

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

PRACTICUM PRECEPTOR HANDBOOK

IOWA

College of Public Health

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in hosting a Master of Public Health (MPH) student practicum. This information packet provides guidelines for you regarding the process, including course requirements and the roles and responsibilities of the preceptor and student.

Please feel free to contact us at any point with any questions or concerns. The MPH Practicum Director is Jeanie Kimbel, and she can be reached at jeanine-kimbel@uiowa.edu.

We appreciate your support of our student(s) and the future public health workforce by serving as a preceptor. Our program is strengthened by your involvement.

WHAT IS AN MPH PRACTICUM?

The MPH Practicum is an opportunity for graduate-level public health students at the University of Iowa, College of Public Health to apply public health competencies in a real-world setting. It is a comprehensive and integrated application of the MPH curriculum that functions as the culminating experience for the MPH. Students are required to complete the MPH Practicum in the final semester of their plan of study. A practicum is coordinated between a preceptor (an experienced public health professional working in the public health practice sector) and a student, under the direction of the MPH Practicum Director and the mentorship of a faculty advisor. The project meets the needs of the host organization, while the student gains experience in the application of public health skills and competencies in a topic area of interest.

PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS

1. **Applies public health skills and competencies** relevant to the student's areas of study and interest.
2. Is carried out within a **public health practice context** (includes population-level activities at an established organization/agency).
3. Is supervised by a **qualified preceptor** who has experience and knowledge in the subject matter.
4. Is a significant experience, with a minimum work requirement of **200 hours**.
5. Is an **evaluated experience**: preceptors evaluate students based on achievement of defined competencies and deliverables; students self-assess their achievement through reflection on their coursework and practicum; and all products/presentations are evaluated by the MPH Practicum Director and College of Public Health faculty.

PRECEPTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assist in developing the project by approving the learning objectives and scope of activities to be achieved in the practicum.
- Work with the student to identify their activities and responsibilities.
- Assist in orienting the student to the agency/organization and the community that it serves.
- Assist the student in becoming acquainted with agency staff early in the experience.
- Provide on-going oversight and maintain consistent contact with the student throughout the practicum.
- Complete two, web-based evaluation surveys, one at the mid-point and another upon completion of the practicum. (See the “*MPH Practicum Progress Report*” in Appendix A, and the “*Preceptor’s Final Evaluation of MPH Practicum*” in Appendix B.)

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The practicum must provide opportunity for the student to apply knowledge and theory learned in the classroom to a professional work setting and to develop the skills needed for successful transition to the public health workforce. While in the work arena, students will adhere to the policies and procedures of the organization as if a regular employee. In addition, the student is expected to:

- Learn about the scope of the organization/agency, its funding sources, and its programs as well as the community it serves.
- Have a proposal approved by the preceptor, the MPH Practicum Director, and their faculty mentor before the official start of the practicum.
- Receive guidance from the preceptor or other appropriate agency personnel to clarify the expectations and/or uncertainties about duties.
- Meet regularly with the preceptor to discuss progress.
- Perform tasks and assignments as efficiently and effectively as possible, and discuss any barriers or changes in work plans with the preceptor and the MPH Practicum Director.
- Meet with the preceptor prior to the end of the experience to jointly evaluate the practicum.
- Submit a final paper that describes, discusses, and evaluates the practicum, along with outlining how they were able to apply public health competencies.
- Present about the practicum at the scheduled poster session or oral presentation.

EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICUM

Written reports, poster presentations (or oral presentations) and preceptor evaluation surveys provide the essential basis for evaluation of practicums and serve as a mechanism for feedback to agency preceptors, the College of Public Health and the student. Upon completion of the practicum:

1. Preceptors complete a web-based evaluation survey. (See the *“Preceptor’s Final Evaluation of MPH Practicum”* in Appendix B.)
2. Students prepare a written report reflecting on their practicum and the application of public health competencies. This report is evaluated by the MPH Practicum Director and College of Public Health faculty.
3. Students present about the practicum at the scheduled poster session. Distance-based students participate in an oral presentation in lieu of the poster session. All presentations are evaluated by the MPH Practicum Course Director and College of Public Health faculty.
4. Students complete a self-assessment of MPH competency attainment, as well as an evaluation of the practicum site.

TIPS FOR PRECEPTORS

The following are some tips for a successful experience with your student:

Orient the student to your organization

- Tour the building, highlighting work space, break areas and accommodations.
- Introduce the student to organization staff to allow the student to gain an understanding of workplace resources and culture.
- Review relevant policies (e.g., dress code, procedures for absences).
- Discuss work logistics (e.g., exchange contact information, parking, ID badges, computer log-in).
- Review the organization’s history.
- Review the organization’s mission, goals, vision and work on a day to day basis.
- Review the organization’s funding sources.

