

# SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## *Guide to the Master of Public Health Practice Experience*

### **Introduction to the MPH Practice Experience**

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) is the national organization that provides guidelines for accredited schools and programs of public health. Our Public Health Practice Experience was designed to align with the [CEPH accreditation expectations published in 2016](#).

#### **Why are accreditation criteria so important?**

We want employers to know that our MPH graduates have foundational public health practice skills and are ready for the workforce.

#### **Practice, practice, practice....**

Being ready for the work force necessitates practice. Traditional university courses involving lectures and occasional exams result in low rates of knowledge retention (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014). Can you imagine buying a house for \$200,000 and finding that three years later, it is worth only \$66,000? We want our graduates to be effective practitioners and leaders as they enter the workforce. We promote lifelong learning and expect students' educational investments to grow rather than depreciate.

Using research on adult learning, we have modelled the MPH Practice Experience to maximize application and minimize loss of knowledge. Some of these key features include:

- **A full year of practice** Knowledge retention improves when students can apply the ideas they learn in class to an existing "mental model" (Brown et al., 2014). By stretching the internships over a full year, students continuously engage in a learning and application cycle. The internship setting offers the "mental model" to apply classroom knowledge, which promotes synthesis, critical thinking, and retention.
- **Reflection** When you enter the workforce, it is easy to get focused on completing tasks and being ready for upcoming strategies. However, pausing to reflect on what you've learned, how it fits into what you already believe, and how you can improve is instrumental in the development and reinforcement of knowledge and skills. Our model of Public Health Practice Experience includes a reflection log completed each semester to promote knowledge synthesis and professional development.

#### **The MPH Degree: Transition to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Model**

*The MPH is the cornerstone of education in public health, priming well-prepared graduates for expanded roles in the 21st century. MPH degrees of the future will ground students in a rigorous, integrated, public health core and focus on specialized skill building in a defined area of expertise. The MPH will also emphasize experiential learning that provides opportunities for applying and integrating concepts, skills, and interdisciplinary content.*

*(Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH), [Framing the Future](#), 2014)*

- **Regular Feedback** Students complete supervision forms every other week to document self-assessment, planning, and supervisor feedback. An important transition from classroom to workforce is developing the recognition that you can't earn an "A" on every work product or function. In fact, some might argue they have learned more from their mistakes than their successes. Becoming comfortable with regular reflection and feedback on performance is critical for professional development.

### *How to use this guide*

This guide is a resource for students, Faculty Course Coordinators, Site and Task Supervisors. Understanding each other's roles and responsibilities will promote effective communication and clear expectations.

### *Keeping the End in Mind*

Ultimately, we seek a win-win for students and community partner organizations. Our first priority is ensuring that students are placed in a site where they can strengthen their **foundational and concentration-specific public health competencies**. These may include leadership skills, community assessment, evaluation, data collection and analysis, policy or program development, project planning and implementation, and communication, among others. Community partner sites do not need to be "health" specific and may include human service organizations, government, mental health, education, community development and many others that in some way address the social determinants of health (e.g., poverty, racism, educational attainment, health care access, environment, etc....).

Our second priority is ensuring that students are making **valuable contributions** to the organizations where they are placed. A keystone of this priority is the planning, implementation and completion of a **final product** that makes a meaningful contribution to the organization **and** draws on the competencies of the student's MPH degree program. We expect that this product will take anywhere from 200-400 hours to carry out. Decisions about the breadth and size of this product should be made between the site supervisor, student, and Faculty Course Coordinator. It is important to note that these projects may not be research studies. While public health practitioners often use data to drive decision-making and engage in program evaluation, projects that involve data should be developed for a community audience and have clear practice-based implications for the organization.

### *Key Ingredients*

The Practice Experience course includes several key components that collectively contribute to the completion of an MPH degree. These include the following:

**Assignments:** Faculty Course Coordinators supervise and grade several assignments that support the requirements of an MPH degree. These include a **reflection log** with responses to specific prompts, **presentations**, and the MPH Integrative Learning Experience (ILE) which is a **Policy analysis & brief**.

