

MPH Practicum



Residential (Chapel Hill-based) students complete their practica over the summer between the first and second year of the MPH program. This “roadmap” can help you navigate the process!

Residential Roadmap and Guide

Early Fall Year 1

Familiarize yourself with the practicum requirements and resources on the SPHG 703 Canvas site.

Mid Fall

Consider public health career paths and identify goals for your practicum experience (e.g., professional skills, practicum products, content area, location, funding).

Late Fall

Update your resume and LinkedIn page, consider having a professional headshot taken, engage with career services supports, identify practicum organizations of interest.

Winter Break

Start networking to expand your connections in practicum areas of interest. Reach out to professors, alumni, previous employers, guest lecturers, and others with whom you have shared public health interests. **Starting to see open summer opportunities? APPLY!!**

January

Begin SPHG 703, the required pre-practicum course.

February-March

Continue to apply to, network for, and follow up with opportunities. Apply to funding opportunities.

April

Secure a practicum that meets Gillings MPH Practicum requirements. Begin drafting a learning agreement.

May

Submit final learning agreement. Once you have final grades in practicum prerequisite coursework and the practicum team provides permission, you can begin your practicum hours.

Mid Practicum

Complete mid-practicum survey and participate in mid-practicum meeting.

August

Finish practicum hours and products. Begin SPHG 707, the required post-practicum course!

Fall Year 2

Participate in the annual Gillings Practicum Day. Celebrate the completion of an important MPH milestone!

TIP!
Familiarize yourself with travel requirements for international practica!

TIP!
Use an application tracker to stay organized!

TIP!
International students: To comply with visa regulations: Apply for CPT immediately after accepting a practicum offer.

Key Terms

Practicum: This 200 (minimum) hour planned, mentored and evaluated applied practice experience (paid or unpaid) gives students an opportunity to use their Gillings MPH training in a professional public health setting.

SPHG 703 MPH Pre-Practicum Assignments (0.5 credits, Spring Year 1): This course provides structures and supports for students as they search, select, and plan for the practicum. It awards credit to required pre-practicum assignments.

SPHG 707 MPH Post-Practicum Assignments (0.5 credits, Fall Year 2): This course facilitates reflection on the practicum and awards credit to required post-practicum assignments.

Learning Agreement: A document that outlines a scope of work and clarifies expectations for the practicum to help ensure a mutually beneficial experience for the student, practicum organization, and parties impacted by the practicum work.

Practicum Products: The tangible outputs of a student's practicum work. Students must produce a minimum of two student-generated, non-proprietary, practical work products (e.g., project plans; grant proposals; training manuals or lesson plans; surveys; memos; videos; podcasts; presentations designed to educate community members, advance an organization's work, etc.; spreadsheets; websites; photos with accompanying explanatory text; or other digital artifacts of learning), produced for the practicum organization's use and benefit, that demonstrate attainment of five CEPH MPH Foundational Competencies.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): To comply with visa regulations, international students must have this authorization to complete a practicum. See your academic coordinator for more information.

Practicum Supports

Practicum Team: Provides programmatic support for the practicum process through information sessions, practicum courses, and office hours. The practicum team can be contacted at mphpracticum@unc.edu.

Practicum Advisers: Provide concentration-specific support throughout the practicum search, selection, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Preceptor: The preceptor is the student's main point of contact at the practicum organization. They mentor the practicum student and supervise the practicum work.

Gillings Career Services: Provides support with the career services aspects (e.g., resume and cover letter critiques, networking, interviewing preparation) of the practicum search process.

Heels Engage Network: This UNC campus-wide platform allows you to connect with Alumni and other UNC community members such as students, faculty/staff, and friends of the community who support Carolina students.

Common Practicum Sources

Current MPH Practicum Opportunities Database: A list of practicum opportunities available through Gillings community partners that meet Gillings MPH Practicum requirements.

Past Practicum Database: A list of the practica Gillings MPH students have completed in the past.

MPH Weekly Practicum Opportunities Newsletter: An electronic newsletter that includes vetted practicum opportunities from our community partners; unvetted opportunities that may satisfy Gillings MPH practicum requirements; practicum funding resources; events related to the practicum search, selection, and onboarding process; and additional practicum supports.

Personal Network: Strategically connect with people who can offer advice, referrals, or direct opportunities. Your personal network may consist of academic advisors, professors, LinkedIn or social media connections, family and friends, and professional associations related to your field of study.

Internet Search: Utilize keyterms in your online search for open opportunities by creating a search string. Consider: "public health" AND "summer" AND "internship" AND "concentration name or field of interest". Structure it using keywords and boolean operators (AND) to refine your search results effectively.