NDSU | PUBLIC HEALTH

Student Practicum Manual

Academic Year 2015-2016

NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Use of this Document

The *Student Practicum Manual* is intended to guide NDSU Master of Public Health (MPH) degree candidates through the processes of selecting and completing the Practicum, which is an essential educational component of the program. Students should familiarize themselves with this manual and follow the steps described in the sections below.

Introduction to the Practicum

The Practicum is a semi-guided, practical experience in which MPH students partner with a professional mentor (the Preceptor) to address a real-world situation within the public health realm that is important to the Preceptor's organization (referred to as the Host Organization). The Host Organization may be a public health department, another government agency such as the Indian Health Service, a non-governmental organization such as a hospital, other healthcare provider, or a community service organization. An up-to-date listing of all available organizations can be found on the ND MPH website, www.ndmph.org

The Practicum experience should:

- Be based upon a real problem, issue or situation faced by the Host Organization that, when solved, will meaningfully advance the organization's mission;
- Provide an opportunity for the student to apply competencies, knowledge, techniques and tools acquired in the classroom;
- Challenge the student, leading them to pursue new knowledge and acquire new skills in relevant areas of public health;
- Allow the student to fully appreciate the mission of the Host Organization, its inner workings, and how the organization meets its public health mission;
- Include substantive work within one or more of the MPH Core Competencies of *Biostatistics*, *Health Policy and Management*, *Epidemiology*, *Environmental and Occupational Health*, and *Social and Behavioral Science*;
- Be well defined and specific in scope, allowing the student to produce a Deliverable that signifies completion of the project.

The Practicum experience should not:

- Be based upon an essential component of the Host Organization's work, where significant negative consequences could arise if the project falters;
- Involve significant amounts of routine work within the Host Organization's normal scope of operation;
- Be limited to a "shadow experience."

Ethical and professional conduct is essential to the Practicum experience. As an individual training to be a public health professional, each MPH student is expected to conduct him or herself ethically and professionally according to the standards of the MPH program, North Dakota State University, and the Host Organization.

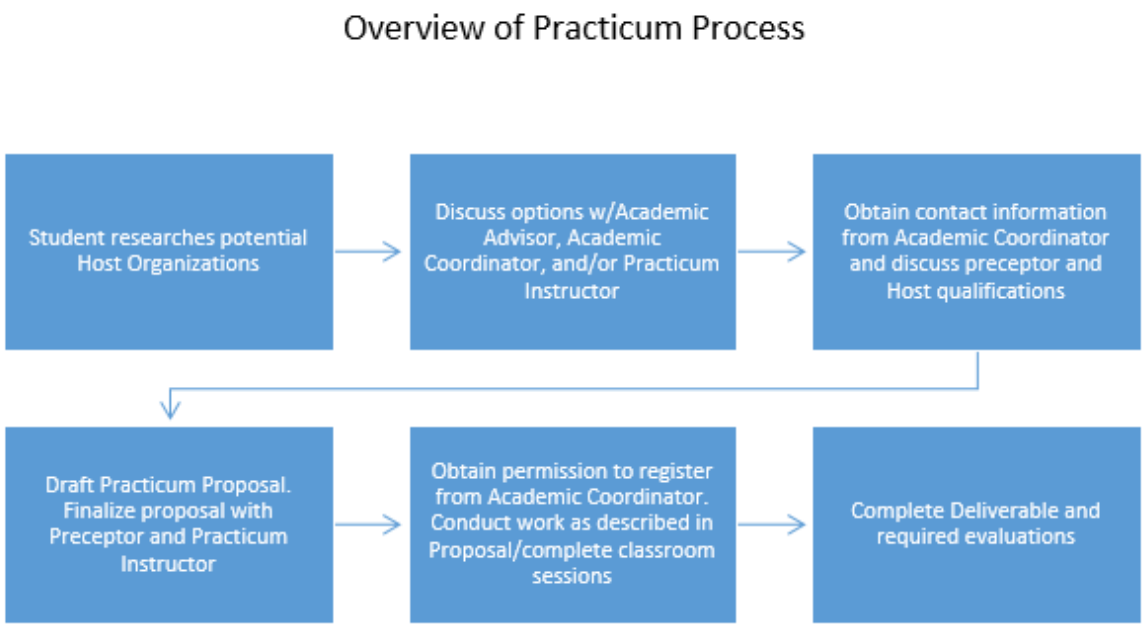
Practicums in the Place of Employment—Students are able to use their place of employment as the Host Organization if (a) the project is unique and separate from the student's employment responsibilities and (b) the Preceptor is not the student's usual supervisor.

