

Milken Institute School of Public Health

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences

PUBH 6014

Practicum: Public Health Nutrition MPH 2 credit hours

(Required for all students pursuing a
MPH in Public Health Nutrition)

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Practicum Description:

The practicum is a three-way partnership among students, SPH, and sponsoring agencies/organizations in which the practicum takes place under the supervision of a site preceptor. The practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated practice experience in Public Health Nutrition that provides students with an opportunity to:

- synthesize, integrate, and apply practical skills, knowledge, and training learned through courses,
- gain professional experience in a professional public health work environment, and
- work on public health practice projects that are of particular interest.

The practicum serves as an important first step in a public health career, providing an introduction to the practical skills and experience necessary for a productive and fulfilling profession. For students with prior work experience, the practicum provides the opportunity to hone skills or to gain new experience in a different area of specialization.

The practicum is a 2-credit requirement during which the student works 120 hours on-site in a public health nutrition setting under the supervision of a site preceptor who has agreed to directly supervise the work of the student. Decisions on the practicum site, nature of the work, specific learning objectives, and activities of the practicum are arrived at following discussions and agreements among the student, the EXNS practicum director, and the site preceptor, whose respective responsibilities are outlined below. Students should plan to complete the practicum within the semester of registration and are required to complete the practicum within two semesters. Students will be billed for the course at the time of registration (which may be any time during the semester) and the course credit will be applied to the semester of registration. Most full-time students complete the practicum requirement during their second full year of study, following the successful completion of the prerequisites listed below. The Culminating Experience (PUBH 6015), is separate and distinct from the practicum and must be completed in the student's final year of study.

Practicum Prerequisites:

Students must successfully complete the following courses before enrolling in the Practicum.

Course Number	Course Title	Semester Completed
PUBH 6002	Biostatistical Applications for Public Health	
PUBH 6003	Principles and Practice of Epidemiology	
PUBH 6006	Management and Policy Approaches to Public Health	
PUBH 6007 *	Social and Behavioral Approaches to Public Health	
PUBH 6611	Nutrition Assessment	
EXSC 6242	Nutrition Across the Lifespan	

* This course may be taken concurrently with the Practicum.

Program Competencies

The practicum is the means by which Public Health Nutrition MPH students demonstrate and enhance the skills outlined in at least one (and preferably several) of the Public Health Nutrition Program Core Competencies:

1. Integrate nutrition within the core functions of public health.
2. Describe the international and US public health nutrition system.
3. Assess the nutritional status of individuals and communities.
4. Evaluate the accessibility, adequacy and safety of the food and water system for a given community, and understand how these factors could affect the desired outcomes of health promotion and disease prevention activities.
5. Apply evidence-based knowledge and understanding of the relationship between nutrition and health outcomes across the life-span.
6. Design, implement and evaluate population-based nutrition interventions, policies and programs.
7. Demonstrate effective communication, management and leadership skills to ensure the success of public health nutrition programs and services.

Practicum Learning Objectives

Each student's specific learning objectives will vary based on the opportunities provided by the practicum and the student's area(s) of interest within the field of Public Health Nutrition. Prior to starting the actual practicum experience, the student will develop a practicum plan that must include specific learning objectives addressing at least one (and preferably several) of the Public Health Nutrition Core Competencies listed above.

Procedures for enrolling in the Practicum:

1. First, review the materials on the practicum website: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum> . Thoroughly read this syllabus and the SPH MPH Practicum Experience Student Guidebook, available at <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/downloads/Student%20Practicum%20Guidebook.pdf>
2. Go to <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum> and submit a student application. This will generate a login and password for the practicum management website, if you do not have one already. Your practicum director will verify your profile on the practicum management website.
3. Complete the two required training components (CITI Training and Practicum Training), both online courses linked from the practicum training site: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum>
 - a. For the CITI Training, you must complete the Social and Behavioral Researchers module. When you have completed it, print the final completion page showing your grade and turn that page in to the Office of Student Records (950 New Hampshire Ave, NW, 2nd Floor). Save a copy for your records.
 - b. The Practicum Training is an online course. First, watch the student practicum training online video in its entirety and pay careful attention to the policies and process described. Second, click the link at the bottom of the practicum training page that says "Start the Practicum Test Now" and take the test, which will measure your knowledge of the practicum training materials. You will receive an email confirmation of your passing grade; print a copy for your records. You must pass the test in order to be able to submit a practicum plan.
4. The Office of Student Records will verify your practicum and CITI training. Once those steps are completed and checked off, you will be able to submit a practicum plan (once your preceptor has submitted a project for you to select when submitting your plan).
5. If you have not already identified a practicum site (either during your PUBH 6610 Public Health Nutrition Practice and Leadership course or through other networking opportunities), be sure to meet with your academic advisor to discuss appropriate practicum opportunities before you begin searching for a site. See the "Finding a Practicum Site" section below for additional suggestions for identifying an appropriate practicum. We suggest that you draft a resume, cover letter, and an initial set of practicum expectations and learning objectives to prepare for