**Work and Project Plan:** Students work with their Site Supervisors and Faculty Course Coordinators to develop an overall work plan that includes a final project (i.e., the meaningful product) and other tasks that promote the student's development as a public health practitioner. We recognize that situations change, and the plan may need revising. Each semester, students will provide a progress report on their work/project plan and have the opportunity to revise.

**Group Co-Learning:** Each semester students will meet with one another to hear about each other's experiences in their internships.

**Demonstration of Work Activities, Supervision & Performance:** Several documents will be used to monitor work activities, address issues of concern, and assess student performance. These include supervision logs submitted every other week, end of term performance assessments, and corrective action forms (when applicable). Students will log their daily hours using the Track It Forward system adopted by the HSC and will submit a summary report of these hours at the end of each term.

Each student will have a syllabus associated with their section of Practice Experience (PHED 5297) which will be provided by their Faculty Course Coordinator. The course will be managed online in Canvas by each instructor.

## Forms

The key forms used in the Public Health Practice Experience are listed below.

<b>Forms</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Initiated By</b>
<b>Student Schedule, Goals, Tasks</b>	<i>Month 1</i>	<i>Student</i>
<b>Semi-Monthly Supervision and time log form</b>	<i>Every 2 weeks</i>	<i>Student</i>
<b>Corrective Action Form</b>	<i>When needed</i>	<i>Faculty Course Coordinator or Site Supervisor</i>
<b>Work and Project Plan</b>	<i>Mid to end of Term 1</i>	<i>Student</i>
<b>First semester student performance evaluation</b>	<i>End of term 1</i>	<i>Faculty Course Coordinator &amp; Site Supervisor</i>
<b>Work and Project Plan Progress Report</b>	<i>Mid-semester terms 2 and 3</i>	<i>Student</i>
<b>Second semester student performance evaluation</b>	<i>End of term 2</i>	<i>Faculty Course Coordinator &amp; Site Supervisor</i>
<b>Final product evaluation</b>	<i>End of term 3</i>	<i>Faculty Course Coordinator &amp; Site Supervisor</i>
<b>Final semester student performance evaluation</b>	<i>End of term 3</i>	<i>Faculty Course Coordinator &amp; Site Supervisor</i>

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Some of our students have special circumstances. We appreciate the flexibility of Site Supervisors and Faculty Course Coordinators in accommodating the needs that arise from these situations.

### International Students

International students face federal restrictions based on their student visa status. They are not permitted to work off-campus and their on-campus employment and internship hours may not exceed 20 hours per week during the Fall and Spring semester start and stop dates. These restrictions are NOT applicable during the summer semester and winter break.

### Veterans

Veterans receive funding only during official semesters. They may need to adjust their schedules to load their hours between semester start and stop dates.

### Dual-Degree Students

Students pursuing another graduate degree in addition to public health (e.g., anthropology, physician assistant, pharmacy, osteopathic medicine) are encouraged to integrate their public health practice expectations with their other degree program's internship or rotation requirements. Because these students are carrying a heavy load, wherever possible, we try to align the work plan of the public health internship with the expectations of the other degree program. Dual-degree students may need more variability in how they complete their hours and could potentially shorten or lengthen their actual engagement with community sites/organizations by 6-10 weeks. Dual-degree students must still complete all three semesters of the PHED 5297 course, even if they distribute their hours over a shorter or longer period of time.

## Equity Diversity and Inclusion

At the School of Public Health, we encourage dialogue around issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Working in community settings allows our students to explore different organizational cultures and consider ways that historical biases, discrimination and structural “isms” (racism, sexism, ageism, able body ism, heterosexism, etc....) affect organizations and the communities they serve. We suggest that some supervision time be used to for open discussions of these topics.

## Our School of Public Health commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

*Our work, rooted in social justice, leads to solutions for a healthier community. We aspire to create an academic environment where an equitable, diverse and inclusive culture is part of our core values. We seek and embrace diversity of thought, people, culture, and experiences. These principles enhance our ability to prepare the public health workforce, generate knowledge, and make positive contributions to our community.*

## Roles and Responsibilities

This document includes both a **description of each person's role**, as well as a **check list of key tasks** that need to be completed.

