

 <p>THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON, DC</p>	<p>Milken Institute School of Public Health Department of Health Policy and Management</p> <p>PUBH 6014.16</p> <p>Practicum: Health Policy</p> <p>(Required for all students pursuing an MPH in health policy.)</p>
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Health Policy Practicum Director

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Practicum Description

The practicum is a three-way partnership among students, GWSPH, 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 health policy that aims to provide students with an opportunity to synthesize, integrate, and apply practical skills, knowledge, and training learned through courses, to gain professional experience in a professional public health work environment, and to 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 health policy setting under the supervision of a site preceptor who has agreed to directly supervise the work of the student. The practicum site, nature of the work, specific learning objectives, and activities of the practicum are determined by the student and the site preceptor, with the approval of the DHP practicum director. 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 without late registration penalty) 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, but it may be done any time after the student has completed the trainings and prerequisite course. The Culminating Experience, a.k.a. the Capstone (PUBH 6350) is separate and distinct from the practicum and must be completed in the student's final semester of study.

Course Prerequisite:

Students must successfully complete Fundamentals for Health Policy: Public Health and Health Care (PUBH 6305) before enrolling in the Practicum (PUBH 6014.16). The prerequisite may be waived with the permission of the practicum director under certain conditions, such as where the student has sufficient prior experience in health policy.

Procedures for Enrolling in the Practicum:

1. First, review the materials on the practicum website: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum>. <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum>The Practicum Guidebook (https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/practicum/Student_Practicum_Guidebook.pdf) has instructions for using the practicum management system (built on a Symplicity system).
2. Complete the CITI training. You must complete the Social and Behavioral Researchers module at www.citiprogram.org. Instructions are in the guidebook. When you have completed it, save the final completion page showing your grade as a pdf (or print and scan it) and email it to the Office of Student Records (gwsphrecords@gwu.edu). Important: Save a copy for your records as well. The CITI training is a graduation requirement and may need to be verified again later by the Office of Student Records.
3. If you have not found a practicum site yet, begin searching for a site. (See the "Finding a Practicum Site" section below for more suggestions.) 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. The preceptor cannot be a full-time GW faculty or staff member, but adjunct faculty may serve as preceptors as their places of primary employment. (Note that there are certain GW-affiliated sites that may be practicum sites, such as the Medical Faculty Associates and the GW Cancer Institute. Ask your practicum director if you have a GW-related preceptor or site in mind.)
4. Proactively contact preferred practicum sites and site preceptors. (See the "Finding a Practicum Site" section below for more suggestions.) You can refer your potential preceptor to the "Info for Practice Partners" and the "Site Preceptor Guidebook" links on the main practicum page: <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum>.
5. If you have not already done so, talk with your preceptor to develop your practicum plan, ensuring that it satisfies at least one of the health policy competencies described below. Your plan will identify your learning objectives that relate to those competencies and the activities you will undertake during your practicum. These activities must be substantive health policy work, not just administrative tasks.
6. If your preceptor and/or practicum site are not already in the practicum management system, ask your preceptor to create a preceptor and site profile in the practicum management system. Site Preceptor Guidebook is available online at <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicumdownload/SP%20Guidebook.pdf>.
7. Once your preceptor and site have been verified, your preceptor will receive an email containing a login and password for the practicum management website.
8. If the preceptor did not submit a position (job) when their profile was submitted, they should do it at this point.
9. Then you log into the system 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. See the guidebook for screenshots and instructions for submitting your plan. Complete your plan online, including at least one of the health policy competencies listed below. List specific learning objectives and the activities to be performed during the practicum.
10. Fill out a registration transaction form (RTF) completed for PUBH 6014.16 for the semester in which you will begin the practicum. (This may be filled out and signed electronically.) Attach this completed RTF to your practicum plan in the practicum management system. (You may also submit this to your

practicum director.) The registration transaction form is available here (first form listed): <http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/forms>. (Do not use the EZ form from the GW Registrar site.) The CRN for PUBH 6014.16 is available on the published course schedule for that semester: <http://my.gwu.edu/mod/pws/index.cfm> (Public Health).

11. 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.
12. 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 and Preceptor

Students are responsible for proactively finding a site in which to complete his or her practicum. The site cannot be part of GWSPH or George Washington University. (There are limited exceptions to this rule for certain GW-affiliated sites that are approved practicum sites, such as the GW Hospital, Medical Faculty Associates, and the GW Cancer Institute. Adjunct and part-time faculty may serve as preceptors at their non-GW organization. Check with your practicum director if you have a GW-related preceptor or site in mind.)

Your preceptor should have sufficient relevant experience to give you a good learning experience. In general, we expect a preceptor to have at least three years of full-time health policy experience after a graduate degree in health policy or public health (such as a MPH, DrPH, or MS in health policy), at least five years of full-time health policy experience after a graduate degree in a different field, or ten years of full-time health policy experience after a bachelor's degree. We recognize that people come to health policy from a wide variety of backgrounds, however, so if you are uncertain whether your preceptor is sufficiently qualified, please contact your practicum director or ask the potential preceptor to do so in order to discuss the preceptor's qualifications. Your preceptor cannot be a GW student, recent graduate, or full-time GW faculty or staff member, but adjunct faculty may serve as preceptors at their places of primary employment.

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 Practicum Archive on the Source, which lists past practicum sites and preceptors: https://source.publichealth.gwu.edu/view/practicum_archive (log in required). This is a list of places where MPH students across all tracks have done their practicums in recent years. The list can be filtered and sorted by column. Note that you might want to browse rather than filter or search for something in particular because site names may vary (HHS instead of Health and Human Services, for example) and a project listed for a different track, such as Online or EOH, may be a good site or project for a health policy student even though it isn't tagged to health policy. Note that this archive is not as detailed as we'd like because it only shows the past project/job title, which might be generic like "health policy intern," and doesn't give you details about what the project involved.) Note that the list of projects includes all departments, so not all projects are appropriate for a health policy 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. Please be selective in reaching out to past preceptors and make specific requests explaining why you are interested in working with them. DO NOT mass email them with a generic request.

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

- DHP Students listserv ("jobs and stuff" emails from the Department of Health Policy and Management)
- GWSPH jobs database/Handshake (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/services/career-center/jobs>)
- ASPH listings (<http://www.publichealthjobs.net/> - registration required)
- APHA Public Health CareerMart (<http://careers.apha.org/jobseekers/>)
- Idealist.org (<http://www.idealists.org/>)

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.

Completing the Practicum

Students have the following responsibilities after enrolling in PUBH 6014.16:

- 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 in the practicum management system (<http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum>). 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.

Doing 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 GWSPH;
- 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.

Talk with your practicum director if you plan to take this route.

Health Policy Competencies and Learning Objectives

All MPH (health policy) students must develop skills in basic health policy analysis and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students' health policy area of interest. The practicum is the means by which Health Policy students demonstrate and enhance such skills in a practice setting. Therefore, 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 health policy competencies (which should be identified in your practicum plan as phrased below – **do not make up your own competencies**):

- Describing and critically assessing the political, legal, philosophical, economic, financial, and/or social framework for health policy and applying that understanding to analysis of current health policy issues;
- Locating, assessing, appropriately using, and synthesizing qualitative information relevant to key issues in health policy, including government documents, peer-reviewed literature, and "gray" literature produced by health policy organizations;
- Locating, assessing, and appropriately using statistical and other data relevant to health policy and conducting basic manipulations of data;
- Analyzing health policy-related legislation, administrative regulations, judicial opinions, or agency rulings;
- Assessing the methodology and quality of health policy research results and synthesizing findings for policy analyses; or
- Applying the core elements of a policy analysis to key issues in health services and public health policy through short or long written papers or oral presentations.

Learning objectives are what you want to achieve during your practicum. They should be related to your professional development. Examples of learning objectives tied to one or more of the above competencies are below, though you will draft your own as appropriate for your selected competencies and the activities you will complete in your individual practicum (unlike the competencies, these you make up to fit your planned project):

- Gain a greater understanding of reproductive health policy and current challenges for the field.
- Learn to use SAS for data analysis.
- Improve skills in drafting audience-specific briefing materials for policymakers and funders.
- Develop effective comparative analysis skills through research and analysis of prior programs to improve patient engagement.

Activities are things you will be doing in your practicum that will allow you to achieve your learning objectives. Examples of activities:

- Evaluate current policies and programs related to physician assistant employment in shortage areas and develop policy options that direct physician assistant program graduates to shortage areas.
- Formulate, draft, and review background and analytical documents, such as fact sheets, issue briefs, reports and other written materials on injury prevention policy;
- Develop a detailed chart describing how public health, mental health, and substance abuse programs are structured in order to facilitate enhanced collaboration among government agencies to support policy and programmatic efforts in the states;
- Research and analyze the duty of health professionals to provide information to patients – including the duty of informed consent, the duty to disclose conflicts, and the duty to warn – in the context of liability cases, quality of care standards, and practice guidelines;
- Assist in the development of a survey of state minority health agencies to identify and assess best practices of the Office of Minority Health grantees to reduce disparities; and
- Search for, synthesize, and summarize health care policy news as it relates to children, low-income families, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Programs.

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, which the practicum director will consider along with the student's self-evaluation to determine credit or no credit. Credit may not be issued until the preceptor has submitted a final evaluation.

Grading

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

Practicum Equivalent Experience

The GWSPH 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 health policy experience prior to the date of matriculation into the GW MPH program. If the petition is granted, students do not have to complete the practicum requirement, but must replace the 2 practicum credits with elective credits.

Students seeking to waive the practicum must file a Practicum Equivalent Experience (PEE) Application in their first semester of the MPH program. (See Practicum Equivalent Experience form here: <https://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/forms>.) The PEE form must describe in detail the 3 years of health policy experience, including the names and contact information of the performance sites, and the past experience must address at least one of the health policy competencies listed above. Students must also complete a Graduate Records Petition, checking the option to waive the practicum and indicating which two elective credits should be identified as replacing the practicum credits (<https://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/forms>.) The PEE and records petition should be submitted to the student's academic advisor and then practicum director for review and approval, and then forwarded to Student Records.

Academic Integrity

Please review the University's policy on academic integrity, located at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity>. All GWSPH 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, <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.