communicating with potential preceptors. You are not limited to practicum sites or preceptors who are already in the practicum system. On the contrary, you are encouraged to find a practicum that best suits your interests and career goals. A new preceptor will submit a preceptor application and site application to be approved before you can submit your plan.

6. Proactively contact preferred practicum sites and site preceptors. (See the “Finding a Practicum Site” section below for more suggestions.)
7. Email your practicum director and request a meeting to discuss your practicum.
8. If you have not already done so, meet with your preceptor to develop your practicum plan, ensuring that it satisfies at least one of the Public Health Nutrition MPH competencies described in detail below. You can refer to this sample practicum plan form in developing your plan, but the plan will be submitted online, not in paper form: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/download/Student%20Practicum%20Plan.pdf>
9. If your preceptor and/or practicum site are not already in the practicum management website, ask your preceptor to submit a preceptor application and site application (Go to <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/practicumforms.cfm> and click on “practicum applications” and then “preceptor.” If the preceptor’s site is not already in the system, the preceptor should be prompted to submit a site at the same time but if not, they should go back to the “practicum applications” tab and select “site” to submit a site application. The site application is available at: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/practicumApp/applicationPre.cfm>
10. Once your preceptor and site have been verified, your preceptor will receive an email containing a login and password for the practicum management website.
11. The preceptor must log into the practicum management website (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/index.cfm>) and submit a project briefly describing the work you will do. The preceptor guidebook is available on the internet at: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/download/SP%20Guidebook.pdf>
12. Then you log into the practicum management website and submit your practicum plan, selecting the project that your preceptor submitted. Some organizations and projects have similar names, so be sure that you select the correct project for your site and preceptor.
13. Complete your plan online, including at least one of the Public Health Nutrition competencies listed below. List specific learning objectives and the activities to be performed during the practicum.
14. Fill out a paper registration transaction form (RTF) completed for PUBH 6014 for the semester in which you will begin the practicum. Submit this form to your practicum director to complete registration (you may bring it to the practicum director in person or scan and email the completed form to her). The form is available here (first form listed): <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/forms>. The CRN for PUBH 6014 is available on the published course schedule for that semester: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/courses> .
15. Once your plan is submitted, your practicum director will review and approve it online. At that point, she will sign your registration transaction form and send it over to the Office of Student Records for processing. It may take up to 7 days for the course to appear on your list of courses in Banner/GWeb. However, you may begin logging hours in the practicum system as soon as your plan has been signed by both your practicum director and site preceptor, and the Office of Student Records has checked “registered” on your profile (which should take a day or two at the most).
16. Note that you cannot log your hours retroactively for a date before your plan was signed and you were registered for the course. Therefore, you should ensure that the above steps have been completed before you begin your practicum.

Finding a Practicum Site:

Students are responsible for proactively finding a site in which to complete his or her practicum. To do so, students should think about what practicum site would best serve their career goals and may either apply to an internship posted by an organization of interest, and then make that internship their practicum, or reach out directly to experienced professionals with whom the student would most like to work. Students may review the list of past and present sites and

projects on the practicum management website (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/practicumApp/projectView.cfm>) by logging into the system and selecting “project information” from the menu at the left. (You must have a login and password to access the site - see Step 2 above.) Note that the list of projects includes all departments, so not all projects are appropriate for a Public Health Nutrition practicum. If a past project seems like a good fit for your interests and skills and preceptor’s email address is listed, you may contact the preceptor and ask if they have a current need and appropriate project for an MPH student to work on as a practicum. If the preceptor’s email address is not visible on the project page, they might not want to be contacted by students, but you can ask your practicum director to reach out to the preceptor in that case.

