

What is a practice experience?

Public health practice experience (PHPE) is the term UNTHSC-SPH uses for an internship or practicum. All Schools of Public Health accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) are required to have an applied practice experience. The purpose of the public health practice experience is to apply your skills and knowledge learned in your graduate studies in a professional public health work environment. The practice experience can be an opportunity to observe and network with public health professionals while practicing graduate skills. **There are no exemptions for the public health practice experience.**

The practice experience is to be an applied-project related work experience in a public health site such as a public health department, non-profit public health agency or hospital administration where you can advance your skills.

Is the Practice Experience in Public Health just for MPH students?

These courses are for MPH students only and may not be taken by DrPH students. In addition, MHA students have their own internships.

When do I do a practice experience?

Once you have completed 21 credit hours of core and/or department required course work, and completed all three sections of PHED 5197, you can then begin the practice experience. Students must have a 3.0 overall GPA and be in good academic standing. It is expected that students have basic public health knowledge when they go to the site.



The only exception to the 21-hour rule is if you have completed 18 hours and receive a state or federally supported semester long internship. These internships may require a full semester commitment. The Association of Schools of Public Health web site (asph.org) advertises fellowships and internships. You must contact your academic advisor to begin the process to apply for this exception.

How many hours is a practice experience?

Two hundred (200) contact hours at the site are required. That means you will spend 200 hours at the site or doing related work assigned by the site supervisor. The hours spent preparing the poster or traveling to and from the work site are NOT counted in the 200 hours.

Where do I find out the requirements for the practice experience?

The link to the Student Manual for Practice Experience in Public Health is located on the Public Health Practice Experience web page. You should download and read the manual. The Manual should answer all your questions and list your responsibilities for the course, the site supervisor's responsibilities, poster session information, evaluation criteria and other helpful information. If you have additional questions, please contact Dr. Smethers (misty.smethers@unthsc.edu) or Ms. Derry (Chelsea.derry@unthsc.edu).



What is the role of the Student?

When should I begin searching for a practice experience site?

You will need to notify, via email, Ms. Derry (Chelsea.derry@unthsc.edu) and indicate the semester you want to register for. You should begin searching at least one semester before you are going to sign up for the course. For example, if you are going to register for the practice experience in Summer 2012 you should start searching in Fall 2011. Deadlines are listed on the PHPE Website.

Where do I do a practice experience?

Can I use my job as my practice experience?

No. Our accrediting bodies, CEPH and SACS, do not permit us to give credit for job or life experience.

Can I do my practice experience at my work site?

You may do the practice experience at your work site, but the duties **MUST BE OUTSIDE** of your usual work duties and expectations. You also must have someone at your work site that is willing to serve as site supervisor.

Can several experiences be combined to meet the practicum requirements?

No, your Public Health Practice Experience is with one site.

Can the experience be outside of Fort Worth or Texas?

Yes, the experience can be anywhere as long as you are able to find a site supervisor.

Can the experience site be international?

Yes, the experience can be international as long as you are able to find a site supervisor. You will need to review the International Travel Checklist page on our website for any travel alerts or warnings. **Students who wish to complete their practicum in a country that is currently under a travel alert will not be approved.** Currently the School does not have a formal international internship program. You may check other schools' sites to look for those types of programs also. Dr. Adrignola will assist in the search whenever possible.



How do I get to my site location?

Does the school provide transportation?



Transportation is the student's responsibility. You may use your personal vehicle or public transportation. The school offers the opportunity to students to purchase a bus pass at a nominal charge. Students will need to contact the Human Resource Services Office regarding the availability of these passes.

Is the practice experience paid?

The practice experience **may be paid or it may be unpaid.** Most of the sites do not pay due to budget constraints, but this varies from site to site. Pay makes no difference to the value of the experience. In addition to practicing skills learned in the classroom, you will be able to begin to establish a network of public health professional contacts for future reference.



What is the next step?

Practice Experience Procedure

1. Student meets with Coordinator of Academic Services
 - Coordinator verifies eligibility
 - Completed all three sections of PHED 5197
 - At least 21 SCH
 - 3.0 GPA
 - Discusses type of practice experience desired
 - Reviews resume, CV, and/or cover letter
 - Review Professional Conduct handout and sign the Professional Conduct form
2. Once student is ready to begin the search, the Coordinator will send the information regarding the student to the Liaison.
3. Liaison will provide student with various opportunities and contact information for potential sites. No information provided to you by the Liaison is to be shared with any other students. To do so, would be a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and will be handled accordingly.
4. Student is responsible for setting up and attending interviews with potential sites.
5. Once the student has been given an offer, the student takes the offer to the advisor for review.
6. Advisor reviews the site and supervisor to ensure that the student's experience will meet the competencies outlined for the Public Health Practice Experience.
7. If the site and supervisor are acceptable, the advisor sends approval to the Coordinator and the student accepts the offer.
8. Once the offer has been accepted, the student will contact the Coordinator to obtain the Project Agreement.
9. Academic Advisor will send the completed and approved Project Agreement to the Coordinator.
10. Coordinator will provide student with permission number to register, access to Canvas course, and any follow-up paperwork that the site may require.

When can I start accumulating hours toward my practice experience?

You will be able to begin accumulating hours as soon as there is a complete project agreement on file with the Office of Admission and Academic Services and you have been registered into the appropriate PHPE course.

Do I have to pay for the practice experience just like any course?

Yes, you will pay for Practice Experience in Public Health just like any other course in the curriculum.

Can I use an experience that I completed before enrolling in the course?

No, you may not use experience you have had prior to enrolling in Practice Experience in Public Health. No credit will be given for previous experiences. You can only count the public health activities and



experiences in which you participate during the time you are registered for the course.

Can I do the practice at a site one semester and then sign up for the course credit in another semester?

No. You must sign up for Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 and begin the practice experience in the same semester.

What if I don't finish my practice experience in one semester?



You will need to work with Dr. Smethers and Ms. Derry to accommodate any extenuating circumstances.

What is the role of the departmental academic advisor?

Your academic advisor is the content expert for your practice experience. That professor will advise you regarding questions you may have about the actual content of your experience. They will approve your Project Agreement, review your assignments including the poster and give you a grade.



Are there sample posters I can view?

The Office of Admission and Academic Services (EAD 716) has sample posters you may view. Please contact Ms. Derry to schedule a time to view these posters.

Final Steps. . .

What is a poster and oral session?

Once you complete the practice experience, it is required that you present your work at the Public Health Practice Experience Poster and Oral Session. During the Oral Session, students will be asked to give a 10 minute presentation about their practice experience. The audience will be allowed 5 minutes for questions. At the poster session, each student is expected to be present with their poster and be able to provide a brief (3-5 minute) overview of their experience to Dr. Smethers, your academic advisor, students, faculty, staff, site supervisors and other guests. You can bring any brochures, pamphlets, etc. related to the experience to distribute to guests. You are encouraged to invite your site supervisor to the poster and oral session. Information regarding developing the wide-format poster is available in your Portfolio. Students should refer to the Announcements page of the Public Health Practice Experience Canvas site regarding deadlines. Your site supervisor and academic advisor must approve your poster prior to scheduling an appointment with Vikas Tomer to have it printed.

Do I get a grade for the practice experience?

Yes. A letter grade following the SPH grading policy will be assigned.



How will I be evaluated and how is the grade determined?

Your grade is determined by a combination of input from your academic advisor, your practice site supervisor, and Dr. Smethers. There will be rubrics available on Canvas that outline how you will be graded.