



UNC

GILLINGS SCHOOL OF
GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

ACADEMIC POLICIES

MPH AND MSPH PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

Department of Epidemiology

Gillings School of Global Public Health

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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OVERVIEW

The Epidemiology practicum/field experience is a planned and supervised component of the curriculum that provides learning opportunities normally not available in the classroom. It is designed to be an intensive, mentored, skill-building experience. The Master's practicum provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom while addressing the Master's Competencies in the context of public health field training.

The planning, implementation, and evaluation of the practicum experience is done collaboratively between the student, the academic advisor and a practicum preceptor. Students must register for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice). The process is administered by the Office of Student Services and facilitated by the Faculty Practicum Coordinator, and adheres to a time line that identifies milestones for an orderly planning, implementation and evaluation. Responsibility for the academic oversight of this component of the curriculum rests with the Graduate Studies Committee.

MASTER'S PRACTICUM

These Practicum Guidelines provide the framework for the planning, conduct, and evaluation of the Master's practicum. A step-by-step guide is provided in Appendix I.

Practicum Purpose

The Master's practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated practice experience during which students address basic public health concepts and competencies. The Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) Master's level competencies specific to Epidemiology and to its cross-cutting public health competencies are listed below. The purpose of the practicum is to provide opportunities for the student to execute as many of these competencies as is feasible. The planning of a practicum, its implementation, and evaluation are guided by a review of these competencies that MPH and MSPH students should possess upon graduation. A student's previous/usual professional activities do not suffice to fulfill the practicum requirement.

Practicum Competencies

The following are the **ASPH** Master's Degree in Public Health Core Competencies (separate from the departmental competencies):

Discipline-Specific Competencies

Upon graduation a student with an MPH or MSPH should possess the competencies listed below. The following is a list of discipline-specific competencies. You must choose **at least 3** that your practicum experience will address. **Please note: A competency may be used only once in either the discipline-specific or the cross-cutting table, but not both.**

1. Describe a specific public health problem in terms of its magnitude, person, time and context
2. Formulate an informative study question and the associated testable hypotheses
3. Identify an appropriate source of data for this purpose and define an informative subset
4. Review basic ethical and legal principles applicable to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of these data
5. Identify an appropriate study design and method of analysis
6. Use statistical analysis software to estimate and test the hypothesized associations
7. Apply appropriate analytical techniques to calculate the pertinent epidemiology measures

8. Apply descriptive and inferential methods to deduce results
9. Apply the concepts of error and bias in the evaluation of the results
10. Interpret the results addressing the strengths and limitations of the inference(s)
11. Communicate this information to professional and lay audiences.

Cross-Cutting Competencies

The training in epidemiology and its practicum experience are embedded in the broader context of public health as a discipline, as follows. The following is a list of all cross-cutting competencies. You must choose **at least 3** (among all cross-cutting competencies) that your practicum experience will address. **Please note: A competency may be used only once in either the discipline-specific or the cross-cutting table, but not both.**

1. Communication

- A. Describe a specific public health problem in terms of its magnitude, person, time and place
- B. Develop cogent and persuasive written materials regarding public health topics
- C. Communicate information on a public health topic to professional and lay audiences.
- D. Deliver oral presentations using recognized criteria for effective information dissemination
- E. Adapt language and delivery modalities to specific audiences.
- F. Use media, advanced technologies and community networks to disseminate information about public health issues
- G. Facilitate collective information sharing, discussion and problem solving

2. Diversity and Cultural Competency

- A. Demonstrate sensitivity to varied cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of individuals and groups
- B. Demonstrate tolerance with differences in perspectives, norms and values of others
- C. Recognize the varied levels of health access among individuals and within communities
- D. Interact productively with diverse co-workers, partners and other stakeholders

3. Leadership

- A. Recognize the importance of maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders.
- B. Adopt best practices from other disciplines, fields, or organizations.
- C. Solicit ideas and opinions to learn from others in forming decisions.
- D. Demonstrate basic negotiation and conflict management skills.

4. Professionalism and Ethics

- A. Review basic ethical and legal principles applicable to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of research data
- B. Establish the basis for lifelong learning in the field of public health
- C. Apply ethical principles in both personal and professional interactions
- D. Consider the effect of public health decisions on social justice and equity
- E. Apply evidence-based concepts in public health decision-making

http://www.asph.org/userfiles/AJPHSept08_Development_MPH_Core_Competency_Model.pdf

[Note: The competencies listed above are an updated version of what is in this ASPH document.]

