



ACADEMIC POLICIES

MPH AND MSPH PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

2017-2018

Department of Epidemiology
Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

OVERVIEW

The Epidemiology practicum/field experience is a planned and supervised component of both the MPH and MSPH 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. Students in either degree program (MPH or MSPH) must conduct practicum/field training.

The planning, implementation, and evaluation of the practicum experience is done collaboratively between the student, the academic advisor, a practicum preceptor and the faculty practicum coordinator and adheres to a time line that identifies milestones for an orderly planning, implementation and evaluation. The Office of Student Services manages the practicum as an academic requirement and serves as the repository for all practicum documents. Responsibility for the academic oversight of this component of the curriculum rests with the Graduate Studies Committee.

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 and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) 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.

Practicum Competencies

The following are the **ASPPH** 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.** If more than 3 competencies are addressed you can also list those.

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.** If more than 3 competencies are addressed you can also list those.

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.aspph.org/educate/models/mph-competency-model/>

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

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

Planning for Your Practicum

Practicum Planning Timeline

Planning for the practicum should begin no later than the second semester of the first year of the Master's program and at least 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, practicum preceptor and faculty practicum coordinator to submit their approved practicum proposal to the Office of Student Services by the end of their first year. Students should register for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice) during the semester in which they expect to complete the practicum (including submission of the report).

The Practicum Team

The planning, implementation and evaluation of the practicum is a joint effort among the student, academic advisor, the practicum preceptor and the faculty practicum coordinator. The Office of Student Services acts as the repository for all practicum related materials. The responsibilities of each of these team members are briefly outlined below. ***Detailed information on each of these responsibilities listed below will be discussed in the next sections.***

Student

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

Before starting the practicum.

- Identifying and selecting a practicum and practicum preceptor
- Developing and submitting a Practicum Proposal for approval and signatures to their academic advisor, practicum preceptor and faculty practicum coordinator.
- Submitting via web form an approved and signed practicum proposal to the Department of

Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database.

After completing the practicum.

- Register for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice)
- Write the Master's Practicum Report, review with preceptor and submit completed report via web form to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database.
- Write the Master's Practicum Abstract and submit via web form to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database.
- Evaluate the practicum experience and submitting via a web form to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database.
- Register the practicum online in the Service & Practice Database at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.
- Send the Practicum Preceptor's Evaluation" web form link to the practicum preceptor for completion and submission to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database.

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

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 **off-campus** practice-based activity that serves as the student's practicum. ***The student's academic advisor may not serve as practicum preceptor; adjunct faculty, however, may 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, the academic advisor and the faculty practicum coordinator
- 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:

- Serving as the first point of contact for practicum questions
- Providing guidance to students and faculty in the overall practicum process
- Advising students on possible practicum projects
- Planning and conducting a practicum orientation
- Assigning a grade to the student based on the completed practicum report and evaluation from the practicum preceptor.

The faculty practicum coordinator for the Department of Epidemiology is Lorraine Alexander, DrPH 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:

- Managing the practicum as an academic requirement
- Serving as a repository for hardcopies of all practicum documentation
- Sending out announcements via student listserv to students on possible practicum projects that come through the Office of Student Services

Practicum Duration

Students in either degree program (MPH or MSPH) must conduct practicum/field training for a minimum of 100 hours. However, some practicum opportunities will necessitate more than 100 hours, at the discretion of the practicum preceptor. You will be asked to report the total number of hours you spent on your practicum when you submit the Master's Practicum Report.

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*. Appropriate settings for the practicum experience include: federal agencies (e.g. FDA, CDC, HHS); state, county, city health departments; state, local public health and social service agencies; neighborhood health centers and community clinics; hospitals; or global health organizations.

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. Students should also

consult with their academic advisor in identifying suitable opportunities for a practicum.

Places to look for practicum opportunities:

The Gillings School of Global Public Health Career Services Office

This office serves a central coordination role at the level of the school by making available to students known opportunities for a practicum. Students can review postings of job, internship or practicum opportunities, at the Career Services web site:

<http://sph.unc.edu/students/career-services/>

The Gillings School of Global Public Health Practice, Service and Research Opportunities Page.