Besides the practicum website, you should review these sites for internship announcements:

- Weekly PHN Student Update e-mails
- SPH Jobs listings (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/services/career-center/jobs>)
- APHA Public Health CareerMart (<http://careers.apha.org/jobseekers/>)
- Idealist.org (<http://www.idealists.org/>)
- PublicHealthJobs.net (<http://www.publichealthjobs.net/>, registration required)

If needed, the practicum director will work with the student to locate an appropriate practicum site and preceptor. If the practicum and site are not already verified on the practicum management website, the practicum director will review and approve the potential practicum site and preceptor.

Students may receive payment for work performed under the practicum. However, if a student intends to use a formal internship (i.e., an internship arrived at separate and apart from the practicum) as a practicum, the student must set up the practicum before beginning the internship. If the internship is begun prior to the setting up of a practicum, it may be subject to the rules for completing the practicum at your current place of employment (see below). An internship can be longer than the 120 hours required for the practicum, but the practicum should be completed at the beginning of the internship. A student may also continue on at the practicum site as an employee after the practicum is completed.

Developing the Practicum Plan:

The student’s practicum plan must, through its list of specific learning objectives, describe the skills to be developed that are relevant to at least one of the following specific public health nutrition-related core competencies as described below:

Integrate nutrition within the core functions of public health.

Students will be able to translate nutrition research into public health practice through application of skills in nutrition assessment/surveillance, program planning and evaluation, management, education and health promotion, public policy, and health communication. [Covered in PUBH 6006, 6500, 6610]

Describe the international and US public health nutrition system.

Students will be familiar with the governmental structures and processes involved in the development of public policy, legislation, regulations and delivery of services that influence food intake, nutritional status, and health of populations. Students will be familiar with international, federal, state and local level nutrition surveillance and assistance programs. Students will be able to identify the political, economic and social processes that influence food and nutrition policies and legislation. [Covered in PUBH 6610, 6613, 6482]

Assess the nutritional status of individuals and communities.

Students will have the skills to select and use appropriate and current methods to assess nutrition status and prioritize nutritional problems of target populations across the life span. Examples might include anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, dietary, functional (e.g. physical mobility or feeding skills), environmental and socioeconomic assessment. Students will understand the process, rationale, and issues related to establishing nutrient requirements and dietary recommendations. [Covered in PUBH 6611, 6241]

Evaluate the accessibility, adequacy and safety of the food and water systems for a given community, and understand how these factors could affect the desired outcomes of health promotion and disease prevention activities.

Students will be able to identify potential environmental, economic, behavioral, political, cultural and historical factors that impact the food system (including the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food) and water supply. Students will also have the skills to implement or advocate for improvements in the food and water supply chain as needed to improve the health of the communities they serve. [Covered in PUBH 6004, 6485, 6612]

Apply evidence-based knowledge and understanding of the relationship between nutrition and health outcomes across the life-span.

Students will be able to describe the role of nutrition in the health of the general population. Students can identify the health consequences of both under- and over-nutrition. Students will be able to identify and critically evaluate relevant nutrition research, and apply research findings to food and nutrition programs and policies. [Covered in PUBH 6001, 6002, 6003; EXSC 6242]

Design, implement, and evaluate population-based nutrition interventions, policies, and programs.

Students will be able to apply the principles of community assessment, planning, marketing, implementation and evaluation in order to assure the success of food and nutrition interventions. Students will understand and apply theories of social and behavioral change when developing nutrition interventions. [Covered in PUBH 6007, 6305, 6500, 6501]

Demonstrate effective communication, management and leadership skills to ensure the success of public health nutrition programs and services.

Students will have the skills to communicate food and nutrition information appropriate for broad and diverse audiences, including individuals, families, communities, health professionals, media, policy and decision makers, food industries, and businesses. Students will interact sensitively, effectively and professionally with persons from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, educational, and professional backgrounds, and with persons of all ages and lifestyle preferences. [Covered in PUBH 6006, 6007, 6610, 6432]

You will draft your own learning objectives based on the competencies you select from the list above and the activities you plan to complete in your individual practicum.