Practicum Options

The goals of the Epidemiology practicum can be met through an intensive, mentored, skill-building experience in which the student applies Master's competencies in the context of a public health practice setting. Settings for the practicum experience can range from community organizations, public health agencies, NGOs, governmental agencies, or academic settings, among many other options. When authorized by the student, examples of past practica will be made available to students and faculty.

Practicum Opportunities

Students hold the primary responsibility for identifying and selecting a practicum. Student should also consult with their academic advisor in identifying suitable opportunities for practica. The Gillings School of Global Public Health Career Services Office serves a central coordination role at the level of the school by making available to students known opportunities for practica. Students can review postings of job, internship or practicum opportunities, at the Career Services web site:

<http://www.sph.unc.edu/careers/>

Practicum Duration

Students in either degree program (MPH or MSPH) must conduct practicum/field training for a minimum of 40 hours. However, many practicum opportunities will necessitate more than 40 hours, at the discretion of the practicum preceptor.

Funding

Funding is not an expectation for a practicum, although students may apply for funding to support a practicum experience or project associated with it. Funded practica are infrequent, but when considering off-campus opportunities students are encouraged to inquire about options for reimbursement of costs associated with travel and housing.

The Practicum Team

The planning, implementation and evaluation of the practicum is a joint effort among the student, Academic Advisor, and the Practicum Preceptor. The departmental Practicum Coordinator and the Office of Student Services act as facilitators at the initiative of the student. The responsibilities of each of these team members are briefly outlined below. Detailed information on each of these responsibilities is discussed in the next sections.

Student

Each student is primarily responsible for his/her practicum experience. The student is responsible for:

- Identifying and selecting a practicum
- Registering for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice)
- Developing and submitting a practicum proposal to the Office of Student Services
- Pre-registering the practicum online on the school online practicum registration form
- Completing the practicum experience
- Writing the practicum report with review by practicum preceptor

- Evaluating the practicum experience
- Post-registering the practicum online on the school online practicum registration form
- Giving practicum preceptor “Practicum Preceptor’s Evaluation” form
- Giving grade form to academic advisor
- Filing practicum report with the Office of Student Services

Academic Advisor

All students have an academic advisor who supports and guides the student in the development and planning of the practicum experience. The academic advisor is responsible for:

- Assisting the student in finding and planning a practicum
- Reviewing and approving the practicum proposal
- Providing support and advice during practicum
- Grading the overall practicum experience

Practicum Preceptor

All Epidemiology students must have a practicum preceptor who supports and guides the student in the planning and implementation of the practicum experience. The practicum preceptor is typically the individual responsible for the extra-departmental or off-campus activity that serves as the student’s practicum. ***The student’s academic advisor may not serve as practicum preceptor; adjunct faculty, however, can serve as practicum preceptors.*** The practicum preceptor is responsible for:

- Helping plan the practicum
- Hosting and mentoring the student during the practicum
- Giving feedback to both the student and the academic advisor
- Evaluating the practicum experience

Faculty Practicum Coordinator

The faculty practicum coordinator is available to students and faculty to assist in the planning of the practicum and may also act as a facilitator at the initiative of the student. The faculty practicum coordinator is responsible for:

- Providing guidance to students and faculty in the overall practicum process
- Advising students on possible practicum projects
- Planning and conducting a practicum orientation
- Periodically reviews completed practica

The Practicum Coordinator is Lorraine Alexander. She can be reached by email at lorraine_alexander@unc.edu.

Office of Student Services

The Office of Student Services manages the practicum as an academic requirement. The Office of Student Services is responsible for:

- Serving as the first point of contact for practicum questions
- Serving as a repository for practicum documentation
- Advising students on possible practicum projects that come through the Student Services Office

Practicum Planning Timeline

Planning for the practicum should begin during the second semester of the first year of the Master's program and no later than two months prior to the intended practicum experience. Students are encouraged to plan their practicum during their second semester in consultation with their academic advisor and to submit their practicum proposal to the Office of Student Services by the end of their first year. Students are encouraged to register for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice) during the semester in which they expect to complete the practicum, but may register anytime during their program, once a project has been identified.

Milestones to be considered in the planning of a practicum, its conduct and evaluation are discussed in the sections below.

