

**UNC Department of Epidemiology  
Hosting a MPH/MSPH Practicum Student  
2018-2019**

**Please note these guidelines were updated on 3.13.19 based on new guidelines from Gillings Practicum Subcommittee – updates yellow highlighted in document**

**What is a practicum?** 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 in Appendix 1. 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.

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.***

**The practicum offers students an opportunity to:**

- Apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom
- Contribute to the work and impact of a public health-related organization
- Explore areas of professional interest, network, and develop career goals
- Observe and learn from professionals in the field
- Gain feedback on professional skills and performance

A minimum of 100 practicum hours\* must be completed during the Epidemiology MPH/MSPH student's course of study. Practicums can occur nearly anywhere, including both domestic and international settings, and can be paid or unpaid. During the practicum, an appointed on-site preceptor directly supervises the student. The student's academic adviser can contribute additional support and expertise to the experience.

**\*Note: this will change to 200 hours starting Fall 2019**

**What are the practicum requirements?** Practicum opportunities must:

- Be at least 100 hours long.
- Be mentored by a practicing public health professional (preceptor) who is working within a public health-related institution, private agency, or organization. The preceptor should have a degree in public health or a related field, have at least 3-5 years of public health working experience, and be willing and able to provide regular guidance and feedback to the student.
- Require students to apply graduate-level skills acquired in the EPID MPH/MSPH program.
- Involve projects that allow students to have principal responsibility for activities and products that are of value to an organization. The number and types of projects a student completes are left to the discretion of the preceptor in recognition of the agency's needs, time constraints, and student

interests and capabilities.

- Provide students with opportunities to gain perspective about the types of issues, concerns, and processes that occur in real world public health practice and research.
- Develop and enhance students' professional skill sets.

**What do students do during their practicums?** Practicum activities and outputs vary in accordance with the practicum agency's needs and the student's interests and learning objectives. Examples of practicum activities include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coding or recoding data</li><li>• Curriculum development</li><li>• Data analysis</li><li>• Database management</li><li>• Implementation of a health intervention</li><li>• Program planning</li><li>• Outbreak investigation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of social marketing materials</li><li>• Evaluation (planning, instrument development, reporting)</li><li>• Formative research (interviews, focus groups, surveys)</li><li>• IRB application development, submission, and/or renewal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualitative data collection</li><li>• Quantitative data collection</li><li>• Questionnaire/survey design</li><li>• Report writing</li><li>• Quality improvement projects</li></ul>
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**What types of activities are NOT appropriate for EPID MPH/MSPH practicum students?** We expect students to get a mentored experience. A practicum that is a "shadow" experience or is strictly observational would not be appropriate. Students are not expected to replace administrative staff (e.g., only asked to do copying or filing). Research projects located or housed at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill or other universities do not suffice to fulfill the practicum requirement.

**What are the roles and responsibilities of the practicum preceptor?** The preceptor has the professional skills and knowledge to direct the on-site experience of the student. (S)he is expected to have: a public health degree and/or 3-5 years of experience; an interest and competence in supervising and mentoring; expertise in assigned project areas; experience and status within the organization; and an ability to serve as the key link between the student and the agency and between the student and the community (if applicable).

The preceptor must be able to observe and evaluate the student's performance in the practicum setting. The preceptor will:

- Establish, in collaboration with the student and the student's academic adviser, an appropriate and feasible scope of work, which is documented in the student's learning agreement (<https://sph.unc.edu/epid/epid-student-central/>) that is directly aligned with the practicum organization's needs and provides a valuable learning experience for the student.
- Orient the student to the health topic(s), people, policies, procedures, and norms related to the practicum work.
- Meet regularly with the student to provide guidance, support and timely, constructive feedback.
- Communicate with Lorraine Alexander DrPH, the Faculty Practicum Coordinator, (and the student's academic adviser as needed) to provide feedback on the student's performance.
- Model professional, ethical behavior.
- Complete an evaluation of the student and the practicum experience.
- Identify a suitable replacement if unable to continue in the role of a preceptor.

**How do I request a student to work with my agency on his/her practicum?** If you are interested in hosting a student for his/her practicum, please send a description of your practicum opportunity to the Faculty Practicum Coordinator (Lorraine Alexander) at [Lorraine.Alexander@unc.edu](mailto:Lorraine.Alexander@unc.edu). At a minimum, please provide the following information in your correspondence:

- Practicum Agency Contact Information: Address, website, and phone number for your organization.
- Practicum Description: An overview of the major activities associated with the practicum.
- Final Deliverable(s): The products that will result from the student's work (e.g., curriculum, manuscript, evaluation report, database, etc.).
- Indicate the possible **ASPPH** Master's Degree in Public Health Core Competencies that your practicum opportunity will address. (See Appendix 1 for list of competencies).
- Skills Required: Skills that students must already have before completing the practicum (e.g., computer skills, language skills, experience with a specific task, knowledge of a particular health topic, etc.).
- Timeframe: When the student will be expected to complete the work.
- Funding: Amount of funding (hourly wage or stipend) available, if applicable.
- Application Instructions: Steps that should be taken to learn more about, or apply to, the opportunity. The Faculty Practicum Coordinator will review your opportunity for feasibility and appropriateness. If it meets EPID's practicum requirements, it will be emailed out to all MPH/MSPH EPID students.

**Questions?** To learn more about the practicum process, please contact the Faculty Practicum Coordinator at [Lorraine\\_Alexander@unc.edu](mailto:Lorraine_Alexander@unc.edu).

## APPENDIX 1

### MPH Foundational Competencies

The following is a list of **MPH Foundational Competencies**. Students must choose **at least 5** that your practicum experience will address. If more than 5 competencies are addressed you can also list those.

- MPH01. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.
- MPH02. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
- MPH03. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.
- MPH04. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.
- MPH05. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
- MPH06. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.
- MPH07. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.
- MPH08. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.
- MPH09. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.
- MPH10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.
- MPH11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs.
- MPH12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.
- MPH13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.
- MPH14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.
- MPH15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.
- MPH16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making.

- MPH17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.
- MPH18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.
- MPH19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.
- MPH20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.
- MPH21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams.
- MPH22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.

From: ACCREDITATION CRITERIA SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC HEALTH & PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS [https://storage.googleapis.com/media.ceph.org/wp\\_assets/2016.Criteria.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/media.ceph.org/wp_assets/2016.Criteria.pdf)

Note: This document was adapted from PHLP practicum preceptor guidelines.