

PRACTICUM HANDBOOK

A Guide for Field Supervisors



2014 Version



ROLLINS
SCHOOL OF
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HEALTH

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THE PRACTICUM

All students of the Rollins School of Public Health seeking professional degrees such as an MPH, pursue opportunities to integrate and apply practical skills and training learned through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. Many of these skills which may include, analytical, financial and management skills are a great pre-graduation resource to public health agencies, organizations, and offices.

As you are probably already aware, internships, volunteer opportunities, and part-time jobs are highly sought among our graduate students. Area agencies and organizations often hire our students during peak work times or for special projects. But did you know that these opportunities may also fulfill a student's practicum requirement?

WHAT IS A PRACTICUM?

A practicum is a unique opportunity for graduate students to integrate and apply practical skills and training learned through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. The Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) requires all students to participate in a practicum experience, as required by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Public health work environments include not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, local health departments, and for-profit firms. A typical practicum experience requires students to work 200-400 hours under the direct supervision of a Field Supervisor and the guidance of the student's department and Career Services. An ideal practicum experience should be:

- Project-oriented work in a public health site
- Allow students to apply graduate level skills in a public health context
- Offer opportunities to engage in activities that will advance a student's career potential and goals

A suitable practicum is a planned, supervised and evaluated practice experience, related to a student's academic goals and professional interests, to apply knowledge and skills acquired through coursework in a community-based environment. Each practicum should:

- Be based on well-defined competencies/learning objectives
- Include a process to track and evaluate student performance, competency achievement and practical experiences
- Be supervised, primarily, by a qualified Field Supervisor (a public health practitioner qualified to evaluate the professional competence of the student)
- Take place in a variety of agencies and organizations including local and state public health

agencies to the extent possible and appropriate.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIELD SUPERVISOR AND ORGANIZATION

A Field Supervisor will serve as a liaison between the school and work site, providing direct supervision to the student. Often, they will serve in a mentoring role, providing the students with valuable guidance, insights and lessons that can only be gleaned from years of professional experience. Field Supervisors should have working knowledge of the public health agency, the community served and the content area as well as a Master of Public Health degree or a Master's Degree in a related field, or the equivalent combination of education and experience.

Field Supervisors are responsible for:

- Developing mutually agreeable goals and objectives with the practicum student(s) at the beginning of the experience.
- Remaining available (on site) to supervise and direct students during the experience.
- Providing feedback to the student and the school by completing an online evaluation form at the end of the experience. Supervisors should schedule time to meet face-to-face and discuss this feedback.
- Completing the Field Supervisor Profile (contact info, credentials and work-setting/content experiences) in the online system.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BECOMING A FIELD SUPERVISOR?

- Aid students in fulfilling their practicum requirement
- Benefit from students offering support on your current projects
- Raise awareness of your organization
- Reserve the opportunity to hire the best
- Serve as a valuable mentoring resource to RSPH
- Contribute to the development of new public health professionals

PRACTICUM PROCESS

1. Initial Contact

Practica may develop in several ways. In some cases, the student may contact a potential Field Supervisor to discuss the possibility of a practicum experience or the Field Supervisor may locate a student to offer a practicum opportunity through postings or word-of-mouth. For information on how Career Services can help you, please see the section called *How Should I Advertise an Opportunity* later in this handbook.

2. Establish Practicum Objectives/Strategies

All practicum experiences require objectives that are mutually agreed upon between the Field Supervisor and the student. The time frame to complete the objectives is the length of time the student will work for your organization. We have included examples of objectives and strategies that RSPH students have submitted in the past on the page titled *Examples of Objectives & Strategies*. Although not required by all departments, some students will complete a [Practicum Agreement Form](#) prior to their practicum and have it reviewed by a staff and/or faculty member in their department and by their Field Supervisor. This form clarifies some critical information about the student's practicum.

3. Data Input by Student

To document student practica experiences, the RSPH maintains an electronic practicum database (Practicum Web Client or a newer version called the Practicum Portal for students that started RSPH in fall 2013). Each database includes the work sites, practica objectives, Field Supervisors' qualifications, and student and Field Supervisor's evaluations of the experience. Together, these databases are available as a reference for the school and for students who may be seeking future opportunities. The databases enable the school to monitor how the practicum requirements are being met and to allow electronic monitoring and approval at various steps. Information entered into the Practicum Web Client/Portal is available for review by the department Assistant/Associate Director of Academic Programs (ADAP) and Practicum Faculty Advisor. [Definitions of these and other key terms are found in the *Glossary* section later in this handbook.] The databases are searchable and allow the school to monitor where students have had professional experiences.