The Practicum Proposal

Once a practicum and practicum preceptor have been identified, a practicum proposal needs to be written, approved and submitted. A practicum proposal formally establishes the aims of the practicum as a learning experience and the conditions under which the student and the preceptor(s) plan to conduct the activity. During the planning of the practicum the aims of the practicum and the anticipated activities are cross-referenced with the ASPH Masters competencies, to identify the opportunities to exercise these competencies as part of the practicum.

Elaboration of the practicum proposal is the responsibility of the student, with input from the practicum preceptor. The proposal must be endorsed by both the academic advisor and the practicum preceptor. Once signed and submitted to the Office of Student Services, the proposal defines the scope of the practicum and serves as the basis for the working relationship between the parties. Any modification requires the written agreement of the parties who signed the proposal and written notification to the Office of Student Services.

Students must submit the practicum proposal to both their practicum preceptor and academic advisor no later than two months prior to the intended practicum experience. Additional time must be allowed for planning if the practicum requires field placement and coordination with an extra-departmental or off-campus practicum preceptor. Students who wish to set up an international practicum are encouraged to extend the time line for planning. Students must use the online proposal form titled "*Master's Practicum Proposal*" listed at:

<https://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/department-of-epidemiology-forms/>

Once the practicum proposal is submitted to the Student Services Office, students must pre-register their practicum online using the “Gillings School of Global Public Health Student Practicum Form” at the URL below. Click on the Academics tab and go to Practicum Report Form. Screen shots of the forms are provided in Appendix II.

https://sph.unc.edu/student_pages/resources-2/

Institutional Review Board

The Master’s Practicum is a training activity in public health practice and is not primarily set up as a research project. If the practicum has a research component, the student’s participation takes place under the leadership of the pertinent principal investigator, whose responsibility extends to safeguarding the ethical conduct of the research activity a student takes part in. If the student has lead responsibility for the research component – in addition to meeting the training objectives of the Master’s Practicum – the research component is submitted for review by the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to its implementation. All students should read the online IRB guidelines regarding class projects and practica at:

http://research.unc.edu/offices/human-research-ethics/researchers/faq/ccm3_036121/

Completion of the Master’s Practicum

Completion of EPID 900 requires submitting the practicum report, “Student’s Practicum Evaluation” form, and “Practicum Preceptor’s Evaluation” form to the Office of Student Services. In addition the student must post-register their practicum online updating the same form that was used for pre-registration as discussed above.

Practicum Report

Before the practicum is considered complete (and a final grade is assigned for EPID 900) the student’s practicum report and the practicum evaluations are filed with the Office of Student Services. The practicum report is structured as a scientific or technical report that describes the practicum goals and its implementation, as well as source materials, documentation, field reports, evaluations and discussion, as applicable. The report follows the general guidelines for contents and format described in the section below, and can serve as source material for EPID 992 (Master’s paper). The report includes a two to five page narrative that describes the practicum, the degree to which its goals were met, and the main strengths and weaknesses of the experience as a learning opportunity and professional experience. Recommendations and suggestions for consideration in future practica are encouraged. Pertinent source materials, documentation, field reports and data summaries may be included as an appendix.

Practicum Evaluation

The practicum evaluation includes assessments by the student and the practicum preceptor. Both student and preceptor evaluation forms are available online at:

<https://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/department-of-epidemiology-forms/>

All evaluation forms are submitted to the Student Services Office and must be in place before a final grade for EPID 900 can be processed.

Practicum Post-Registration

As part of the evaluation of the practicum experience students re-visit the practicum aims and the referenced competencies to assess the degree to which the practice experience was successful. As part of this process all students must post-register their practicum online updating the same form that was used for pre-registration. (It is essential that you fill this form out twice, once at the beginning of your practicum and again when you have finished. This information will help the School document its accountability for attainment of the ASPH competencies and the requirement that all students complete a practicum.)

Post-register online using the “*Gillings School of Global Public Health Student Practicum Form*” at the URL below. Click on the Academics tab and go to Practicum Report Form.

https://sph.unc.edu/student_pages/resources-2/

Practicum Grading

The academic advisor is responsible for arriving at a grade that reflects the broadest possible input from all parties involved in the student’s practicum experience. Students provide their academic advisor with a copy of their final report, completed practicum preceptor’s evaluation, their completed student evaluation form, and the “EPID 900 Grading” form (or its URL). The academic advisor will then submit the completed grade form to the Student Services Office. The URL for the grade form is below:

<https://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/department-of-epidemiology-forms/>

Master’s Paper

The Master’s Practicum is not an activity designed to complete a Master’s paper. Data and materials collected as part of a practicum experience may, however, serve as starting material for EPID 992 (Master’s paper), unless the agency hosting the practicum/internship has policies that prevent such uses of the data. A Master’s Paper is not part of the Practicum Report and does not substitute for it.