The Practicum Process

For students, the Practicum process consists of the following:

1. Identify several Host Organizations that appeal to your professional interests.
2. Discuss your interests in those organizations with your academic advisor, the Academic Coordinator, and/or the Practicum Instructor.
3. Obtain contact information for potential Host Organizations from the Academic Coordinator.
4. Contact Host Organization representatives and discuss projects that would benefit the Host Organization, be interesting to the Student, and advance the Student's educational program.
5. Chose a Practicum project based on those discussions.
6. Draft a Practicum Agreement (hereafter Agreement; Appendix A) between yourself (the student) and the Preceptor, in which you outline the project goals and the roles and responsibilities of both parties.
7. Send the draft Agreement to the Practicum Instructor for review and comment.
8. Finalize the Agreement and send to the Preceptor for their review and approval.
9. Send the Agreement (signed by the student and Preceptor) to the Practicum Instructor for final approval.
10. After approval, enroll for the required number of credits.
11. Conduct the Practicum as described in the Agreement.
12. Meet regularly with the Preceptor throughout the project.
13. Attend classroom sessions hosted by the Practicum Instructor.
14. Complete the mid-term and final student evaluation and ensure that the Preceptor completes their mid-term and final evaluations.
15. Provide deliverables as described in the Agreement.

Note: Steps 1 through 9 must be completed prior to enrollment into the Practicum course (MPH 794).



Writing the Practicum Agreement

Developing a Practicum Agreement (Appendix A) ensures that there is a well-defined project with clear goals and an identified 'product' or Deliverable that signals completion of the student's obligation. The Agreement must contain all of the following elements in this order:

A. Background (1/4 to 1/2 page)
   a. Host Organization and Its Public Health Mission
      Describe the public health service(s) that the Host Organization provides
   b. Preceptor's Role in Host Organization
      Describe the Preceptor's role in providing the public health service(s) of the Host Organization
   c. Practicum's Contribution & Importance to Host Organization

B. Project Description (1/2 to 1 page)
   a. Synopsis of the problem, issue or situation.
   b. Detailed description of the *deliverable* to be generated by the student, marking the successful completion of the practicum.

C. Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources (1/2 to 1 page)
   a. Describe the roles of the student, the Preceptor, and any other personnel that will be involved in the project.
   b. Enumerate specific responsibilities of each individual. (For example, it may be the Preceptor's responsibility to provide certain data, the student's responsibility to analyze that data and draft a report, and the Preceptor's responsibility to read and comment upon the draft.)
   c. List all critical resources that are required for completion of the project and who will provide them.

D. Communication and Scheduling Expectations (1/2 page)
   a. Describe how all project personnel will communicate throughout the project.
   b. Include a statement that describes the expectations surrounding when and where the student will complete the majority of the work associated with the Practicum. Will all of the work be done at the Host Organization's facilities? If so, establish a daily/weekly schedule of work. Will some or most of the work be completed outside of the Host Organization's facilities?

E. Contributions to MPH Learning (1/4 to 1/2 page)
   a. Describe how the Practicum experience relates to the mission of NDSU MPH and the student's specialization.
   b. Describe how successful completion of the Practicum will demonstrate proficiency in MPH Competencies (https://www.ndsu.edu/publichealth/mphcorecomp/) for applicable specialization.

F. Timeline
   a. Create three or more subordinate milestones that will enable completion of the final Deliverable.

b. Build a realistic timeline for the completion of project milestones and the final deliverable.

