

# Practicum Guide for Master of Public Health Students

*PH 9997 Practicum*

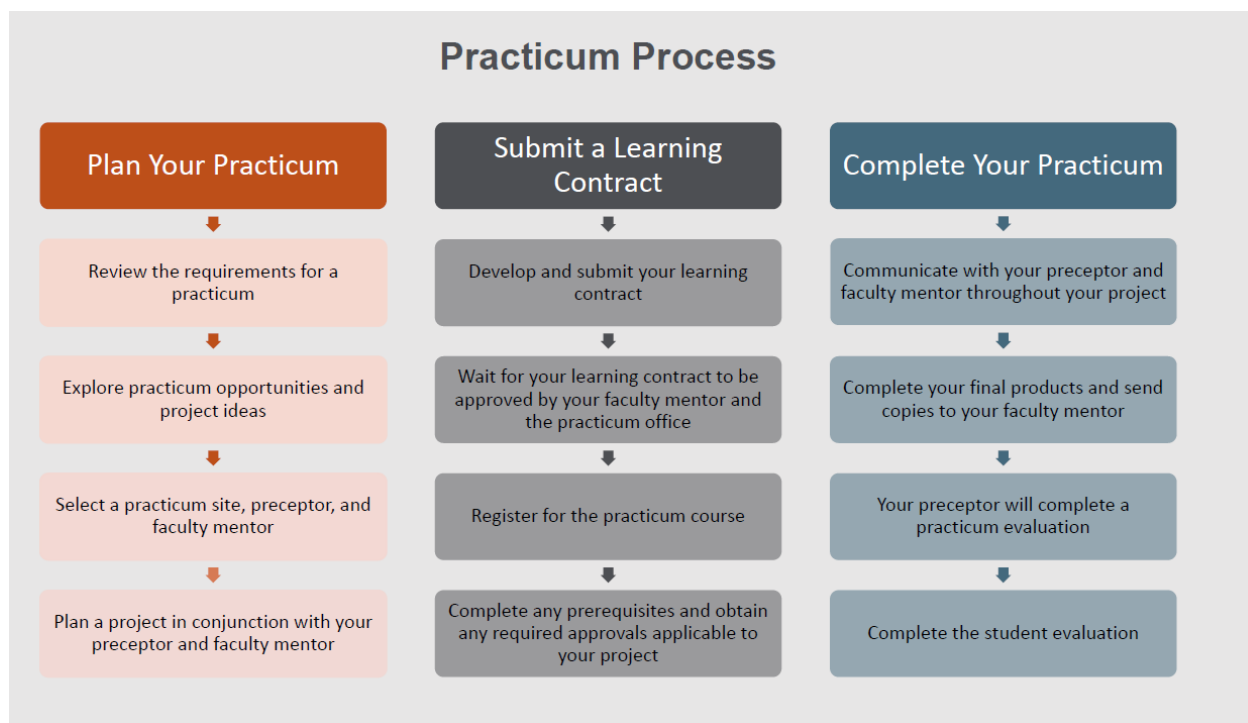
A practicum, or applied practice experience, is an application of learning to a ‘real world’ setting. Students in the MPH program are required to complete a practicum a requirement of their degree. This guide provides an overview of the steps required to complete the practicum and helpful resources to ensure success.

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## Section 1: Practicum Overview

The practicum is an applied field experience designed to demonstrate your competency attainment, enhance your skills, and benefit the community. The practicum process includes three major phases: (1) [planning your practicum](#); (2) [submitting a learning contract](#); and, (3) [completing your practicum](#). This document provides a guide for each phase.