Supervise the student

- During the course of the practicum, regularly scheduled, check-ins with the student are strongly encouraged to remain aware of student progress as well as to answer questions or address concerns.

- It is important to establish a plan for contacting one another between scheduled meetings (in the event that something pressing arises).
- The MPH program does not require the student to log their work hours in any particular manner. However, the preceptor is asked to vouch for the student's work hours in the final evaluation of the practicum. We strongly encourage you to implement any manner of record keeping you find supportive of this process (e.g., timesheet, spreadsheet, weekly email reports).
- Provide consistent feedback based on the learning objectives in the practicum proposal.
- Take advantage of "teachable moments" and understand that you are molding the future public health workforce.

Contact the MPH Practicum Director with any questions or concerns.

- We are invested in your positive experience as a preceptor, and we greatly appreciate your partnership.
- You will find us to be responsive and supportive of you in your role as a preceptor. We understand without a doubt that our students could not benefit from this practical learning experience without you.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Participation in the practicum is not predicated on the availability of remuneration but on the quality and value of the educational experience. Because of the limited duration and nature of practicum placements, they are typically unpaid. However, preceptors are advised that the student must pay tuition to the University of Iowa for a 3 credit-hour course (approximately \$3000) in order to receive credit for the practicum.

Since students are receiving academic credit, it is against university policy for them to also receive financial compensation for their time and/or services. However, small stipends to support travel, lodging, printing, etc. may be permissible. Please feel free to contact the Practicum Director with any questions.

PLEASE CONTACT US WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

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APPENDIX A: MPH PRACTICUM PROGRESS REPORT

At the approximate mid-point of the practicum, the preceptor will receive an email from the MPH Practicum Director requesting a progress report. Imbedded in this email will be the link to a short, web-based survey. A copy of the survey appears below.

MPH Applied Practicum Preceptor:

Please respond to the following questions with regard to your MPH student's practicum.
Thank you!

Name of student: _____

Name of preceptor (your name): _____

Name of your organization: _____

How is your student progressing on the agreed objectives?

PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE TO DATE

Please rate your agreement with each of the following aspects of the student's performance, or mark "not observed" if the behavior has not been observed during the student's practicum to date.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Observed
I am satisfied with the pace of the student's work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the quality of the student's work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communications with/from the student have been adequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The student takes responsibility for completing proposed activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The student maintains a professional demeanor in the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

General Comments and Appraisal of Student

(Discuss performance ratings from above, strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for student's development/improvement, etc.)

Do you have any concerns at the moment? If so, please describe below.

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Comments regarding concerns:

Do you require any assistance? If so, please comment on your needs below.

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

How can we assist you?

Thank you for completing this evaluation and for your service as a preceptor. We value the contribution of your time and professional expertise. We look forward to a continued relationship with you. Please click the ">>" button and this evaluation will be submitted to the College of Public Health. If you have additional comments or concerns, please feel free to contact Jeanie Kimbel at jeanine-kimbel@uiowa.edu.

APPENDIX B: PRECEPTOR'S FINAL EVALUATION OF MPH PRACTICUM

Near the conclusion of the practicum, the preceptor will receive an email from the MPH Practicum Director requesting an assessment of the student's performance and competence throughout the project. Imbedded in this email will be the link to a web-based survey. A copy of the survey appears below.

MPH Practicum Preceptor:

Please complete the following evaluation of your MPH student's practicum.

Thank you!

Student Name: _____

Preceptor Name (your name): _____

Name of Your Organization: _____

PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

Please rate your agreement with each of the following aspects of the student's performance, or mark "not observed" if the behavior was not observed during the student's practicum.

The student:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Observed
Met the expectations for this practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed the proposed objectives satisfactorily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated the knowledge and skills required for this practicum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Devoted a minimum of 200 hours to this project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was punctual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met deadlines when they existed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed routine tasks without specific instructions; did not require constant oversight	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sought help when unclear about tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demonstrated flexibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Checked work for accuracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Looked for opportunities to learn/become more involved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriately analyzed problems and situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adhered to agency policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked well with others to accomplish tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accepted constructive criticism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercised courtesy with clients, colleagues, public and management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated effective written communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated effective verbal communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managed time wisely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

General Comments and Appraisal of Student

(Discuss strengths and weaknesses, level of achievement, willingness to devote time and energy, sense of purpose and commitment, and recommendations for student's development, etc.)

Would you be willing to work with another MPH Practicum student in the future?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**
- ☐ **Unsure at this time**

If you have potential projects in mind, please note them here:

Thank you for completing this evaluation and for your service as a preceptor. We value the contribution of your time and professional expertise. We look forward to a continued relationship with you. Please click the ">>" button and this evaluation will be submitted to the College of Public Health. If you have additional comments or concerns, please feel free to contact Jeanie Kimbel at jeanine-kimbel@uiowa.edu.