### Faculty Course Coordinators:

#### Roles

- Serve as instructor of record (manage Canvas section and enter grades online) for a section of practice experience students (8-16 students, 3 semesters @ 1 credit hour per semester)
- Promote professional development and reflection through group meetings, online discussions and graded activities
- Serve as a liaison between site supervisors and UNTHSC regarding students' development and progress
- Provide instructive guidance and timely grading of assignments
- Serve as a mentor to students to promote effective practice in community settings
- Serve as a member of the Public Health Practice Experience Committee

### Faculty Course Coordinator Check list

<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Review annual orientation slides	Prior to week one
Customize and finalize syllabus and canvas site, determine schedule co-learning meetings and assignment deadlines	Prior to week one
Schedule individual meetings/conversations with assigned students	Weeks 1-3 of semester one
Reach out to site and task supervisors to make virtual introduction. Ensure all documents have been received and orientation is complete.	Week 1
Conduct site visit to identify and address any growing concerns and determine if the placement will continue to be viable for the remainder of the year	Middle of semester one
Distribute semester one performance evaluation to site supervisors	Two or three weeks before end of semester one
Ensure workplan includes tasks that meet at least 3 foundational competencies and 2 concentration specific competencies	End of term one
Schedule individual meetings/conversations with assigned students	Weeks 1-3 of semester two
Review syllabus and revise schedule of second semester deadlines and co-learning meetings as needed	Week 1 of semester two
Conduct site visit to review progress of internship activities, discuss any needed modifications to work or project plan	Middle of semester two
Distribute semester two performance evaluation to site supervisors	Two or three weeks before end of semester two

Schedule individual meetings/conversations with assigned students	Weeks 1-3 of semester three
Review syllabus and revise schedule of third semester deadlines and co-learning meetings as needed	Week 1 of semester three
Conduct site visit to review progress of internship activities, discuss any needed modifications to work or project plan	Middle of semester three
Distribute semester three performance evaluation to site supervisors	Two or three weeks before end of semester three

### Site Supervisors and Task Supervisors

#### Roles

- Serve as daily supervisor for work/learning experiences in practice-based setting; providing timely and direct feedback
- Monitor time log and student progress on the work plan and final project
- Meet every other week (at least 60 minutes) to discuss learning experiences and provide supervision and sign/approve semi-monthly supervision form
- Complete annual MPH Practice Experience orientation process
- Communicate performance concerns, however minor, to Students **and** Faculty Advisors in a timely fashion
- Provide mentorship for students and discuss opportunities for professional development

### Site & Task Supervisor Check list

<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Review annual orientation slides	<u>Prior to week one</u>
Submit contact information forms, resume/CV of site supervisor and signed confirmation form to PHPE@unthsc.edu	<u>Prior to week one</u>
Hold conversations with students about organizational culture, schedule, and general work expectations.	Prior to week one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify workspace and other resources the student needs to complete the internship</li> <li>• Develop initial schedule and discuss task opportunities available at the practice site</li> <li>• Discuss ways for the internship to be mutually beneficial for students and practice sites (re-visit this topic at least 2 times per semester)</li> </ul>	Week 1
Implement orientation process for students	Weeks 1-3
Schedule semi-monthly supervision meetings with students and Site or Task supervisor	Schedule semi-monthly supervision meetings with students and Site or Task supervisor
Host site visit with Faculty Course Coordinator	Middle of semester one

Provide semester one performance evaluation to Faculty Course Coordinator	1-2 weeks before end of semester one
Discuss with student federal, state and local policies that influence the work being done at the site/organization	Week 1 semester two
Host site visit to with Faculty Course coordinator to review progress of internship activities and discuss any needed modifications to work or project plan	Middle of semester two
Provide semester two performance evaluation to Faculty Course Coordinator	One-two weeks before end of semester two
Discuss a detailed plan with student on finalization of the project product/deliverables and how quality will be determined (i.e., evaluation criteria)	Week one-semester three
Host final site visit to review overall internship experience, discuss any final modifications to work or project plan	Middle of semester three
Provide semester two performance evaluation to Faculty Course Coordinator and evaluation of final product	One-two weeks before end of semester three