Enrolling in the Practicum

Once the Practicum Instructor approves the final version of the Agreement, the signed copy must be given to the Academic Coordinator. The Academic Coordinator then gives the student permission to enroll. Students may register for 1 to 3 credits per semester, repeated up to 3 times as needed to obtain a total of 3 credits. MPH 794 requires a permission number to enter in Campus Connection for successful enrollment.

Proposal submission deadlines are the date that online registration opens in campus connection for the next semester. These dates can be found at: https://www.ndsu.edu/bisonconnection/dates/. Most full-time students will complete their practicum in the summer between their first and second year and so the deadline will be a date in April.

Please note that before given permission to enroll, students also need to have completed:

- At least 18 credits and be in good academic standing
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) training in Human Subjects Protection – Basic Course for Social/Behavioral Research
- Any requirements of the Practicum Organization such as immunizations or Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) training
- A criminal background check

Training in Human Subjects Protection
NDSU MPH students must complete the Social/Behavioral Research module in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online training program **at least 1 month before registering for their Practicum hours.** Instructions for completing Human Subjects Protection training are found on the IRB website: https://www.ndsu.edu/research/integrity_compliance/irb/training/

Upon completion of the CITI training, please contact Kristy Shirley kristy.shirley@ndsu.edu in the Office of Research and Creative Activity to verify if NDSU IRB approval is needed for your practicum experience. If IRB approval is required, forms can be found at: https://www.ndsu.edu/research/integrity_compliance/irb/forms/

Criminal Background Check
A certified background check is required within 30 days prior to enrolling in the Practicum. The Academic Coordinator will provide instructions and program code when the student is ready to enroll. Cost is paid by the student.

www.certifiedbackground.com

Completing the Practicum

The Agreement is a professional document and the student is expected to abide by it to the best of their ability. Obstacles and issues should be brought to the attention of the Preceptor and the Practicum Instructor as early as possible. Regular updates on progress should be provided to the Preceptor at the agreed upon times (per the Agreement) and to the Practicum Instructor during regular classroom sessions. A formal mid-practicum review must also be conducted between the student and Preceptor

and shared with the student's advisor. This can be completed in the manner most conducive to the Preceptor and student and it is required that the electronic mid-evaluation be used as a minimum. Completion of the *Deliverable* (as described in the Agreement) signifies the end of the Practicum project. At that time, the Preceptor completes the electronic Preceptor's Evaluation. The student completes the electronic Student's Evaluation and provides a copy of the Deliverable to the Academic Advisor, Practicum Instructor, and Academic Coordinator. If necessary, sensitive information may be redacted in NDSU copies of the Deliverable.

Evaluating the Practicum

The Practicum is evaluated on a Pass/Fail bases based on the Preceptor's Evaluation and the student's participation in the classroom sessions. The Practicum Instructor enters the grade into Campus Connection.

Specification of Responsibilities

Preceptor (Mentor)

- Orient the MPH student to a public health-related problem, issue, or project of interest to the host organization.
- Review and comment on draft editions of the Student-Preceptor Agreement. Sign the final edition prior to the start of the practicum.
- Meet regularly with the MPH student to discuss approaches and progress—providing constructive feedback while encouraging autonomous pursuit of creative but effective solutions.
- Provide access to all resources necessary for completion of the practicum project. (Non-disclosure agreements and redaction of information in the student's final report is possible, if necessary).
- Contact the Practicum Instructor or Academic Coordinator in case of deficiency or if any concerns arise at any point during the practicum.
- Complete two electronic evaluations of the student's work on the Practicum—one at the mid-term of the practicum and one upon completion.
- Treat as confidential student educational records, which are subject to the Federal Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

Practicum Instructor

- Meet with the student to describe the Practicum and brainstorm possible Practicum projects.
- Provide a list of possible Host Organizations that includes pertinent contact information.
- Review and approve the Student-Preceptor Agreement (Appendix A) prior to the start of the practicum.
- Meet regularly with the MPH student to discuss approaches and progress—serving as a conduit between the student and subject matter experts or resources available within the ND MPH program that might be of benefit to the student.
- Provide instruction in professional development and communication.
- Intercede on the student's behalf if necessary to clarify student and Preceptor roles and facilitate understanding and agreement as to goals, conduct, commitment, and deliverables.
- Academically evaluate the student's performance and issue a grade for the Practicum.