### Requirements Overview

- Students must select a practicum site in a non-academic setting, unless the setting is externally facing, and primarily focused on community engagement.
- Each practicum requires a preceptor (site supervisor) who will oversee your work at the organization and a School of Public Health faculty mentor to approve, oversee, and grade your practicum.
- Students must select any [five competencies](#) with at least three competencies from the MPH foundational competency list.
- Prior to enrolling in the appropriate amount of credit hours with a faculty mentor, students will develop and receive approval of a learning contract.
- Additional approvals are required for [international practicum opportunities](#).
- Develop two high-quality products that benefit your practicum site and meet MPH competencies.
  - Final products are tangible items submitted to the faculty mentor and preceptor for review.
  - MPH students may not complete a reflection as one of the required final products. Faculty mentors or preceptors may ask for a reflection paper in addition to the two required final products.
- MPH students must cumulatively earn three practicum credits to meet program requirements. Each academic credit requires 60 hours of practicum, therefore you must obtain at least 180 hours of practicum experience. You may propose more than one practicum to achieve 180 hours of practicum.
- Additional considerations for;
  - [International students](#)
  - [International practicum experiences](#)
  - Practicums involving [human subjects and animal research](#)
  - Graduate [Certificates](#)

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## Section 2: Planning Your Practicum

### Timeline and Planning

- You should begin planning at least one semester before you intend to enroll in practicum. If you need to [travel internationally for your practicum](#), you should begin planning at least 6-9 months in advance.
- What semester to pursue your practicum is a decision between you and your advisor or faculty mentor. However, we strongly encourage students to complete the MPH Core Courses prior to enrolling in practicum.

### Identifying Practicum Opportunities

There are many ways to find a practicum. An appropriate practicum site should meet your learning needs and be beneficial to the agencies or organizations involved.

Suggestions for finding practicum opportunities include:

- Ask your faculty advisor or other faculty members for recommendations. You can search on the [Faculty section of the School of Public Health website](#) to find faculty with similar interests who may assist with practicum placements.
- Review the list of practicum and internship opportunities available using [Handshake](#).
- Network by attending lectures presented by visiting guests, who are often leaders in their respective fields, and by joining the [UTHealth School of Public Health LinkedIn](#) group to network with Alumni.
- Talk with your student peers, many of whom work or volunteer in the field.
- Contact an organization that interests you and develop a practicum on your own.
- Explore the listing of popular practicum [sites](#).
- Visit external job boards that posts internship positions.
  - [Indeed.com](#)
  - [AcademyHealth.org](#)
  - [Internships.com](#)
  - [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
  - [National Institutes of Health](#)
  - [UT System Graduate Archer Fellowship Program](#)
  - United Way
    - Houston: <https://www.unitedwayhouston.org/job-bank/job-bank-listings>
    - San Antonio: <https://www.unitedwaysatx.org/mission-united/employment/>
    - Dallas: <https://unitedwaydallas.org/careers/>
    - Austin: <https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/get-involved/volunteer/>
    - El Paso: <https://www.unitedwayelpaso.org/employment-opportunities>
  - [The Texas Politics Project at UT Austin](#)

### Faculty Mentor

Each practicum requires a School of Public Health faculty mentor to approve, oversee, and grade your practicum. Your faculty mentor can be your advisor or a faculty member who has experience with your practicum topic. Students can discuss with their faculty advisor and view the [faculty directory](#) to identify a faculty mentor.

### Practicum Preceptor

Each practicum requires a preceptor (site supervisor). Your preceptor will oversee your work at the organization where you will complete your practicum (host organization). Your preceptor should inform you of any onboarding or orientation applicable to your activities. If your preceptor requires UTHealth to sign an affiliation or program agreement before you begin your practicum, please forward these requests to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement ([practicum@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:practicum@uth.tmc.edu)).

### Plan a Practicum Project that Meets MPH Competencies and Results in Two Written Products

MPH students must select a minimum of five competencies to attain during their practicum experience. MPH students must attain a minimum of three competencies from the list of MPH Foundational Knowledge Competencies. Students may select all five competencies from the MPH Foundational Knowledge Competencies, but may choose to select competencies from their

respective major-specific competencies. MPH –Customized students should select competencies linked to their Advanced Public Health Coursework. Students must demonstrate attainment of all five selected competencies through the production of at least two written-products. One final product cannot be a summary of the other final product. For example, if you provide a detailed report and a poster as the two final products, the poster should not summarize the report. Examples of acceptable written products for specific competencies can be found in [Appendix](#).

