MPH@GW Practicum Experience

Course Description:
The MPH@GW practicum is designed to enhance student’s professional experience in the field of public health. The practicum is planned, supervised, and evaluated and serves as a compliment to the student’s classroom education. Success is defined by the relationship between the student, preceptor, and the site. The site preceptor must be qualified in the field of public health, and will need to be approved by the practicum coordinator. The preceptor should have at least 5 years of relevant public health experience. The practicum is an opportunity to gain experience in an area of interest to the student and can often lead into a career trajectory, so careful thought should be given to the selection of a site and preceptor. The practicum experience should fulfill at least one or more of the core competencies in the MPH@GW program. The student is responsible for identifying and contacting a suitable preceptor. Nonetheless, the MPH@GW practicum coordinator can provide guidance if the student needs guidance identifying a qualified site and preceptor. The student is responsible for completing 120 hours on site under the guidance of the preceptor. The student needs to log their completed hours on a regular basis. Only hours directly relating to the practicum learning objectives should be logged in the GWSPH practicum database (e.g. general training and travel time would not count for practicum hours). The entire practicum effort is managed, tracked, and recorded in the GWSPH practicum database: https://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/.

Prerequisites:
Completion of all core courses (15 credits)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6001</td>
<td>The Biologic Basis of Disease in Public Health</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6002</td>
<td>Biostatistical Applications for Public Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6003</td>
<td>Principles and Practices of Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6004</td>
<td>Environmental Health in a Sustainable World</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6006</td>
<td>Policy and Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PubH 6007</td>
<td>Social and Behavioral Approaches to Health</td>
<td>2</td>
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MPH@GW Program Competencies:
Upon completion of the program, students should possess the following functional competencies.

- Describe biological mechanisms of major diseases causing death and disability in the US and globally from a public health perspective (e.g., PubH 6001)
- Define communities and identify and assess relevant population health needs (e.g., PubH 6007, 6500)
- Assess the functions, capacities, management and governance of governmental, international and non-state organizations that comprise health systems. Translate scientific and program evidence to inform the development of public health programs and policies within the context of health systems (e.g., PubH 6006, 6442).
- Apply public health theory and experiential evidence to develop and manage project, program and institutional strategies to reduce community and individual health risks to mitigate the impact of disease (e.g., PubH 6007, 6503).
- Conduct core program evaluations and complete an assessment of program outcomes, achievements, impacts and shortcomings. Communicate findings to stakeholders (e.g., PubH 6533, 6437).
- Apply relevant qualitative and quantitative tools and concepts to inform policy analyses for different audiences and topics (e.g., PubH 6002, 6003).
- Develop concise written and oral policy analyses for different audiences; identify the key strategies required to protect and advance health (e.g., PubH 6006).
- Describe how health systems performance is affected by various approaches to health care organization, health law, health workforce development and health care financing (e.g., PubH 6202, 6442).
- Develop knowledge and skills in fundamentals of environmental health including the connection between population health and exposures to chemical, physical, and biological agents in the environment (e.g., PubH 6004).
- Develop communication campaigns and strategies to disseminate health promotion information through media channels (e.g., PubH 6570, 6503).

Required Text: None

Methods of Instruction: On Site Skill Building

Methods of Evaluation: Site Preceptor evaluation determines credit or no credit (there is no letter grade for this course).

Class Policy Regarding Attendance/Participation: Since this is a mentorship experience the student is expected to be working on site under the guidance of the preceptor. Only time spent on site working on program specific core competencies can be counted towards the 120 hour practicum experience.

Course Platform: Starting in fall 2014, the practicum course will be run through the 2GW platform like the other MPH@GW courses. Students will upload their practicum-related documents to the course in 2GW. In addition, students, their preceptor, and the practicum coordinator will track the progress of the practicum through the GWSPH practicum database (https://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/). Here students will submit their student profile, practicum plan, hours logged, the mid-point, and final evaluations.

Grading Scale and Standards: There is no letter grade for the class. There is only credit/no credit which is partially based on the preceptor’s final evaluation.

Practicum Expectations: Since the practicum is in a professional working environment and the student represents GWU and their own potential job prospects, the highest integrity and professional behavior is expected at all times.
General Timeline Leading Up to the Practicum

4-5 months from the start of the practicum
- Begin looking for internship and/or practicum opportunities (especially if a paid internship is preferred) because federal positions are advertised early (i.e. February postings for summer internships).
  - Review practicum opportunities advertised by the MPH@GW program, job listings on GWSPH website (http://publichealth.gwu.edu/services/career-center/jobs), and websites like usajobs.gov for internship opportunities.

2-3 months from start of practicum
- Begin searching for a qualified preceptor who works in an area of interest in public health
- Set up appointment with practicum coordinator for ideas and guidance
- Complete CITI Training (biomedical or social and behavioral) and upload the completion certificate to the 2GW platform
- Read the Practicum Guidebook found on the GWSPH Practicum Website: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/practicum
- View the 50-minute practicum training video: https://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/onlinetraining/index.html
- Pass the GWSPH Practicum Training Quiz on the practicum database with 80% or higher: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/studenttraining.cfm
- Complete your student profile (also known as the student application) in the practicum database: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/practicumApp/applicationStu.cfm

1-2 months from start of practicum
- Preceptor registers (and site if not already registered) on the practicum database and the practicum coordinator approves
- Upon approval, preceptor receives a password for the database
- Preceptor submits a project via the practicum database - see attached Site Preceptor Guide
- Student sends their practicum plan to the practicum coordinator via email for initial review
- Once the plan is approved, the student submits the plan against the preceptor’s project in the database
- Student sends the practicum coordinator a Registration Transaction Form (RTF) to register for course
- Practicum coordinator signs the RTF which goes to Student Records
- RTF can take 1-2 weeks to process after which the student can begin logging hours
  - Please Note: the student will register for the practicum in the module in which the practicum is started.

60 hours into the practicum
- Student fills out a midpoint evaluation (logging hours is frozen until this step is completed)

120 hours into the practicum
- Student fills out a final evaluation on the preceptor (preceptor, practicum coordinator and student signs electronically)
- Preceptor fills out a final evaluation on the student (preceptor, practicum coordinator and student signs electronically)
- Credit is awarded based on preceptor’s feedback
Guide for MPH@GW Site Preceptors

First, thank you for your willingness to mentor our Masters in Public Health student for their 120-hour practicum. I hope you both you and the student find it very rewarding. To maintain academic accreditation, we use a web-based system (database) to match students with projects. To make it a little easier, the following is a guide to help you get set up.

1. Register as a “Preceptor” AND a “Site”

Go to: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/practicumapply.cfm

2. Wait a Few Days for Verification and Password

3. Once you get your password, log into the site here: http://publichealth.gwu.edu/practicum/

4. Please notify the student and me (Sarah) at sepreston@gwu.edu after you submit the project via the database. The database matches preceptor’s projects and student’s practicum plans. So, once your project is listed in the
database, the student needs to submit their practicum plan against your project. The student should discuss the practicum plan with you and send to me for review. Once the practicum plan is finalized, the student logs in, submits their plan, and we will get an automatic notification to verify the plan. To verify, you log in to the database and click the “sign” button at the end of their plan.

5. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Kennedy (Preston), 202-872-0292, Practicum Coordinator for the MPH@GW Program. Thank you!

Examples of Public Health Settings for Practicum

- Colleges and universities
- Public and private secondary schools
- Consumer advocacy organizations
- International development organizations
- Consulting firms
- State legislative committees
- Health service delivery organizations
- Community organizations
- Federal and state health agencies
- Voluntary health agencies