PRACTICUM HANDBOOK

A Guide for Students

EMORY

ROLLINS
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC
HEALTH

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A Guide to Practicum for Students

What is a practicum?

A practicum is a unique opportunity for graduate students to integrate and apply skills and knowledge gained through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. The intent is for students to have a variety of experiences in different types of public health environments while in graduate school, such as not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, state or local health departments, and for-profit firms. The Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) requires all students to participate in a practicum experience; this standard is set by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Even students with previous public health experience will be required to complete a practicum during graduate school and will benefit from this opportunity to gain additional knowledge and skills.

A typical practicum experience requires students to work a minimum of 200-400 hours under the supervision of an experienced field supervisor and under the guidance of the student's department (ADAP and Practicum Faculty Advisor). 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

Ideally, a practicum experience should also have at least one tangible final deliverable for the agency (e.g. a manuscript/report/evaluation).

Why is a practicum necessary?

A practicum is required by all accredited Schools of Public Health. According to the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the organization that accredits Schools of Public Health, accreditation Criterion 2.4 states that "all graduate professional public health degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students' areas of specialization." (CEPH, 2011)

CEPH further interprets this criterion by saying that "The school must provide opportunities for professional public health degree students at the master's and doctoral levels to apply the knowledge and skills being acquired through their courses of study. Practical knowledge and skills are essential to successful practice. A planned, supervised and evaluated practice experience is an essential component of a professional public health degree program. These opportunities can take place in a variety of agencies and organizations and should include

local and state public health agencies to the extent possible and appropriate. Opportunities may also include those in appropriate local, state, national and international non-governmental agencies and organizations. An essential component of the practice experience is supervision by a preceptor qualified to evaluate the professional competence of the student. Schools must have well-defined learning objectives, procedures and criteria for evaluation of the practice experience." (CEPH, 2011)

Can my Practicum Faculty Advisor, or one of my professors, be my Field Supervisor?

No**.** A Field Supervisor, sometimes known as a preceptor or site supervisor, **oversees and supervises** a student's work **in the field** and **evaluates their work.** Practicum Faculty Advisors or ADAPS help locate practicum opportunities and possible Field Supervisors, review learning objectives and certify completion, but should not be the person supervising a student's work on a day-to-day basis. If needed, the Practicum Faculty Advisor or the ADAP can step in and assist the student should issues come up between the student and Field Supervisor. The Field Supervisor cannot be a faculty member or an adjunct faculty member who has taught the graduate student the content that is the foundation of the practicum experience.

I've been working as a public health nurse for 20 years or I'm a physician. Can I waive the practicum experience?

No. Exemptions are <u>not</u> granted for the practicum experience. The practicum is a supervised experience based upon the application of graduate level competencies gained while enrolled at the Rollins School of Public Health. Your work experience prior to coming to graduate school, while important to a professional development, was not guided by the knowledge you gained in coursework at the RSPH. Therefore, prior work experience does not substitute for a practicum.

May I use an experience prior to my enrollment in the MPH program as my practicum? OR I am scheduled to enroll in the MPH program in the fall; can I start working on my practicum the summer prior to enrollment?

No. Students are not allowed to begin their practicum until they have completed their first semester (or if part-time, at least 9 credit hours) after enrolling at RSPH. In a practicum, students are supposed to practice graduate level competencies (i.e., the knowledge and skills) they have acquired through their coursework in a community of practice. Students have not acquired any competencies through their coursework until they have completed at least their first semester.

Can my thesis, capstone or special studies project (SSP) count as my practicum?

No. The practicum and the culminating experience (i.e., thesis, capstone or SSP) are different experiences.

What is the difference between a practicum and culminating experience (thesis, capstone or SSP)?

A practicum is a supervised practical experience in the field of public health designed to enhance a student's professional skills and knowledge. The practicum may result in a number of products ranging from a paper, a

literature review, a daily log/diary, a poster, a curriculum, applied analytic opportunities, or other deliverables for the agency that the student is working and deemed relevant by the Field Supervisor.

Through the culminating experience (such as a thesis or capstone project), students will integrate the broad base of public health knowledge and skills acquired from their coursework, practicum and other learning activities. This synthesis typically results is a product that resembles a written paper with an oral presentation.