Before the start of a practicum, the student will complete the site information inclusive of the organization name, practicum position title, name and email address of their Field Supervisor, and his or her practicum objectives with strategies for achieving each of the objectives.

If you are supervising a student and your student has submitted their practicum information (including your name and email address) into the system at the beginning of their practicum, you should receive an email from sphdatabase@emory.edu asking you to approve the practicum objectives and update your profile. [If you are expecting an email, but have not received it, please check your spam/junk folders for email from sphdatabase@emory.edu]. The specifics of the log-in and approval process will be provided in the email prompt.

4. Midpoint Check-in with Student

Midway through the student's practicum, the Field Supervisor will be sent an email asking them to meet with their student to discuss how the practicum is going and to review - and if necessary, adjust - the practicum objectives.

5. Two Week Reminder

About 2 weeks prior to the end of the practicum, Field Supervisors and students will be reminded to log back into the Web Client/Portal at the end of the student's experience to complete the student's evaluation (which includes assessing the achievement of objectives and student's overall professionalism and performance).

6. Site Supervisor Evaluation

Once the student has submitted his or her evaluation to the Web Client/Practicum Portal, their Field Supervisor will be prompted by email from practicum@sph.emory.edu to log-in to the Practicum Web Client/Portal to evaluate the student's practicum performance. The specifics of the log-in and approval process will be provided in the email prompt. If you haven't done so previously within the Web Client/Portal, please remember to update your profile (education and current job information) and to indicate additional ways you would like to be involved with RSPH.

8. Discussion of Evaluation

It is recommended that you meet with the student to discuss the completion of objectives and overall evaluation. This provides the student with an experience similar to performance evaluations that typically occur in the workplace.

ESTABLISHING WORK STANDARDS

Students can be valuable contributors in the work setting. They are energetic and eager colleagues. At the same time, they are not full employees in the agency. Because of this, they need clearly defined expectations for their work standards that should both be reasonable and attainable and should include specific directions that are appropriate within your agency

1. **Orientation:** Students need a basic orientation to the agency. Orientation may include: an overview of the mission of the agency or organization; guidelines and resources for performing whatever tasks will be assigned to the student; office policies and procedures, and professional dress code. Additional orientation basics may include: introduction to others in the office with whom the student is likely to interact, a tour of the facilities, library and demonstration on office equipment use.
2. **Adequate work resources:** Students need to have access to the resources needed to accomplish the objectives of the practicum. These may include desk and computer, phone with appropriate access to long distance, name badges, access cards, time sheets or other items as deemed necessary.
3. **Assignments:**
 - a) Students need defined timelines. Because they are often balancing school assignments with their practicum experience, they need to be able to assure that both can be completed without jeopardizing either one.
 - b) Students benefit from experiencing the internal operations of the worksite that may go beyond the objectives of the practicum. These include things such as, observing management discussions, participating in strategic planning, and attending seminars.
 - c) Students benefit from being able to apply what they have learned in graduate school to the operations of the agency. They also benefit from trying to perform beyond their own comfort level.
4. **Regular Contact and Supervision:** The student and his or her Field Supervisor should have opportunities to meet regularly.
 - a) **Developing Work Plans:** The student should work with the Field Supervisor to develop objectives for the practicum experience and form a work plan that is achievable. The work plan ideally should expose the student to a broad range of activities and decision-making processes and give the student some in-depth exposure to issues pertinent to the agency or organization's activities.
 - b) **Regular Meetings:** The subject matter of these meetings may include evaluating the student's performance over the course of the prior week, discussing the activities of the agency or organization, and analyzing particular successes and problems that arise in the

course of the practicum. The Field Supervisor might also assist the student in developing insights into public health practice, organization's work, and otherwise provide guidance that can assist the student in launching his or her own career. This kind of mentoring can have tremendous educational value to the student, transcending even the value of the professional practical experience the student gains through the practicum.