APPENDIX I: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO MASTER'S PRACTICUM PROCESS

1. Identify a suitable practicum opportunity.
2. Submit your practicum proposal to your academic advisor and practicum preceptor for review at least 2 months prior to implementation.
3. Obtain signed approval of the "Master's Practicum Proposal" form* from your practicum preceptor, your academic advisor and the faculty practicum coordinator (Lorraine Alexander, DrPH).
4. Submit the signed "Master's Practicum Proposal" form to the EPID Office of Student Services for registration at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the practicum.
5. Pre-register practicum online using the "*Gillings School of Global Public Health Student Practicum Form*" at https://sph.unc.edu/student_pages/resources-2/
6. Register for EPID 900 (see Appendix II) during the semester in which you expect to complete the practicum so that a grade for the practicum can be assigned.
7. Complete the practicum.
8. Have the practicum preceptor submit the evaluation form (Practicum Preceptor's Evaluation" form) to the EPID Student Services Office (by email to epidemiology@unc.edu or by fax to 919-966-4914) and request that a copy be provided to you and your academic advisor.
9. Complete the Student Evaluation of the Practicum Experience.*
10. Post-register practicum online using the "*Gillings School of Global Public Health Student Practicum Form*" at https://sph.unc.edu/student_pages/resources-2/. Click on the Academics tab and go to Practicum Report Form. Note: this is the same form that you filled out before you started your practicum.
11. Submit the final practicum report and student evaluation to the Student Services Office.
12. Submit copies of your final report, the completed practicum preceptor's evaluation, and the completed student evaluation form to your academic advisor and request a grade for EPID 900. Grade forms also are available at the URL shown below.

* available at: <https://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/departments-of-epidemiology-forms/>

APPENDIX II: SAMPLE ONLINE REGISTRATION FORMS

To register for the Master's Practicum, go to https://sph.unc.edu/student_pages/resources-2/ . Click on the Academic tab and go to Practicum Report Form and log in with your onyen and password.

The first screen (shown below) allows you to select the course associated with your practicum (EPID 900).

When you click "Continue" you will get another screen (shown below) in which you will enter identifying information (name, PID, advisor, etc.), information about the practicum (agency, description, etc.), and check the 'competencies' you expect to achieve during this practicum. There are 19 'cross-cutting' competencies which are common to all departments in the school; students are expected to check exactly 3 from this list. The last section lists department-specific competencies, and you are expected to check at least 3 of these.

Then, click "Submit" and if the form is completely filled out (almost all the fields are required), then your answers are saved and you will see an acknowledgment page (see below), which lists all of your answers. There's also a link near the top of this page to get a hard copy of your data.

After the practicum is complete, you can return to the site, select the course again, and this time check the box below the course list before clicking "Continue." This will give you the post-practicum form, which reproduces all your pre-practicum answers and asks you to check the competencies you actually achieved. This time there are no restrictions on how many you may check. The acknowledgment page after this form lists the competencies checked both before and after the activity.

**Gillings School of Global Public Health
Practicum Information Form**

Login:

The School must have documentation for every graduate about his or her progress toward achieving specific competencies in the practicum course.

Please complete the following information (online form) for the practicum course in your department at the time you start your placement and when you finish it. You must list 3 competencies you plan to achieve in your practicum.

When your practicum is over, you will complete this same form online, indicating which competencies you achieved, and also modifying the description of your practicum if it changed substantially from what you anticipated.

Select your Practicum Course:

BIOS 842 Statistical Consulting
ENVR 681 Undergraduate Practicum in Environmental Sciences
ENVR 981 Practicum in Environmental Sciences
EPID 900 Study Implementation
HBHE 742 Practicum I
HBHE 743 Practicum II
HBHE 744 Research Practicum I
HBHE 745 Research Practicum II
HPM 301 Field Training Practicum
HPM 704 HPM Internship
MHCH 717 Field Training in MCH
NUTR 660/660L Food Service Experience
NUTR 710 Clinical Nutrition Experience
NUTR 720 Concurrent Experience
NUTR 725 Concurrent Experience
NUTR 730 Block Field Experience
PHNU 783 Practicum in Occupational Health Nursing I
PHNU 784 Practicum in Occupational Health Nursing II
PHNU 886 Block Practicum in Occupational Health Nursing
PUBH 886(HC&P) Practicum in Health Care and Prevention MPH
PUBH 886(HC&P-2) Additional Practicum in Health Care & Prevention MPH
PUBH 886(LMC) Practicum in Leadership MPH

Please check here if you have finished this practicum course, and are now ready to record the competencies you achieved.