## Students

### Roles

- Identify the public health skills and competencies relevant to their area of interest that are most beneficial to their career advancement.
- Apply skills and competencies in concert with knowledge gained from their coursework.
- Participate in the design and implementation of the major project.
- Treat their practice site as they would professional public health employment, integrate within the structure of the organization and function as a professional at all times. This includes setting and adhering to a regular schedule and adhering to the organization's expectations of professional conduct.
- Immerse themselves in supporting the work of the organization as well as complying with the policies and procedures of the organization.
- Maintain communication with the Site Supervisor, Faculty Course Coordinator, and Practice Experience leadership/personnel.
- Responsible for activities and work described in the Work Plan prepared by the student and signed by the Site/Task Supervisor.
- Provide professional quality work in completing all assignments.
- Arrive at supervision prepared with a draft log reviewing activities and challenges from the prior 1-2 weeks and identified goals/tasks for the week ahead.
- Submit signed supervision and time logs to Canvas every other week.
- Enter completed time into the Track It Forward system within 5 business days of each complete shift.
- Solicit regular feedback from site supervisors on your performance and professional behavior
- Adhere to the agreed-upon schedule and communicate in advance with your site supervisor when you need to make scheduling changes
- Be resilient and resourceful: identify potential solutions to barriers and challenges, then discuss them with your site supervisor and faculty course coordinator
- Discuss issues of concern in a timely manner with site supervisors and faculty course coordinators
- Take advantage of new learning opportunities, especially ones that involve interprofessional collaboration
- Represent the School of Public Health with professionalism and competence; your work is a reflection of the quality of the MPH degree program at UNTHSC

- Submit all course assignments and signed documents through Canvas
- If issues of concern go unresolved, communicate them to the Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Health Equity
- Share your successes with your peers, supervisors, faculty course coordinators, and SPH administration

### Student Check list

<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Review annual orientation slides	Prior to week one
Set up information about your internship site in Track It Forward	Prior to week one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that you are registered for a section of PHED 5297 and can access the Canvas site for this course</li> <li>• Review the syllabus and course schedule for your section of the PHED 5297 course</li> </ul>	Before logging hours
Ensure that all confirmation materials have been submitted: contact information forms, resume/CV of site supervisor and signed confirmation form to PHPE@unthsc.edu	A minimum of 6 weeks prior to start of internship
Hold conversations with site supervisor about organizational culture, schedule, and general work expectations.	Prior to week one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss workspace and other resources needs to complete the internship</li> <li>• Develop initial schedule and discuss task opportunities available at the practice site</li> <li>• Discuss ways for the internship to be mutually beneficial (re-visit this topic at least 2 times per semester)</li> </ul>	Week 1
Complete orientation process as indicated by organization, initiate/request any additional self-orientation and learning to promote knowledge/understanding of the practice context	Weeks 1-6
Set regular meetings with the Site/ Task Supervisor where Supervision and Time Logs are prepared and presented by the student, discussed and signed by the Site Supervisor (minimum 60 minutes every other week).	Scheduled every other week
Check Canvas site for course updates and announcements	Weekly throughout internship
Prepare for the Integrative Learning Experience assignment by discussing federal, state and local policies that influence the work being done at the site/organization	Week one semester two
Discuss a detailed plan with site supervisor on finalization of the project product/deliverables and how quality will be determined (i.e., evaluation criteria)	Week one-semester three

## Student Schedule

Log and complete 600 hours (or a proportionately reduced amount for students receiving a waiver):

- Approximately 200 hours per full semester (includes semester breaks)
- Approximately 12-14 hours per week
- Hours spent with the Faculty Course Coordinator and Site Supervisor **count**
- Hours spent on written assignments (reflection log & policy analysis) or driving to the practice site **do not count**

## References

Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L. III, & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Cambridge, MA, US: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

Council for Education for Public Health (2016). *Accreditation Criteria: Schools of Public Health and Public Health Programs* (amended October 2016). Washington DC: CEPH. Retrieved from: [https://media.ceph.org/wp\\_assets/2016.Criteria.pdf](https://media.ceph.org/wp_assets/2016.Criteria.pdf)

Association for Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH; 2014). *Framing the Future: A Master of Public Health degree for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Retrieved from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/aspph-wp-production/app/uploads/2015/02/MPH1.pdf>

## Where can you access forms and more information?

*When information or forms are updated, they will be added to the MPH Practice Experience website at:*

<https://www.unthsc.edu/school-of-public-health/mph-practice-experience/>