.edu">bobburke@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-5560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention and Community Health</td>
<td>Karyn Pomerantz, Tamara Henry</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kpomeran@gwu.edu">kpomeran@gwu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:thenry@gwu.edu">thenry@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-3623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Webmaster</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Kraetz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kraetzja@gwu.edu">kraetzja@gwu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPHHS Practicum Contacts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Professor of Public Health Practice</td>
<td>Pierre N.D. Vigilance, M.D., M.P.H.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pndv@gwu.edu">pndv@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-8361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Coordinator</td>
<td>Jacqueline Arnold</td>
<td><a href="mailto:arnoldja@gwu.edu">arnoldja@gwu.edu</a></td>
<td>(202) 994-8674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Student Records</td>
<td>2175 K Street NW Suite 500</td>
<td></td>
<td>(202) 994-8036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thank you for your commitment to shaping our future public health workforce. We greatly appreciate your time and support!*