

CPH:7800 - MPH Practicum

MPH Practicum Director: Jeanie Kimbel, (jeanie-kimbel@uiowa.edu)

Credit: 3 semester hours

Schedule: This course is offered in fall, spring and summer terms

BACKGROUND

Collegiate accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requires that MPH students demonstrate competency attainment through applied practice experiences (APE). Furthermore, MPH students must complete an integrative learning experience (ILE) that demonstrates synthesis of foundational and concentration competencies. Completion of CPH:7800 MPH Practicum fulfills both the APE and ILE requirements for MPH students.

The goal of the MPH Practicum is to provide students with the opportunity to work in an organization that addresses public health issues. During the practicum, students apply public health principles and theories learned in MPH courses and demonstrate public health competencies in their activities. The practicum enriches students' educational training in public health by bridging the gap between the classroom and public health practice. The practicum functions as a practice-based culminating experience for the MPH degree. MPH students typically complete their practicum during their final semester of the program. Exceptions are granted in very rare circumstances and only when all prerequisites are met. The syllabus for CPH:7800 MPH Practicum can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Prior to registering for and starting the practicum, students must:

- complete all required MPH core courses and the majority of other MPH coursework.
- have a site-based preceptor approved by the MPH Practicum Director.
- have their project proposal approved by the MPH Practicum Director, site preceptor, and faculty mentor.

During the practicum, students will:

- apply 5 public health competencies in carrying out the practicum. Of the 5 competencies selected, 3 competencies must be foundational, and 1 competency must be concentration specific. The remaining competency may be either foundational or concentration specific. A list of foundational and concentration-specific competencies can be found in [Appendix B](#).
- develop a minimum of 2 practical, non-academic work products (deliverables) that demonstrate attainment of the selected competencies and meet the needs of the host organization.

- submit a written report that is developed in a manner that is useful to external stakeholders, such as non-profit or governmental organizations, and could inform others' future practices.
- complete a public presentation. The CPH poster session allows students to reflect on their practicum and present it in a visual form to the audience. NOTE: Students in the Practicing Veterinarian program will complete an oral presentation in lieu of participating in the CPH poster session.

ROLE CLARIFICATION

The **MPH Practicum Director** for the MPH Practicum (CPH:7800) is available to help students identify opportunities and assist in the development and implementation of successful projects. The MPH Practicum Director authorizes course registration and ultimately determines the practicum grade in consultation with the site preceptor, the faculty mentor, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

The **Site Preceptor** is the practice liaison representing the host organization/agency where the practicum is carried out. They collaborate with the student in developing the proposal and orient the student to all aspects of the project and the site. They provide guidance to, and regular oversight of the student in carrying out the practicum. The preceptor is expected to provide feedback to the MPH Practicum Director on student performance and must be able to do so in English. A preceptor's resume/curriculum vitae must be collected (if not already on file) to determine suitability to provide MPH Practicum supervision. The student and preceptor must be fluent in a common language. The appropriateness of potential preceptors will be discussed in detail with the MPH Practicum Director.

The **Faculty Mentor** is typically the student's assigned departmental faculty academic advisor. However, the student may identify a different faculty mentor with prior approval (see note below). The faculty mentor serves 3 roles: (1) reviews and approves the application of concentration-specific competencies in the practicum proposal; (2) serves as a consultant to advise the student regarding the application of concentration-specific competencies, as needed; and (3) evaluates the application of concentration-specific competencies at the conclusion of the practicum.

NOTE: Changing Faculty Mentor - If a student wishes to change faculty mentors, the student initiates the change by determining which faculty member would be preferred and discussing the possibility with the preferred faculty mentor. Students may also consult with their Graduate Program Coordinator, Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the MPH Practicum Director should they need help identifying a more suitable mentor. Upon approval by the new faculty mentor, the student must then notify the prior mentor and the MPH Practicum Director.

FACULTY MENTOR ROLE – OVERVIEW

The scope of the faculty mentor role is tied explicitly to the student's application of **concentration-specific** competencies.

It is expected that the student will initiate contact with the faculty mentor. Please note that any delay in responding to student requests will unnecessarily delay their progress in achieving their practicum goals. **It is expected that the faculty mentor will respond promptly to student communications.**

The time periods during which faculty mentors should expect communication from their students include:

1. **Prior to course registration**, as the student is developing their practicum proposal, they may reach out to their faculty mentor to seek advice about the specific application of concentration competencies as these relate to the practicum activities (e.g., the student may seek advice regarding the most appropriate statistical methods if data analysis is required). The faculty mentor is also required to approve the final practicum proposal.

NOTE: Student guidelines for proposal development are located in [Appendix C](#).

2. **During the working period**, the student may reach out to their faculty mentor for additional consultation. This is most likely to occur in the event that the student encounters a barrier to their progress and/or a significant change to the project is required (e.g., a deliverable is changed such that the applied concentration-specific competency must also be changed). In the event of a significant revision to the previously approved plan, the faculty mentor is expected to review the revised plan and contact the MPH Practicum Director if there are concerns (otherwise, approval is assumed).

There is no requirement that students must meet with their faculty mentor during the practicum work period; however, the faculty mentor may request a meeting with the student to check-in, as desired.

NOTE: The faculty mentor is not required to review drafts of deliverables or the final written report prior to the conclusion of the practicum. The site preceptor serves as the student's primary point of contact regarding the appropriateness and acceptability of the required deliverables. The MPH Practicum Director serves as the student's primary point of contact regarding the written report. Writing support is provided through 3 required meetings/seminars with the MPH Practicum Director over the term in which they are registered. Student guidelines for the written report are located in [Appendix D](#).

3. **At the conclusion of the course**, the faculty mentor will be required to evaluate the student's application of concentration-specific competencies during the practicum

experience by conducting a review of the student's final written report and deliverables. The MPH Practicum Director will notify the faculty mentor when their evaluation is required. Further instructions, including the evaluation form and rubric, can be found in [Appendix E](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who should I contact when I have a question?

Contact the MPH Practicum Director: Jeanie Kimbel (jeanine-kimbel@uiowa.edu) with any questions that you may have about the practicum experience and/or your role as a faculty mentor.

What is a deliverable?

A deliverable is a practical, non-academic work product that demonstrates attainment of the selected competencies and meets the needs of the host organization. Students must develop a minimum of 2 deliverables during their practicum experience. Examples of suitable deliverables include project plans, grant proposals, training manuals or lesson plans, surveys, memos, videos, podcasts, presentations, spreadsheets, websites, etc.

Can I serve as both the student's preceptor and faculty mentor on their practicum project?

No, faculty members are not eligible to serve as practicum preceptors.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	CPH:7800 Course Syllabus
Appendix B	List of MPH Foundational and Concentration-Specific Competencies
Appendix C	Student guidelines for proposal
Appendix D	Student guidelines for written report
Appendix E	Faculty evaluation survey for the final written report