There are some situations when a student's practicum and culminating experiences may be related. For example, as part of a student's practicum experience, a student may develop and disseminate a questionnaire on the training needs of people living with lupus. As an SSP, the student may use his or her intellect to analyze the data and develop training recommendations (or an actual training program).

It is important to remember, that even if the practicum and culminating experiences are related to each other, they must be distinct projects that are independent from one another and can be described as such.

Can I do a practicum at my place of employment?

A student can do a practicum at his or her regular place of employment, but the practicum opportunity must extend beyond the student's regular work duties.

Can I complete more than one practicum?

Yes. Many practicum experiences are in-depth enough to provide the student the required 200- 400 hours. Even so, many students choose to complete more than one practicum experience in order to gain additional skills and experiences.

What makes a good practicum experience?

In general, a good practicum experience is an experience that is related to the student's professional goals and interests, provides them with an opportunity to explore new areas or organizations and enhances their professional skills and knowledge. As a student begins to think about a practicum experience, it is important that the student think about his or her career goals. The practicum is a wonderful way to broaden skills for future career goals, whether it is growth in one's current position, a career transition to a new field or to a new work setting or agency.

A suitable practicum is a <u>planned, supervised and evaluated practice experience, related to a student's academic goals and professional interests,</u> 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

Each practicum should meet at least one of the school's core competencies and one of the specific program competencies for the degree that the student is seeking. For a list of the Rollins School of Public Health's core and specific program competencies, please go to:
https://www.sph.emory.edu/rollins-life/documents/Core_Competencies.pdf

Be aware that some practicum environments may have specific requirements, such as a background check (e.g. government clearance) or a memorandum of understanding with Emory.

How do I find a practicum experience?

The idea for a practicum experience can come from many places. Some students know there is an organization with which they want to work. Other students know there is a specific content area they want to explore and they seek out agencies in those content areas. Students may also seek potential opportunities by contacting organizations of interest, networking, and applying to openings posted on the ROL Handshake or through Career Development. During the school year, students may also find work study or part time positions that may develop into a practicum experience, such as those through the Rollins Earn and Learn (REAL) program. Additionally, opportunities are continually being developed through departments for students to enrich their learning through structured professional experiences. Attached at the end of this guide is a list of practicum ideas to get you started, but you might also want to explore a page on the RSPH website called "Where to Find a Practicum" (https://www.sph.emory.edu/rollins-life/community-engaged-learning/practicum/find-a-practicum/index.html).

Does the practicum show up on my transcript?

Yes. Students must register for the practicum. This can be done through OPUS, just like registering for other classes. Please see your ADAP for more information.

How do I document my practicum?

The Rollins School of Public Health has currently updated to a new system to document student practica. If you matriculated prior to Fall 2013, you will continue to document your practicum in the Practicum Web Client (http://cfusion.sph.emory.edu/PracticumProposal/login.htm). **If you matriculated in RSPH Fall 2013 or after**, you will document your practicum in the Practicum Portal (http://cfusion.sph.emory.edu/RSPHPracticum/rewrite.cfm/main/login).

The following steps direct students how to document their practicum in either the Web Client or Practicum Portal. Steps 1 – 3 may be completed at any time. Steps 4 - 7 can be completed only after the start of the students second semester and after the student and the Field Supervisor has agreed upon the plans for the practicum. [Some departments will also require students to receive approval from either their ADAP and/or Practicum Faculty Advisor for their practicum plans].

Step 1: Students will log into the Practicum Web Client or Practicum Portal using their Emory ID and Password. The systems are linked with the OPUS system, so when you log in, your demographic/academic data (i.e., name, expected graduation date, department, degree seeking, and program concentration, if any) should already be populated in the fields on the profile page. If they are not pre-populated or if the information is incorrect, please correct the information (all fields are required).

Step 2: Each student should select their assigned ADAP and Practicum Faculty Advisor from the dropdown list on their profile page. (*NOTE: Usually a Practicum Faculty Advisor and/or ADAP is one who help locate practicum opportunities and possible Field Supervisors, review learning objectives and certify completion.) If you do not know who your assigned Practicum Faculty Advisor is, please contact your departmental ADAP.