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### **Section 3: Develop Your Learning Contract**

Students should follow the steps below to develop and enroll in practicum.

#### **1. Create your learning contract in the mySPH [online practicum management system](#).**

Please reference submission deadlines on the [Practicum Overview section of mySPH](#) as you prepare to complete your learning contract. Students are strongly encouraged to develop their learning contract as early as possible in order to receive approval and register for the practicum experience.

To successfully complete the learning contract, you will need the following information:

- Project Description:
  - Start and end date of practicum experience
  - Number of hours per week
    - *Note: MPH students must complete at least three hours of practicum credit as indicated on the degree planners. Students earn one academic credit per 60 hours of practicum and therefore are expected to complete a minimum of 180 hours of practicum experience.*
  - Project location name and type
  - Project summary
  - Description of community engagement
    - *Note: Describe populations, external stakeholders, community members, or others with whom you will interact during this project. Describe target audiences for reports, presentations, publications, training materials, or other forms of communication during your project.*
  - Site Preceptor and Faculty Mentor: Name and contact information for site preceptor and faculty mentor
    - *Note: Your faculty mentor may not also serve as your preceptor.*
  - Travel information: Students traveling internationally to complete a practicum must complete additional requirements as described in the [Appendix](#).
- Competencies:
  - Students must attain a minimum of five competencies through the practicum experience and must synthesize these competencies into at least two high-quality written products.
  - Please review the list of MPH Foundational Knowledge and MPH Major-Specific Competencies in the [Appendix](#).
  - MPH students must select at least three competencies from the list of [MPH Foundational Knowledge competencies](#). MPH students may elect to choose the two additional competencies from the MPH Foundational Knowledge Competencies or from their [major-specific competencies](#).
  - MPH customized students are asked to select [major-specific competencies](#) that align with their completed Advanced Public Health Coursework.
- Final Products:
  - Students must identify a minimum of two final products that will result from the practicum experience and briefly describe the proposed final products.
  - All final projects must be tangible items that can be reviewed by the preceptor and faculty mentor.
    - For example, if a presentation is one final product, a copy of the slides and your notes would be the uploaded final product.
  - MPH students may not submit a reflection as one of the two final products.
  - The School understands final products may change or evolve throughout the practicum experience; students will have the ability to modify the product type and description upon completion of the practicum experience. Final products will be submitted in mySPH upon completion of the experience.

## 2. Submit your learning contract.

- After you have submitted your learning contract, your faculty mentor will receive an automatic e-mail prompting their review and approval of your learning contract.
  - Follow up with your faculty mentor if you do not receive approval within a few business days. The automatic e-mail may have been blocked as spam mail by your preceptor's organization.
- Once your faculty mentor has approved the learning contract, the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement will review the document.
  - The office cannot approve learning contracts that do not have faculty mentor approval.
  - Please allow at least **three** business days for review.
  - Any required changes will be e-mailed to you and your faculty mentor.
- Your preceptor will be able to review your learning contract once approved.
- As part of the practicum onboarding process, some organizations have an affiliation or program agreement they want UTHealth to review and sign.
  - If you receive a request to complete an agreement for your practicum, please forward the request to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement ([practicum@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:practicum@uth.tmc.edu)).
  - All international projects will require an agreement. Separate procedure for agreements with international preceptors are followed as these are negotiated by the UTHealth Office of Global Health Initiatives.

## 3. Register for practicum in myUTH.

- The learning contract must be submitted and approved by the student's faculty mentor the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement prior the registering for the practicum in myUTH.
- After approving your learning contract, the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement will e-mail a registration code for practicum (course PH 9997) to your UTHealth e-mail account. Please allow at least one business day, after your learning contract is fully approved, to receive your registration code.
- Register for the number of credits as specified on the approved learning contract (course PH 9997) with the identified faculty mentor, using the unique registration permission code provided to you.
- When registering, be sure to select the correct number of academic credits (one credit for every 60 hours of practicum) as the myUTH system defaults to only one credit.
- Search in myUTH for the course by the class number provided to you.

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## ***Section 4: Practicum Completion and Grading***

### **Finishing your practicum.**

- Conduct the activities described in your learning contract, including meeting with your faculty mentor.
- UTHealth does not require you to complete time sheets. However, your host organization may require it so please discuss with your preceptor.
- Complete and submit your final products in [Practicum Overview section of mySPH](#)
  - You must first create the final product by selecting the type of product and then uploading the file. Each file must be uploaded separately.
- Your faculty mentor will grade your final products and submit your grade. The faculty mentor will verify the selected competencies are appropriately demonstrated in the final products and will issue a grade of pass, fail, or incomplete.
- Notify the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement and your faculty mentor if you find you will not be able to complete your practicum by the end of the semester.

### **Evaluate your practicum.**

- Complete the practicum evaluation e-mailed to you at the end of the semester.
  - The Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement will e-mail your preceptor an evaluation near the end of the semester and provide this evaluation to your faculty mentor.

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## Appendix

There are resources available to students through their academic career as a School of Public Health student. These resources are particularly valuable to students in their applied practice experience. Students are encouraged to review and utilize the following resources in preparation and throughout their applied practice experience.

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### Examples of acceptable written products for specific competencies

Students are required to select at least three MPH Foundational Competencies and two Major-specific Competencies, totaling five competencies they plan to attain through their applied practice experience.

#### *MPH Foundational Competencies (select at least three) and example products:*

| Competency  | Examples of acceptable products  |
|---|--|
| MPH-1: Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A proposal that benefits the organization that includes a methods section.</li><li>▪ A literature review relevant to the practicum organization.</li><li>▪ An evaluation plan for a program conducted by the practicum organization.</li></ul> |
| MPH-2: Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A proposal for the organization that includes quantitative or qualitative data collection methods.</li><li>▪ An organization or program evaluation plan that includes data collection plans.</li></ul>   |
| MPH-3: Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A paper, presentation or poster that includes the analysis and results sections. The product must demonstrate the student analyzed quantitative or qualitative data.</li></ul>   |
| MPH-4: Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A paper, presentation or poster that includes a results and conclusion section.</li><li>▪ A literature review that includes evidence tables of data analysis results.</li></ul>  |
| MPH-5: Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A paper that compares the organization, structure and function of your practicum site with similar organizations across a variety of settings.</li></ul>   |
| MPH-6: 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A paper discussing how structural bias, social inequities and racism impact health equity.</li></ul>   |
| MPH-7: Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A needs assessment of the practicum organization or the population they serve.</li></ul>   |
| MPH-8: Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A paper describing how cultural values and practices are incorporated into organizational programs, policies, or practices.</li></ul>  |

| Competency  | Examples of acceptable products   |
|---|---|
| MPH-9: Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper describing the design of a population based-policy, program, or intervention with evidence to support the innovation or policy.</li> </ul> |
| MPH-10: Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A business plan or proposal for resource allocation or management of an existing or new proposal.</li> </ul>                                       |
| MPH-11: Select methods to evaluate public health programs.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An evaluation plan of a new or existing program associated with the practicum organization.</li> </ul>   |
| MPH-12: Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A policy brief that delineates the methodology used to develop the proposed policy, including the role of ethics and evidence.</li> </ul>          |
| MPH-13: Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A proposal to increase stakeholder involvement or building coalitions to support the organization or program.</li> </ul>                           |
| MPH-14: Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letters, editorials, or other written materials that advocate for policy change.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-15: Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An impact evaluation of a policy that impacts the organization.</li> </ul>   |
| MPH-16: Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A strategic plan that includes vision, mission, decision making guidance, and empowering and influencing stakeholders.</li> </ul>                  |
| MPH-17: Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.   | <p><i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i></p>  |
| MPH-18: Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An analysis of the pros and cons of various communication strategies for various audiences for the practicum organization.</li> </ul>              |
| MPH-19: Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This criterion can be met if sharing information both in writing and orally.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-20: Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A communication plan that incorporates cultural competence principles.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-21: Perform effectively on interprofessional teams.   | <p><i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i></p>  |
| MPH-22: Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written product that incorporates systems thinking tools into understanding a public health issue relevant to the organization.</li> </ul>       |

*MPH Major-Specific Competencies (select at least two) and example products:*

| Competency   | Examples of acceptable products  |
|--|--|
| <b>Biostatistics Competencies</b>  |  |
| MS-B1. Use appropriate statistical methods and models to analyze data from the public health, biomedical, or bioinformatics arena.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write-up resulting from a data analysis</li> </ul>  |
| MS-B2. Demonstrate the correct use of probability distributions and theory of statistical inference within biostatistics and public health.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A write-up demonstrating the correct use of probability distributions and statistical inference</li> </ul>  |
| MS-B3. Outline a statistical analysis strategy to appropriately answer a research question.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A statistical methods section for a proposal.</li> </ul>  |
| MS-B4. Use multiple statistical software packages to analyze data to answer public health research questions.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A write up from a data analysis using multiple statistical packages.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Environmental Health Competencies</b>   |  |
| MPH-O1. Conduct a risk characterization of an environmental hazard.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper describing the risk characterization of an environmental hazard relevant to the preceptor organization.</li> </ul>                              |
| MPH-O2. Critically evaluate information and data in the peer-reviewed literature related to environmental health sciences, considering the quality and suitability of literature and data.                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An evidence-based literature review related to an environmental science issue of interest to the practicum organization.</li> </ul>                     |
| MPH-O3. Describe regulatory programs, including effectiveness, in the context of legislative authorities that deal with environmental health issues at the local, state, federal, or international levels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A literature review of regulations impacting the practicum organization and their effectiveness in addressing an environmental health issue.</li> </ul> |
| MPH-O4. Evaluate the function, structure and financing of environmental programs.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An evaluation of the function, structure and financing of environmental programs related to the practicum organization.</li> </ul>                      |
| MPH-O5. Demonstrate effective risk communication that incorporates the principles of risk perception.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication materials that demonstrate effective risk communication.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Epidemiology Competencies</b>   |  |
| MPH-E1. Apply data collection and data management skills for an epidemiologic study.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A data collection and data management manual of procedures.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-E2. Demonstrate the application of epidemiology for informing etiologic research, public health surveillance, or screening programs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A literature review of epidemiologic research that is relevant to the practicum organization.</li> </ul>  |



| Competency  | Examples of acceptable products  |
|---|--|
| MPH-E3. Evaluate a public health problem in terms of magnitude, person, place and time, and exposure-outcome relationships.                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A literature review of epidemiologic research.</li> <li>▪ Data analysis and results section of data collected by the practicum organization</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-E4. Apply basic ethical principles pertaining to the collection and management of epidemiologic information.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manual of procedures that includes basic ethical principles</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-E5. Appropriately interpret measures of disease frequency and association, taking into account the impact of bias and error on results and conclusions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Literature review and evidence tables of disease outcome of interest to the practicum organization</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Health Promotion/Health Education Competencies</b>   |  |
| MPH-H1. Conduct a needs assessment in partnership with stakeholders to address a public health issue.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A needs assessment useful to the practicum organization in collaboration with stakeholders.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-H2. Explain how social or behavioral sciences theories are operationalized in health promotion interventions.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper analyzing how social or behavioral science theories are incorporated into programs or interventions delivered by the practicum organization</li> <li>▪ A paper proposing how social or behavioral science theories can be incorporated into interventions or programs delivered by the practicum organization.</li> </ul> |
| MPH-H3. Apply a systematic planning framework to plan a theory and evidence-based health promotion intervention.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper applying intervention mapping to plan an intervention for the practicum organization.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-H4. Apply a systematic planning framework to plan the adoption and implementation of a health promotion intervention.                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper applying intervention mapping to plan the adoption and implementation of a health promotion intervention that could be used by the practicum organization.</li> </ul>   |
| MPH-H5 Describe a plan to evaluate a health promotion intervention.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written plan to evaluate a program or intervention delivered by the practicum organization.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Health Promotion/Health Education– Dietetic Internship Competencies</b>  |  |
| MPH-DI1. Use the Evidence Analyses Process (EAP) to review a nutrition topic and develop a nutrition focused public health intervention.                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written product using the EAP to review a nutrition topic.</li> <li>▪ A written paper that describes a nutrition focused public health intervention based on an EAP review.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-DI2. Develop a public health nutrition intervention activity based on community nutrition-related needs, assets and capacities.                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written paper describing needs, assets and capacities that lead to the development of a public health nutrition intervention activity.</li> </ul>   |

| Competency   | Examples of acceptable products   |
|--|---|
| MPH-DI3. Communicate patient or client cases using professional nutrition standards.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper or presentation that communicates patient or client cases using professional nutrition standards.</li> </ul>               |
| MPH-DI4. Demonstrate the ability to conduct nutrition-focused physical assessments.  | <i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i>   |
| MPH-DI5. Implement evidence and theory-based nutrition interventions.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written analysis describing how evidence and theory-based nutrition interventions were implemented.</li> </ul>                   |
| <b>Community Health Practice Competencies</b>  |   |
| MPH-C1. Compare and contrast program-planning models used by public health organizations.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper that compares and contrasts program planning models used by the host organization.</li> </ul>                              |
| MPH-C2. Describe the interconnectedness of governmental and non-profit systems in influencing a public health problem.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A paper detailing a public health problem of interest to the host organization.</li> </ul>   |
| MPH-C3. Collaborate with community-based organizations on social justice initiatives to enhance self-reflection when working with diverse communities  | <i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i>   |
| MPH-C4. Examine the role of leadership in public health practice.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A theory-based analysis of leadership skills used within the practicum organization.</li> </ul>                                    |
| MPH-C5. Illustrate how the mechanisms and pathways through which economic or social determinants affect health.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A logic model and written description that illustrates the... affecting a health issue of interest to the organization.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Healthcare Management Competencies</b>  |   |
| MPH-M1. Team Leadership: Collaborates with others to complete team-based assignments within healthcare organizations, adapting when needed to maximize organizational and personal success.              | <i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i>   |
| MPH-M2. Strategic Orientation: Synthesizes organizational opportunities and challenges and defends strategies for organizational success.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A SWOT analysis that includes a written justification.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-M3. Analytical Thinking: Evaluates and analyzes quality, safety and financial performance measures to support managerial decision making in healthcare organizations.                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A proposal of evidence-based measures useful to the organization to support decision making.</li> </ul>                            |
| MPH-M4. Ethics & Professionalism: Synthesizes knowledge and skills needed to excel professionally with high ethical standards and uses these skills while making a meaningful contribution to the field. | <i>This competency is unable to be validated in a written product and cannot be selected.</i>   |

| Competency  | Examples of acceptable products   |
|---|---|
| MPH-M5. Organizational Management: Selects, integrates and evaluates organizational resources to provide high- quality customer-oriented health services responsive to the ever-changing political landscape. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An evaluation of organizational resources.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Health Services Organization Competencies</b>  |   |
| MPH-S1. Demonstrate understanding of microeconomic theory in a market system and how to apply those concepts to understand the economics of the healthcare system and market failure in the US                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A written paper investigating how the practicum site is impacted by microeconomic theory.</li> </ul>   |
| MPH-S2. Review and critically evaluate scientific studies that estimate the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of health policy alternatives.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A literature review that explores the EEE of health policies affecting the practicum site.</li> </ul>  |
| MPH-S3. Prepare a detailed policy analysis plan to assess alternative policies for improving the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of health services.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A policy analysis for improving effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of organizational services.</li> </ul>                                     |
| MPH-S4. Describe the internal and external validity strengths and limitations of health policy evaluations and the degree to which results are useful to decision-makers.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A proposal of a policy evaluation useful to the host site that includes the internal and external validity strengths and limitations.</li> </ul> |
| MPH-S5. Critically evaluate peer-reviewed published manuscripts in the area of health economics or health services research to identify potential study questions.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A literature review to identify a student question of interest to the host site.</li> </ul>  |

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## International Practicum Requirements

- If you plan to travel internationally for your practicum, e-mail the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement at [practicum@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:practicum@uth.tmc.edu) as soon as you find out who will be hosting your international practicum.
  - Please provide us with your host organization, your preceptor, and an English-speaking contact along with approximate dates of your travel and project.
- The Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement will initiate a program agreement with your international host through the [UTHealth Office of Global Health Initiatives](#). Negotiating this agreement can take several months, so the earlier we can initiate the agreement, the better.
- At least two months prior to your trip, you need to provide the practicum office with a copy of your flight information, a travel itinerary, copies of your ISOS registration, and the practicum travel application. [Please find more information here.](#)

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## Considerations for International students

- Notify your international advisor early about your intention to pursue a practicum.
- You must receive Curricular Practical Training (CPT) approval through the [Office of International Affairs](#) before you begin your project.
- To apply for CPT approval, please review the following instructions:
  - Consult your international advisor.
  - Complete the [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) form.
  - Follow learning contract approval procedures and enroll in PH 9997.
  - Submit the CPT form along with the following items to [SPHStudentRecords@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:SPHStudentRecords@uth.tmc.edu).
    - A copy of your approved practicum learning contract
    - A letter on organization letterhead from your preceptor specifying the beginning and ending dates of the practicum, your practicum learning objectives, hours per week, location of your practicum, and whether the practicum is paid or unpaid.
      - *Note: If an unpaid position converts to a paid position during the semester, or vice versa, contact the [Office of International Affairs](#) immediately.*
  - If you are traveling internationally for your practicum and CPT approval is not applicable, you should still consult with your international advisor on your travel and practicum. See guidelines for international travel on the [Practicum Travel](#) webpage.
  - **You must receive approval from the Office of International Affairs before beginning work on your practicum.**

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## Human Subjects or Animal Research Considerations

- Work with your faculty mentor to determine if your practicum will involve human subjects research requiring Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.
- If so, you must receive approval from UTHealth's [Committee for Protection of Human Subjects](#) (CPHS) even if your preceptor or host organization already has an approved protocol for the study. In **addition** to receiving approval through UTHealth's CPHS, check with your preceptor about being added the practicum site's protocol, if conducting your practicum outside of UTHealth.
- If you are **unsure** whether the activities for your practicum involve human subjects research, please email a detailed description of your activities to CPHS at [cphs@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:cphs@uth.tmc.edu). A staff person at CPHS can help you determine if the activities meet the definition of human subjects research.
- Animal Research: If you think your practicum involves research on animal subjects or animal derived materials, discuss your proposed activities with your faculty mentor and the [Animal Welfare Committee](#).

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## Available Onboarding and Training Materials

- HIPPA Training: If your practicum will involve working with protected health information (PHI), review the CITI module in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) training that can be accessed [here](#).
- If you will be working with PHI at a site external to UTHealth, ask your preceptor if your host organization provides site-specific HIPPA training.
  - Requests for review and approval for animal research must be submitted through [iRIS](#).

- Hazardous Materials: If you will be working with hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, or infectious or biological agents at a UTHealth campus or facility, please work with your faculty mentor to complete appropriate steps and please visit [UTHealth's Safety, Health, Environment and Risk Management's website](#) for additional resources
  - If you will be working with hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, or infectious or biological agents at site external to UTHealth, follow all safety regulations or training at your practicum host site. If you feel you have not received adequate training or are concerned about your safety while working at your practicum site, do not proceed with your activities and contact the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement or your faculty mentor.

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### Certificate Program Requirements

If you are enrolled in either of the following certificate programs, verify with your advisor that the practicum is suitable for your certificate:

- Global Health
- Maternal and Child Health

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### Frequently Asked Questions

What is a practicum?

A practicum is a unique learning experience that is planned, supervised, evaluated and graded. Practicum experiences allow students the opportunity to apply classroom education towards a real-world public health problem in a work setting. Each experience varies according to the student's interests and preceptor's needs and must be mutually beneficial for the student and the community preceptor. Each practicum culminates in the submission of two final products that are planned and approved by the preceptor and the faculty mentor before the student begins the experience. Students have the option to undergo several practicum experiences.

What are the benefits of a practicum?

The benefits of a practicum experience are many! Students learn practical skills, develop useful contacts in the practice community, gain valuable work experience in the field of public health, and produce final products of sufficiently high quality to be published or presented at a conference. These activities and skills enhance resumes and potentially improve a student's job prospects.

Who is required to complete a practicum?

A practicum is required for students enrolled in our professional degree programs. These include the Master in Public Health (MPH) degree and the Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) degree.

Is academic credit earned?

Yes, MPH and DrPH students earn academic credit for completing a practicum. Students receive credit by enrolling and completing the requirements of academic course PH9997. Generally, students earn one academic credit for about 60 hours of public health practice and three PH9997 credits may be applied toward your degree. These three credits may come from a single practicum experience or several practicum experiences. While enrolling in additional credit hours can enrich your public health experience, only three academic credit hours count toward your degree.

May I have more than one practicum experience?

Yes, if permitted by your faculty advisor, you may have more than one practicum experience. Keep in mind, however, that only three academic credits count toward your degree.

May I complete the practicum over more than one semester?

Yes, if permitted by your faculty advisor. While many students complete all three credits over one semester, you may decide it is best to spread out the project over multiple semesters. You would need to discuss this option with your faculty mentor and preceptor and develop a schedule. You will need a new learning contract for each semester that you register and it should reflect the number of academic credits you plan to attain that

Why is a practicum required?

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body for Schools of Public Health in the United States, requires that students earning MPH and DrPH degrees receive practice-based training in a setting outside the classroom. Additionally, formal surveys conducted by the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) and anecdotal evidence from local meetings suggest that employers prefer to hire graduates with tangible skills acquired through practice experience. Therefore, the practicum is an essential part of our curriculum.

Why is meant by community engagement?

Your practicum project should require you to interact or communicate with others besides your preceptor and have an outward focus. Activities must focus on the larger population health context.

What if I have more questions?

You may also e-mail your question to the Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement at [practicum@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:practicum@uth.tmc.edu). This mailbox is the most reliable way to receive a quick response to your questions or concerns.

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## Popular Practicum Sites by Campus

### Popular Practicum Sites by Campus

#### Office of Public Health Practice and Engagement

Below is a non-exhaustive list of practicum sites students have used since 2018. This list provides examples of sites students may conduct a practicum project however, students are welcome to pursue experiences elsewhere.

#### AUSTIN

- Texas Department of State Health Services
- City of Austin
- University of Texas at Austin
- Dell Medical School
- CommUnity Care
- It's Time Texas

#### BROWNSVILLE

- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Lincoln Park Alternative High School
- Texas Department of State Health Services
- Parents for Advocating for Student Success
- Le Fe Policy Research and Education Center
- City of Brownsville

#### DALLAS

- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
- Susan G. Komen
- Planned Parenthood
- Dallas County Health and Human Services
- Children's Medical Center
- Safe Kids Dallas Area Coalition

#### EL PASO

- Texas Tech University Health Science Center
- El Paso Department of Public Health
- Centro San Vicente Health Center
- Child Crisis Center of El Paso
- El Paso Water
- Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center

#### HOUSTON

- Baylor College of Medicine
- MD Anderson Cancer Center
- Texas Children's Hospital
- Harris County Public Health and Environmental Sciences
- Harris Health System
- Houston Health Department

#### SAN ANTONIO

- UT Health San Antonio (all schools)
- City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health Department
- United States Air Force
- Methodist Healthcare Ministries
- Texas Diabetes Institute
- University Health System