You may also find practicum opportunities posted on the Practice, Service and Research Opportunities page. This page is frequently updated with new opportunities that may serve as a practicum.

<http://sph.unc.edu/opportunities-and-engagement/>

Global Internships and Funding Page.

The Gillings Global Gateway™ partners with public health organizations to offer several funded internships or fellowships focusing on global health for Gillings School students. They also advertise other global health internship and funding opportunities

<http://sph.unc.edu/global-health/ggg-internships-and-funding/>

Important Information about doing an International Practicum

Students who wish to set up an international practicum are encouraged to extend the time line for planning. Students who are doing an international practicum must go to:

<http://sph.unc.edu/global-health/grt-travel-requirements/>

All students are expected to complete all travel requirements BEFORE leaving the United States.

Activities Which Do Not Meet the Practicum Requirements

The Master's Practicum is a stand-alone activity that must be completed by all MPH and MSPH students before graduation. The following are examples of activities that **do not** meet the requirement. If you have any questions about a possible practicum activity please ask Lorraine Alexander.

Master's Paper

The Master's Practicum and the Master's Paper are not the same and are required to be two distinctly separate activities. The Master's Practicum is not an activity designed to complete a Master's Paper. A Master's Paper is not part of the Practicum Report and does not substitute for it.

Previous or Current Experience or Job

A student's previous/current/usual professional activities do not suffice to fulfill the practicum requirement.

Research projects

Research projects located or housed at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill or other universities do not suffice to fulfill the practicum requirement.

Examples of Past Student Practicum Locations

North Carolina Local County Health Departments:

Guilford County Department of Public Health
Granville Vance Public Health
Orange County Health Department
Wake Division of Public Health & Clinics

North Carolina Division of Public Health

NC Department of Health and Human Services Child Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Alameda County Public Health Department, HIV Surveillance Unit (Alameda County, California)

UNC Hospitals (Hillsborough, NC)

Chatham Primary Care (Siler City, NC)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

United States Department of Agriculture

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 possible opportunities students are encouraged to inquire about options for reimbursement of costs associated with travel and housing.

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. All students must read the online IRB guidelines regarding class projects and practica at:

<http://research.unc.edu/offices/human-research-ethics/getting-started/faq/#whatstud>

Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database

All information for the Epidemiology Master's Practicum will be entered and stored in the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database. Data is entered via webform. The Faculty Practicum Coordinator and EPID Student Services Office will have access to the information entered. All webforms for the Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database can be found at:

<http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Before Starting Your Practicum

Attend an Epidemiology Practicum Orientation Session (Fall or Spring)

Each fall and spring semester the Faculty Practicum Coordinator will hold an orientation session (Date and time TBA). During this session, a review of the practicum requirements, documents and procedures will be discussed. In addition, possible practicum opportunities will be presented by past practicum preceptors.

Complete the Practicum Proposal Form

Once a practicum and practicum preceptor have been identified, a practicum proposal needs to be written and approved. A practicum proposal formally establishes the goals 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 goals of the practicum and the anticipated activities are cross-referenced with the ASPPH 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. Students must get approval for the practicum proposal from their practicum preceptor, academic advisor and the faculty practicum coordinator no later than two months prior to the intended practicum experience.

[PLEASE NOTE: approval must be obtained from all parties listed on the Practicum Proposal Form (practicum preceptor, academic advisor and the faculty practicum coordinator) before beginning practicum. Practicum proposals require careful planning to ensure that they are not rejected due to a failure to meet requirements.]

Proposal form can be found at <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Submit Approved Practicum Proposal Form

Once approved and signed, the proposal document should be uploaded via webform to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database. 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 and the Faculty Practicum Coordinator.