Step 3: Students should upload a current version of their resume (their Field Supervisor, ADAP and Practicum Faculty Advisor will be able to view the resume from within their modules). Should you need to update your resume, you may upload a new version of the resume which will overwrite the current version.

Step 4: Once the student has completed their first semester, confirmed plans for their practicum and, if necessary, received approval from their department ADAP or Practicum Faculty Advisor, they can add a new practicum into the system on the "My Practica" Tab. To add a new practicum, students should be prepared to enter:

1. First name, last name, and current email address of their Field Supervisor (who will oversee and supervise the student's work)
2. The organization and branch/division (if any) of the associated agency
3. Address of the student's practicum worksite
4. Expected start and end date of practicum
5. RSPH and department competencies the practicum addresses (Lists will be provided to select from and can be viewed here)
6. Practicum objectives and strategies

*Note: Practicum objectives and strategies must be articulate, concise and SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). Practicum objectives, which are believed to be attainable during the practicum, can be planned with the aid of your ADAP, Field Supervisor, Practicum Faculty Advisor, the Office of Applied Public Health, and/or Career Development. Each objective will have a strategy: a plan of action by which to achieve stated objective(s).

Step 5: After the student submits the information about their practicum (including objectives and strategies), the Field Supervisor will receive an email asking them to review and approve (or if changes need to be made, deny) the practicum objectives. Once the objectives have been approved, the student may begin his or her practicum.

Step 6: Midway through the practicum, the student and Field Supervisor will receive an email asking the student to document their hours worked to date and encouraging them both to review the objectives. If the project circumstances or plans have changed and the objectives need to be adjusted, the student can do that at this

time. [Additional changes to objectives or changes needing to be made at other times during the practicum can be made by going through the student's ADAP.]

Step 7: About 2 weeks prior to the end of the practicum, the student and the Field Supervisor will receive an email reminding them to evaluate the experience and the student's performance at the end of the practicum. Students will also input the number of hours spent on the practicum.

Once I have documented my practicum in the RSPH Practicum Web Client, have I completed the practicum requirement?

Once a student has evaluated their practicum experience, an email will be sent to the Field Supervisor asking that individual to complete an evaluation. The student and Field Supervisor evaluations are reviewed by the department ADAP, who certifies that the practicum requirement was met, approves the practicum completion and assigns a grade once all components are finished. The director of enrollment and financial aid services finally certifies that students have completed this requirement for graduation.

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.

SMART Objectives

All practica should be based on 3 – 5 SMART objectives linked to at least one of the school's core competencies and one of the student's program competencies. Objectives should be written as SMART objectives, that 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.

Sample Practicum Ideas

Students can seek practicum experience in a range of field sites. The intent is for students to have a variety of experiences, and in a variety of agencies and settings, while in graduate school. According to the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the organization that accredits Schools of Public Health, accreditation Criterion 2.4 states that "These opportunities can take place in a variety of agencies and organizations and should include local and state public health agencies to the extent possible and appropriate.
Opportunities may also include those in appropriate local, state, national and international non-governmental agencies and organizations."

RSPH students have completed practica in the Atlanta metropolitan area, in other locations throughout the state, across the country and around the world. The following is a list of sample practicum ideas (most are actual experiences RSPH students have had in the past):

- Prepare a health promotion presentation, develop speaking opportunities, and deliver to multiple audiences.
- Organize community seniors to provide volunteer support in schools, daycare, NICU, etc.
- Develop and implement a program to accomplish a health goal for neighborhood, faith community, company or organization.
- Develop and implement a "Craig's List" for volunteer public health needs and skills; e.g., "I need a survey instrument"/"I can design a survey instrument".
- Study, volunteer, or work with a global health initiative such as the Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India.
- Assist local agency in implementing the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP)/Local Health Department Self-Assessment Tool for Accreditation Preparation, and/or quality improvement following assessment.
- Collaborate with local health department to design and implement student practicum experiences.
- Intern with the National Network of Public Health Institutes or with a statewide Public Health Institute (or with other public health agencies).
- Facilitate an evaluation design for a nonprofit organization.
- Volunteer to do program evaluations for a foundation (evaluate funding or funded programs).
- Assist a nonprofit in developing and preparing a grant proposal for a health project.
- Serve an internship with a local service agency, such as Men Stopping Violence, Feminist Women's Health Center, Caminar Latino, Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence, Raksha.
- Serve in an active capacity on the board of directors of a nonprofit that promotes health at the community level or beyond.
- Help a foundation develop and prepare an RFP or grant program.