Completing the Practicum:

Students have the following responsibilities after enrolling in PUBH 6014:

- Ensure that your preceptor has signed your practicum plan (by logging into the website and clicking on the bottom of your plan). Students will not be able to start logging hours towards the practicum until both your preceptor and practicum director have signed your plan.
- Once you begin working at the practicum site with their preceptor, log your hours regularly on the practicum management website (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/index.cfm>). This will allow your preceptor and practicum director to monitor your progress and will trigger midpoint and final evaluations at 60 and 120 hours logged. Do not keep track of your hours separately and attempt to log them all at once because that would circumvent the evaluation triggers and your preceptor may not be able to verify the hours if too much time has passed. Failure to complete the midpoint or final evaluation in a timely manner may prevent a student from completing the practicum successfully.
- After logging 60 hours of work, students will be prompted to complete an online midpoint evaluation. Your preceptor and practicum director must sign your midpoint evaluation before you can continue to log hours. Although the midpoint evaluation is an opportunity to address any problems that have arisen, do not wait until the midpoint if you are having a significant problem with your preceptor or practicum work, such as a lack of

substantive work or a lack of contact with your preceptor. These issues can prevent you from having an appropriate learning experience and may interfere with your ability to successfully complete the practicum. Any issues should be brought up with your preceptor and, if necessary, with your practicum director, as soon as possible.

- After your preceptor and practicum director have signed your midpoint evaluation, you may continue to log hours. At 120 hours, you will be prompted to complete a final evaluation of the practicum experience, which your preceptor will not see. Your preceptor will be prompted to complete an evaluation of your work and recommend awarding credit or not. You must review and sign your preceptor's evaluation of you.
- Upon completion of your preceptor's evaluation of you, your practicum director will review both the final evaluation you completed and your preceptor's evaluation of you. Your grade (credit or no credit) will be based on your preceptor's evaluation of your performance during the practicum.

Completing the Practicum at Your Current Place of Employment:

Although not encouraged, students may complete the practicum requirement at their current place of employment, provided that:

- The organization engages in health policy work;
- The organization and preceptor have been approved by SPH;
- The site preceptor is not the student's current job supervisor; and
- The content of the practicum, as described in the student's practicum plan, is separate and distinct from the student's regular work responsibilities.

Methods of Evaluation:

The practicum requirement is evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. No specific grades are issued for the practicum. The site preceptor will complete both a midpoint and final evaluation of the student's overall performance, and then the practicum director will assess every aspect of the student's practicum experience, including all of the student's responsibilities outlined above. The practicum director will then submit your credit or no credit directly in Banner/GWeb.

Grading Scale:

The practicum requirement is evaluated on a credit/no credit basis.

Practicum Equivalent Experience:

The SPH MPH Practicum Experience Student Guidebook allows for the waiver of the practicum requirement in very specific circumstances. The practicum can be waived only if the student had 3 or more years of full-time public health experience prior to the date of matriculation into the GW MPH program. Students seeking to waive the practicum must file a Practicum Equivalent Experience (PEE) Application (<http://sphhs.gwu.edu/pdf/PEE.pdf>) in their first semester of the MPH program. The Application must describe in detail the 3 years of public health experience, including the names and contact information of the performance sites and the past experience must address at least one of the Public Health Nutrition competencies listed above. The application should be submitted to the student's practicum director for review and approval. If the practicum director approves the application, it will be forwarded to SPH administration for approval. Again, this should be done as soon as possible after the student begins the MPH program since the PEE Application must be submitted in the first semester of study. If the petition is granted, students do not have to complete the practicum requirement, but must replace the 2 practicum credits with elective credits.

Academic Integrity:

Please review the University's policy on academic integrity, located at www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. All SPH work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. Common examples of academically dishonest behavior include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating; fabrication; plagiarism; falsification and forgery of university academic documents; and facilitating academic dishonesty.

Students with Disabilities:

If you feel you may need an accommodation due to a disability, please contact the practicum director privately to discuss specific needs. Also, please contact the Disability Support Services Office at (202) 994-8250, Rome Hall, 801 22nd St., Suite 102, <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.