- c) **Evaluation:** At the end of the practicum, the Field Supervisor will be asked to complete an evaluation form assessing the student's performance. These forms are a part of the practicum web client/portal. It is encouraged that the Field Supervisor and the student meet to discuss the content of the evaluation. This can be a powerful learning experience for the student and it mirrors what will be experienced in the workplace.

HOW SHOULD I ADVERTISE AN OPPORTUNITY?

- Post practicum opportunities directly to the school's Career Services job database, The Rollins Opportunity Link (ROL), also known as Symplicity, at <https://sph-emory-csm.symplicity.com/employers/index.php?cck=1&au=&ck>.
- Email the practicum opportunity to Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu for school-wide distribution via an email listserv and posting to the school's Career Services job board. Please include the complete job description, location, duration, stipend/salary, and instructions on how to apply.
- Recruit an individual student. You are welcome to work directly with an RSPH student to create a practicum opportunity.
- Contact Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu or 404-727-9957. Career Services can advertise, collect, sort, and forward resumes and cover letters of select applicants who best meet your practicum needs and qualifications.
- Work directly with a department by contacting the Assistant/Associate Director of Academic Programs (ADAP) or the Practicum Faculty Advisor.

A listing of contact information can be found on a separate page in this handbook.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Does a practicum need to be paid?

Ideally, a practicum opportunity will be a paid position for a student. However, depending on financial needs, some students may be willing to work in unpaid opportunities if the project is closely aligned with their career goals and interests.

Students' stipends depend on their previous experience, education, and other qualifications. Stipends also vary depending on the type of organization the student will work for. RSPH Career Services can help you determine what an hourly rate or stipend should be.

When do students usually complete their practicums?

If the position is full time, most students complete their practicum during the summer between their first and second year of graduate school. If the position is part time, positions may be completed at any time after students complete their first semester at RSPH.

Will my organization qualify as a potential practicum site?

Any agency, institution or organization can be a practicum site as long as they are public health practice based, can ensure a safe and suitable work environment for the student and have a qualified Field Supervisor available to supervise the daily work of the student. If you have any questions regarding your site's eligibility, please contact Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu (404-727-9957) or one of the specific department contacts listed at the end of this handbook. Some of the organizations where students have completed their practica are listed below:



What makes a good Practicum objective?

All practica should be based on 3 – 5 objectives linked to at least one of the school’s core competencies and one of the student’s program competencies. The supervisor and the student should meet, construct and discuss objectives at the beginning of the practicum. It is recommended to use the 'SMART' guidelines in order to assure that each objective is:

- **S**pecific - A specific objective has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general one. To make an objective specific, make sure to include the Who, What, When, Where and Why (e.g. A general objective would be "Get in shape." A specific objective would be "I will join and attend a health club at least three times per week for three months in order to lose 15 pounds.")
- **M**easurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective. Ask yourself "How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?" In the objective above, the 15 pounds is what makes it measurable.
- **A**ttainable - Objectives should be achievable given the resources and time available.
- **R**ealistic - Objectives are realistic when the skills needed to reach the objective are available and the goal fits with the overall strategy and goals of the organization.
- **T**imely - When setting objectives, you should ensure that there is an understanding of a begin date, end date, and how much time it will take to reach the objective within the timeframe. In the objective above, the 3 months is the time frame for achieving the goal.

Please click [here](#) for a full list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

GLOSSARY

Departmental Assistant/Associate Director of Academic Programs (ADAP)

ADAPs provide departmentally-based advisement to students. ADAPS monitor student progress from the point of admission through graduation and beyond, serving as an advocate based on individual student needs. ADAPs can help students think about possible practica to meet their interests and career goals. In addition, the ADAP can help students resolve issues about appropriate practica or resolve issues that might take place during the practica, if needed.

Departmental Practicum Faculty Advisor (PFA)

Each student is assigned a Practicum Faculty Advisor (PFA) to provide guidance and advice to students as they locate and create suitable practica. The PFA can also help students resolve issues about appropriate practica or resolve issues that might take place during the practica. Depending on the department, the PFA or the ADAP may review and approve student's practicum plans prior to the start of the practicum.

Field Supervisor (sometimes known as preceptor or site supervisor)

A Field Supervisor is an on-site supervisor that manages the practicum experience of a student and oversees the day-to-day work of the student. This individual helps to mentor, supervise and direct the student's practicum experience. The field supervisor is not an RSPH faculty member and cannot be remote to the location of the practicum. The field supervisor should be qualified to evaluate the professional performance of the student and act as a mentor whose primary goal is to synthesize the development between academic learning and applied public health practice.

Practicum

A practicum is a practice-based opportunity for graduate students to integrate and apply skills and training learned through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. The practicum is a required element for professional public health degree students and is required for all RSPH students. Practica are typically 200-400 hours in duration. The intent is to expose students to a variety of professional experiences -- while they are in graduate school -- in public health environments including not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, federal, state and local health departments, and for-profit firms.

Practicum Web Client/Portal

The Practicum Web Client (or the newly created Practicum Portal) is an electronic database that students use to document information about the practicum (site, description, objectives and competencies) and that field supervisors use to update their profile and monitor/approve information about the student's practicum. Both the student and the field supervisor also use the Web Client or Portal to evaluate the practicum experience and the student's professional performance/achievement of competencies. The Rollins School of Public Health has recently updated to a new practicum system. Students matriculating in Fall 2013 (or Supervisors who started supervising students after January 1, 2014), will use the new system called the 2014 Practicum Portal. Students matriculating before Fall 2013 (or Supervisors who started supervising students before January 1, 2014), will use the existing system called the Practicum Web Client.

EXAMPLES OF OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

Example 1: Program Planning Intern, Community Agency

Objective: Assist with the development of the Project Grow Program

Strategies:

- Teach middle school youth how to develop a PhotoVoice project on food justice.
- Develop a social marketing and communication plan.
- Gather input from the community on their progress of vegetable gardens.

Example 2: West Nile Virus Entomology Intern, Entomology Lab Field Project

Objective: Describe the types of habitats rural mosquitos are found in compared to urban habitats.

Strategies:

- Conduct entomological surveys multiple times over course of summer.
- Conduct demographic and mobility survey.

Example 3: Instructional Design and Technology Intern, State Public Health Department

Objective: Develop self-paced, interactive multimedia instruction and training in a web-based format.

Strategies:

- Develop storyboards for online e-learning courses and training.
- Integrate PowerPoint training slides into multimedia instruction.

Example 4: Student Intern, International Hospital Administrative Office

Objective: Create data collection tool for rapid assessment of hospital based services in Afghanistan.

Strategies:

- Engage stakeholders regarding data needs.
- Work with data base managers to create forms.

Example 5: Accreditation Communication/Marketing Intern, County Public Health Department

Objective: Assist with the Department's efforts to become accredited.

Strategies:

- Research media placement opportunities for stories about the accreditation process.
- Conduct research on community health assessment and community health improvement.
- Organize materials in an electronic resource library.

Example 6: Behavioral Risk Factor Survey Intern, State Public Health Department

Objective: Develop basic analysis of BRFSS data.

Strategies:

- Create draft BRFSS report with 2012 BRFSS data.
- Develop drafts of fact sheets and data summaries.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Should you have any questions or comments regarding a current or potential Practicum opportunity for our students, please contact the Office of Career Services.

Claudia P. Ellett, MPH

Director of Career Services

404-727-9957, cpaezel@sph.emory.edu

The following list offers contact information for specific departments within the Rollins School of Public Health. Please feel free to contact a department directly if you have an interest in students from a specific department.

Department	ADAPs	Primary Practicum Faculty Advisors
Behavioral Science and Health Education	Meghan Rios (404-727-7877) or Zarie Riley (404-727-3898)	Delia Lang
Biostatistics	Melissa Sherrer (404-727-3968)	Lisa Elon
Career MPH (Distance Learning Program)	Melissa Krancer (404-727-9489)	Susan Butler
Environmental Health	Ariadne Swichtenberg (404-727-7905)	Stephanie Sarnat
Epidemiology	Jena Black (404-727-8729) or Nicole Regan (404-727-7266)	A.D. McNaghten
Global Health	Angela Rozo (404-727-0263) or Theresa Nash (404-727-5724)	Roger Rochat
Health Policy and Management	Kathy Wollenzien (404-727-5701)	Sarah Blake Katherine Wright Bombardier Greg Anderson Brooke Kamke

Should you have any questions or comments regarding the school's Practicum policies or procedures, please contact:

Laura M. Lloyd, MPH, MCHES

Director, Continuing Professional Education

404-727-3035, lmllloyd@emory.edu