- Review grant proposals/abstracts/conference proposals on behalf of sponsoring entity.
- Conduct a health impact analysis of a health-related piece of legislation under consideration or recently passed.
- Volunteer as a health policy researcher for a legislator, legislative committee or other governmental official or agency.
- Work for a professional organization to help organize a conference.
- Develop a public health group within organization.
- Conduct a workplace health needs assessment.
- Perform a comprehensive 360 analytic position assessment to use in current position.
- Connect with analytics/outcomes areas to assist with relevant project.
- Develop a new collaborative partner/partnership for your organization and demonstrate how this will serve public health interests.
- Assist a public health agency perform a data analysis to determine the training needs of the state's public health workforce.
- Evaluate a current lead hazard control program grant and develop a strategy for implementing a similar program in other areas.
- Conduct a pilot study of an online survey tool for follow-up epidemiologic investigations.
- Develop fact sheets and a participant recruitment video for the 2013 National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) project.
- Complete a descriptive analysis of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli in Georgia as well as assisted with outbreak investigations.
- Assist in the development and planning of a statewide annual report on sexually transmitted diseases.
- Develop a healthy vending machine initiative as well as supported activities of the various community health coalitions.
- Analyze community needs assessment data and compile a report on health disparities for a county health department.
- Implement a community needs assessment to inform the design of a Community of Practice for Teen Pregnancy Prevention initiative.
- Research obesity issues in children and made recommendations to the agency for their healthy childhood weight campaign.
- Revise and standardize the existing health and wellness curriculum for the agency.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate a health and nutrition curriculum for K-12 students in the summer reading program.
- Support the work of three community initiatives by creating promotional materials, coalition building and developing a final report.
- Coordinate volunteers working with the Clarkston Farmers Market and assisted in the work of the Food Security Initiative.
- Assist with the planning and implementation of county-wide, summer "Safety Safari Camps."
- Create an electronic communication plan, set up a volunteer registration system and assist with the Georgia Mission of Mercy (GMOM) event.
- Create a five-year strategic plan to address the mental and behavioral health workforce needs in the

SOWEGA area. Serve as research coordinator and mentor for the Pathways to Med School program.

- Assist with the development and implementation of the Food and Feed Rapid Response Team program.
- Develop of supplemental curriculum materials to reinforce safety and injury prevention messages among students in grades 1-6.

Who can I contact for Assistance?

Contact List

The following list offers contact information for the Assistant/Associate Directors of Academic Programs (ADAPs) and the Practicum Faculty Advisors (PFAs) for specific departments within the School.

Department	ADAPs	Primary Practicum Faculty Advisors (PFAs)
Behavioral Sciences and Health Education (BSHE)	Meghan Sullivan (404-727-7877) or Zarie Riley (404-727-3898)	Colin Talley
Biostatistics and Bioinformatics (BIOS)	Melissa Sherrer (404-727-3968)	Lisa Elon
Executive MPH (EMPH)	Leah Tompkins (404-727-9489)	Laura Lloyd
Environmental Health (EH)	Ariadne Swichtenberg (404-727-7905)	Stephanie Sarnat
Epidemiology (EPI)	Jena Black (404-727-8729) or Nicole Regan (404-727-2766)	Anne Spaulding
Global Health (GH)	Flavia Traven (404-712-8110) or Theresa Nash (404-727-5724)	There are multiple options for PFAs in GH. Students should contact their ADAP for more information.
Health Policy and Management (HPM)	Kathy Wollenzien (404-727-5701)	Nijar Imanguli Katherine Wright Bombardier Greg Anderson Brooke Kamke

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact:

Office of Career Development
rsphpracticum@emory.edu
404-727-9957