Submission link can be found at <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

After Completing the Practicum:

Register for Epidemiology 900

Students should register for EPID 900 (Epidemiology Practice) during the semester in which they expect to complete the practicum including the completion and submission of all the items required for a final grade in EPID 900. These items include:

1. The Practicum Proposal Form (this should have been submitted prior to the start of the practicum)
2. The Practicum Report
3. The Practicum Abstract
4. Student Practicum Evaluation Form (filled out by student)
5. Preceptor Practicum Evaluation Form (filled out by preceptor)
6. Practicum Registration (The Gillings School of Global Public Health Practice Database)

The Practicum Report

The practicum report 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. *Your **Practicum Report** must be submitted before a final grade for EPID 900 can be processed.*

Report Guidelines

1. 2-5 pages in length. Double-spaced and 12 pt Times New Roman font, and should contain:
2. A description of the practicum
3. Practicum goals and the degree to which they were met.
4. A discussion of the competencies that were addressed during this practicum. Can include new ones that were not originally listed in the practicum proposal but were also addressed.
5. The main strengths and weaknesses of the practicum as a learning opportunity and as a professional experience.
6. Recommendations and suggestions for consideration in future practica.
7. Pertinent source materials, documentation, field reports and data summaries may be included as an appendix (not included in the page count).

Submission link can be found at <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Practicum Abstract

Once you have completed the Practicum Report, please fill out the “**Practicum Abstract Template**”. These abstracts will be used to document student practicum activities for possible inclusion in departmental newsletters, display on department bulletin board featuring completed master’s practica or as examples for future students. *Your **Practicum Abstract** must be submitted before a final grade for EPID 900 can be processed.*

Abstract form and submission link can be found at <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Abstract Guidelines

The abstract should be not exceed 250 words and should contain the following information as indicated on the template:

1. Practicum Title
2. Your name
3. Your preceptor’s name
4. Host Agency
5. Background: *A statement of the problem/purpose of the practicum.*

- Why do we care about the problem addressed by the practicum?
- What practical or scientific/theoretical gap did your practicum fill?

Methods: *A description of the practicum activities.*

- What did you do to get your results?

Results: *Specific results in summary form.*

- As a result of completing your practicum, what did you learn, invent, create, and/or observe?

Conclusions: *Discussion of the implications of the results.*

- What are the larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem/gap identified in your Background section?

Practicum Evaluation

The practicum evaluation includes assessments by both the student and the practicum preceptor. Both student and preceptor evaluations are web forms which are submitted to the Department of Epidemiology Master's Practicum Database. The forms include the ***Student Practicum Evaluation Form*** (filled out by student) and the ***Preceptor Practicum Evaluation Form*** (filled out by preceptor). *All evaluation forms must be submitted before a final grade for EPID 900 can be processed.*

Evaluation Forms for both student and preceptor can be found at <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Practicum Registration in the Service & Practice Database at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

As part of their practicum experience students must register their practicum online in the ***Service & Practice Database at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health***. This information will help the school document its accountability for attainment of the ASPPH competencies and the requirement that all students complete a practicum.) *Your practicum must be registered in the Service & Practice Database at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health after you complete your practicum and before a final grade for EPID 900 can be processed. Look for link to "Report Your Practicum"*

<http://sph.unc.edu/nciph/public-health-practicum/>

Practicum Grading

The faculty practicum coordinator is responsible for arriving at a grade that reflects the broadest possible input from all parties involved in the student's practicum experience. The faculty practicum coordinator will review the final report, the practicum abstract, completed practicum preceptor's evaluation, the completed student evaluation form and check to see if practicum has been registered

in the Gillings School of Global Public Health Practice Database. The faculty practicum coordinator will then submit the completed grade form to the Student Services Office. The faculty practicum coordinator will submit the final grade for EPID 900 to Connect Carolina.

To see the grading form go to: <http://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>

Participate in the Gillings School of Global Public Health Practicum Day

Practicum Day: Reflections from the Field will be held each fall semester (Date and time TBA). This annual event showcases the breadth and depth of masters-level practica across Gillings. During the event the school will thank faculty, staff, and preceptors, as well as community partners for their role in supporting student practicums. The school will also highlight the important role students have played in improving public health in North Carolina and throughout the world. <http://sph.unc.edu/nciph/gillings-school-practicum-day/>

All masters students who have completed a practicum for course credit should submit their abstract (see Practicum Abstract above) and identify their preferred method of presentation (poster, oral presentation or artifact presentation). A representative from each department who helps coordinate field work will assist in determining the final program for Practicum Day.