Clear

Continue

**Gillings School of Global Public Health
Student Practicum Form (one form per activity)**

Login:

EPID 900: Study Implementation

Your first name: Your last name: Your UNC PID:
(Click [here](#) to look up PID.)

Advisor First Name: Advisor Last Name:

Preceptor First Name: Preceptor Last Name:

Preceptor Email: Preceptor Phone:

Placement Agency: City: State:

Country: County: Hours to be spent:

Beginning date of activity: Ending date: U.S. citizen?
(Click green button to set.) (Click green button to set.) Yes No

Degree Sought

- BSPH
- MHA
- MPH

Type of Placement

- Government (state, local, federal)
- Nonprofit organization
- Hospital or health care delivery facility

- MSPH
- MSDM
- MS
- PhD
- DrPH

- Private practice
- University or research institute
- Proprietary organization (industry, pharmaceutical company, consulting)

[Click here for definitions](#)

Was AHEC involved in this placement? **Yes** **No** The NC Area Health Education Program (AHEC) offers limited housing support. Please visit <http://www.med.unc.edu/ahec/students/travel.htm> for more information.

1. Proposed Title and Activities (200 words):

2. Cross-cutting competencies to be addressed:

(Please check exactly 3 of the 19 cross-cutting competencies below.)

Communication and Informatics

- Demonstrate effective written and oral health communication skills appropriately adapted to professional and lay audiences with varying knowledge and skills in interpreting health information.
- Use information technology tools effectively in core public health functions such as retrieval of institutional and online public health data and dissemination of public health information.
- Engage in collective information sharing, discussion and problem solving.

Diversity and Cultural Competency

- Demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to the varied perspectives, norms and values of others based on individual and ethnic/cultural differences (e.g., age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, region and social class).
- Show effective and productive skills in working with diverse individuals including co-workers, partners, stakeholders, and/or clients.
- Develop, implement, and/or contribute to effective public health programming and conduct research that integrates: (1) knowledge levels of health access among individuals and within communities, and (2) culturally-appropriate methods for conducting practice or research.

Leadership

- Demonstrate basic team building, negotiation, and conflict management skills.
- Create a climate of trust, transparency, mutual cooperation, continuous learning, and openness for suggestion and input with co-workers, partners, other stakeholders, and/or clients.
- Exercise productive organizational, time-management and administrative skills.
- Develop knowledge of one's individual strengths and challenges, as well as mechanisms for continued personal and professional development.

Professionalism and Ethics

- Review, integrate, and apply ethical and/or legal principles in both personal and professional interactions, as well as public health practice and/or research.
- Apply evidence-based concepts in public health decision-making.
- Appreciate the need for lifelong learning in the field of public health.
- Consider the effect of public health decisions on social justice and equity.

Program Planning

- Discuss social, behavioral, environmental, and biological factors that contribute to specific individual and community health outcomes.
- Identify needed resources for public health programs or research.

Systems Thinking

- Identify characteristics of a system.
- Respond to identified public health needs within their appropriate contextual setting.
- Interpret the results addressing the strengths and limitations of the inference(s).

3. Department-specific competencies to be addressed - check at least 3:

Epidemiology Competencies

- Describe a specific public health problem in terms of its magnitude, person, time and context.
- Formulate an informative study question and the associated testable hypotheses.
- Identify an appropriate source of data for this purpose and define an informative subset.
- Review basic ethical and legal principles applicable to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of these data.
- Identify an appropriate study design and method of analysis.
- Use statistical analysis software to estimate and test the hypothesized associations.
- Apply appropriate analytical techniques to calculate the pertinent epidemiology measures.
- Apply descriptive and inferential methods to deduce results.
- Apply the concepts of error and bias in the evaluation of the results.

- Interpret the results addressing the strengths and limitations of the inference(s).
- Communicate this information to professional and lay audiences.

Additional information or comments: