OVERVIEW

• Purpose and Benefits
• Practicum Policies
• Roles and Responsibilities
• Appropriate Practicum Site
• Requirements
• Practicum Documentation and Deliverables
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WHAT IS A PRACTICUM?

• The practicum is an applied practice experience in which the student completes at least one project for or on behalf of an organization which is:
  • Meaningful for the public health organization
  • Advances public health practice
PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF PRACTICUMS

• The practicum is a requirement for all DrPH-seeking students.

• Allows students to enhance their public health skills to an advanced level allowing graduates to pursue careers as practicing public health professionals in leadership positions.

• Allows students to demonstrate mastery of evidence-based public health decision-making and capacity to translate general and discipline-specific empirical knowledge into effective public health practice.
GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- The practicum should address a need identified by a host organization.
- Directly relates your academic goals and professional interests.
- The emphasis of the DrPH practicum is leadership development:
  - The student should be the leader of the practicum project.
  - Seek advice and guidance as needed.
  - Incorporate higher level skills compared to the MPH internship experiences.
COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

• Must align with at least three (3) DrPH competencies
  • 1. Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community and population) levels
  
  • 5. Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies
  
  • 11. Assess one’s own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency (completed through journaling requirement in Interntrack)

• Students should work with faculty advisor to select two (2) additional departmental competencies
PRACTICUM POLICIES

- DrPH Core courses in your area of expertise must be completed and along with any required concentration work or specialty elective work.
- 6 credit-hour course – register under your Faculty Advisor at the SOPH
  - Completed in 1 semester (1 X 6-hour course)
  - Completed in 2 semesters (2 X 3-hour courses)
- Each department will have an individual course number (**793**)
- You will not be able to register until your Practicum Proposal Form is completed and approved by faculty advisor and preceptor in the APEx portal.
PRACTICUM POLICIES

- Student must complete a minimum of 360 contact hours in a practicum experience.

- Work must be completed within the academic semester you are registered for the practicum.
  - You cannot start before the 1st day of classes.
  - You must be completed before last day of classes.

- Final grade (Pass/No Pass) awarded by the faculty advisor.
  - Grades assigned based on completion of Final Paper, Product(s), Presentation, Monthly Reflections, and Preceptor Evaluations.
• The identified project should not be a strictly academic exercise
  • That is, not simply writing a manuscript or completing a project that has already been conceived and started by the organization

• The project should be largely conceived between the organization and student with feedback from the faculty advisor

• The student is responsible for the progression of the project towards the stated project goals
• Faculty Advisor:
  • This is a faculty member at UAB
  • Often, students choose their academic advisor, but this is not a requirement

• External Practicum Preceptor:
  • Works for the organization where the student will complete the practicum
  • Should be experienced in public health
The DrPH Student will:

- Identify the practicum site, preceptor, and faculty sponsor (if different from advisor)
- Ensures that the practicum proposal form is completed and electronically approved before registering
- If necessary, ensures other forms are completed before beginning the practicum (ex. IRB, affiliation agreement)
- Complete the practicum as outlined in the practicum proposal and all assignments in the APEx portal throughout the semester
- Ensure the Preceptor completes all documents in the APEx portal (i.e. approves practicum proposal form, mid and final evaluations of student)
External Preceptor will:

- Mentor the student throughout the practicum experience
- Provide the day-to-day supervision throughout the practicum
- Create an account for use in the APEx Portal
- Complete an evaluation of performance at midpoint and the end of the semester(s)
- Verify completion of hours completed by student
FACULTY ADVISOR ROLE

• Faculty Advisor will:
  • Provides guidance for the student as they develop their Practicum Proposal Form and throughout the practicum experience
  • Communicate with the community preceptor as needed
  • Assigns the student’s grade (Pass/Fail) based on the preceptor’s evaluation of the student’s performance and completion of the practicum seminar
  • Approves the Practicum Proposal Form and monitor the student’s progress during the practicum at an agreed upon timeline (e.g. monthly)
PRACTICUM LOCATION

• The location should be:
  • **External** to the SOPH but may be an organization within UAB
  • Selected by the student and faculty advisor
  • Directly related to the student academic goals and professional interests
  • The focus must be public health and community (population health)
  • Examples of appropriate practicum sites include:
    • Federal public health agencies, (i.e., the CDC, HRSA, and NIH)
    • State and county departments of health*
    • Community-based organizations
    • Non-profit organizations
    • Private industry
    • Community hospitals
    • Other organizations involved in public health work

* Many state and county departments of health require an affiliation agreement. These take months to get approved by UA legal and the organization’s legal department (if they get approved at all). If you plan to complete your practicum at the health department outside of Alabama, please let Elena Kidd (enlinn@uab.edu) know ASAP.
PRACTICUM LOCATION (CONT.)

• DrPH students currently working in a public health organization can do a placement in his or her regular place of employment.

• **However**, the practicum must go above and beyond regular work duties, allowing for the application of advanced knowledge and skills acquired in the academic program.
• International students have additional documents to complete (contact your practicum coordinator).

• If you are completing your Practicum Abroad or traveling abroad for your practicum, you must register with UAB Education Abroad.

• If your practicum requires IRB approval, you must either submit an IRB application or be added to the projects IRB. The IRB approval process might significantly extend the time needed to prepare for a practicum.
REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Practicum Proposal Form (completed by the student; approved by the faculty advisor & preceptor BEFORE registering in BlazerNet)
- Student Monthly Reflections (completed at the start of the practicum and then every month)
- Student Final Reflection of the Practicum Experience
- Student Final Written Product
- Student Final Presentation
- Student Hour Log
- Student Product(s) you develop during your Practicum
- Preceptor Midpoint and Final Evaluations of Student Performance

Complete all required documentation in the APEx portal:
https://sites.uab.edu/apex/for-drph-students/drph-practicum-overview/
The criteria for evaluation are:

- Demonstrating competency in collaborating with public health practitioners
- Ability to demonstrate leadership for a specified project
- Ability to communicate the results of a practice experience to relevant stakeholders, orally and/or in writing
- Practicum Proposal Form (PPF)
  - Must be completed and electronically approved by your faculty advisor and practicum preceptor (site supervisor)
  - Must be completed prior to the start of the semester in which you are completing your practicum
  - YOU CANNOT REGISTER IN BLAZERNET BEFORE PPF IS APPROVED
  - YOU CANNOT START YOUR PRACTICUM BEFORE YOU ARE REGISTERED
  - You should not start the PPF until you have secured a practicum.
REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION
PRACTICUM PROPOSAL FORM

- Personal Information (phone number and emergency contact)
- Agency scope of work or primary focus
- Project title
- Project background
- Project goals and aims
- Summary of how you will achieve these goals and aims.
- Describe how these activities complement DrPH foundational and concentration competencies
- Preceptor’s information
- IRB Approval, expected start/end date, expected number of hours spent on site
REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION
MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

• Completed by the student at the start of the practicum and every month via the APEx Portal

• Describes the progress of the experience:
  • Goals for the upcoming month
  • Reflection on the previous month’s goals*
  • Achievements the past month*
  • Barrier’s faced the past month*
  * Are not completed at the start of your practicum.

• Your faculty advisor and practicum coordinator will receive a copy of each reflection.

• Faculty advisor will add comments (as appropriate)
OTHER REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

• Preceptor Midpoint Evaluation of Student Performance

• Final Evaluations (once practicum is complete)
  • Student Reflection of Practicum Experience
  • Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance

• All documents must be completed prior to the end of the term via the APEx portal.
You initiate preceptor registration when you complete the preceptor information in your Practicum Proposal Form (PPF).

You will not be able to submit your PPF until your preceptor has created an account and the account has been approved and cleared in the system.

• Depending on if the preceptor is internal to UAB, has a UABMC account, or external to UAB, the time for approval could take as little as a few minutes to a couple of days…

• If your preceptor has a UAB MC account please:
  • Notify the OPHP
  • Use their University email address (you can look this up in the UAB directory)
DELIVERABLES

• Written Report (approx. 20 page double-spaced, 1” margins, Times Roman). Should include:
  • Summary of results with suggested recommendations for action
  • Reflective component of your personal and/or professional reactions to the practicum
  • Description of how the practicum demonstrated the five competencies selected in the Practicum Proposal form
• Presentation
  • 30-45 minute presentation to be presented to your DrPH colleagues in the SOPH
• Final Product(s)
• Final Hour Log

Must be uploaded in the APEx portal by your last day of classes the semester you complete your practicum
General Timeline

- Online at the UAB SOPH Applied Practice Experience website under section “For DrPH Students → DrPH Timeline”

https://sites.uab.edu/apex/for-drph-students/drph-timeline/
The practicum is a requirement for all DrPH-seeking students. It enhances an individual's public health skills to an advanced level allowing graduates to pursue careers as practicing public health professionals in leadership positions.

The DrPH is the highest professional degree in public health. It is designed to advance an individual's skills and competencies. Graduates may pursue careers as public health practitioners, leadership positions in domestic and international organizations, and in academia. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), our accrediting agency, requires that each DrPH student be able to demonstrate the DrPH competencies through a practicum experience in addition to course work, qualifying examinations, a written and oral proposal of an original research protocol, a final research project and a public defense of the research. Through this practicum experience, DrPH students take on the responsibility for the completion of at least one project that is meaningful for an organization and to advanced public health practice.

http://sites.uab.edu/apex/for-drph-students/drph-practicum-overview/
HOW DO I BEGIN TO LOOK FOR A PRACTICUM?

- Look in the “Get a Handle” student newsletter for information on employer information sessions and networking opportunities
- Ask your faculty advisor or other faculty members for advice
- Attend a seminar or other networking opportunity
- Meet with your practicum coordinator to brainstorm ideas
- Volunteer
- Contact organizations that interests you
- Applied Practice Experience website
QUESTIONS?