NDSU MPH Student

- Contact potential Preceptors and discuss possible projects with them.
- Author a Practicum Agreement outlining a Practicum project based on those discussions.
- Conduct the work and produce the deliverable agreed upon in the Agreement.
- Meet regularly with the Preceptor during the course of conducting the Practicum.
- Attend regular classroom sessions hosted by the Practicum Instructor. IVN connection is available for students located outside of the local commuting area.
- Comply with the policies, procedures, and operational standards of the Host Organization.
- Behave professionally at all times including attention to punctuality and meeting deadlines.
- Provide the Practicum's final Deliverable to the Preceptor, Practicum Instructor, Academic Coordinator, and Academic Advisor at completion.
- Complete all paperwork and evaluations required for the Practicum
- Comply with the Host Organization's privacy rules and policies related thereto and sign any necessary non-disclosure agreements.

Host Organization

- Provide a mentored, practical learning experience related to public health for the student.
- Provide a qualified person (employee or affiliate) to mentor the student (the Preceptor).
- Certify that it has in place policies that protect MPH students and employees from sexual harassment and discrimination while they are onsite during the Practicum. Host Organization agrees to provide the University with copies of its non-discrimination and sexual harassment policies.
- Provide a name badge, as necessary.
- Provide an orientation to each MPH student at the beginning of the experience, which includes an overview of site's mission and goals and physical facilities, personnel and other operational systems needed for the student to function appropriately at the site.

NDSU MPH Program

- Ensure that the student has completed sufficient coursework to conduct the proposed Practicum.
- Complete a background check of the student within 30 days prior to approving the student for the proposed Practicum.
- Ensure that the student has completed IRB and CITI training before undertaking the proposed Practicum.
- Ensure that the student meets all policy requirements of the College of Health Professions
- Notify the Host Organization if at any time a student files a grievance in which the Host Organization is a party.

Academic Coordinator

- Provide the student with a copy of the Practicum Manual and all required Practicum Forms.
- Provide information on the IRB process, if necessary for a Practicum.
- Provide permission for student to register for the Practicum

Professionalism and Ethics

Students must consistently demonstrate the core attributes of professionalism. NDSU College of Health Professions has defined the following behaviors as indicators of professionalism**:**

- Commitment to Excellence
- Honesty and Integrity
- Respect for Others
- Empathy and Compassion
- Professional Responsibility
- Social Responsibility
- Altruism

Students must possess the emotional health necessary for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of sound judgment, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with members of the academic program and community. They must have a high level of compassion for others, motivation to serve, integrity, and a consciousness of social values and possess sufficient interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, all ethnic backgrounds, and all belief systems. Academic dishonesty and professional misconduct are considered unacceptable. If there is doubt about whether or not academic or professional conduct is appropriate, students should query the guidance provided in university and NDSU MPH bulletins. This is available at:

NDSU College of Health Professions policy manual, Section 3.01:
https://www.ndsu.edu/healthprofessions/college_information/policy_manual/

Appendices

The following must be completed for the Practicum and submitted to the Academic Coordinator:

- *Appendix A: Practicum Organization, Preceptor, & Agreement Form*
  - To be completed and approved and then submitted by the student to the Academic Coordinator before the student is allowed to register for MPH 794 Practicum

The Practicum Agreement must be typed. If you have any questions about the Practicum's purpose and process, please contact the Academic Coordinator:

Stefanie Meyer, MS, CSCS
Academic Coordinator/Lecturer, NDSU
College of Health Professions
Department 2662, PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050
Tel: 701-231-6549
Fax: 701-231-7606