



MPH Practicum: Student Role (updated October 13, 2020)

The UW School of Public Health requires that every MPH student complete a practicum to receive their degree. The practicum is a planned, supervised, and evaluated field-based experience, requiring a minimum of 160 hours (4-6 credits) under the guidance of an SPH Faculty Advisor and a Practicum Site Supervisor. At least 80 of the 160 hours must be completed within a public health organization¹. The onsite requirement is suspended during COVID-19.

The goal of the practicum is to enable students to take the disciplinary knowledge and methods they learned in the classroom and apply them to the field of public health, serving as trainees while expanding the capacity of a public health organization.

Practicum Process

Students should follow the project timeline proposed in the Learning Contract and submit all forms and deliverables to the Practicum Dropbox **as soon as** they are approved and throughout the practicum. (See Table 1 Stages of Approval) The signed (approved) Learning Contract must be submitted **before** practicum work begins. The Practicum Faculty Advisor must complete the online faculty evaluation **before** the student receives practicum credits.

Table 1: Stages of Approval

	Forms & Deliverables	Action by Student	Action by Faculty Advisor	Action by Site Supervisor
Pre-Site	N/A	Reviews this document; identifies a Practicum Faculty Advisor and Site Supervisor	Reviews the Practicum Faculty Advisor One-Pager.	Reviews the Site Supervisor One-Pager.
	(Affiliation Agreement) ²	Discusses potential project ideas with Site Supervisor and Practicum Faculty Advisor.	Ensures the proposed projects meet practicum requirements.	Advises the student on developing projects that meet the needs of the organization.
	Learning Contract ³	Develops a work plan, including competency-based activities, timeline, and site products.	Reviews and signs the learning contract BEFORE practicum begins.	Reviews and signs the learning contract BEFORE practicum begins.
On-Site	Midpoint Review	Updates progress and changes to the learning contract.	Reviews only (midpoint review is conducted and signed by Site Supervisor).	Reviews and signs the midpoint review.
	Site products	Produces tangible outputs for the site that demonstrate attainment of five MPH Foundational Competencies.	Reviews only (site products are evaluated by Site Supervisor).	Reviews and evaluates final site products.
	Site Supervisor Concluding Evaluation	Discusses onsite experience and site products with Site Supervisor.	Reviews only (evaluation is completed by Site Supervisor).	Reviews and signs the Site Supervisor concluding evaluation at the end of the practicum on-site experience.
Post-Site	SPH Assignments	Completes a written assignment summarizing and self-evaluating the practicum experience, and a visual assignment for the practicum symposium.	Reviews only.	No action.
	Faculty Evaluation (online)	Reviews the Faculty Evaluation Report upon receiving it.	Completes an online evaluation based on a holistic review of the student's site evaluations, site products, and SPH assignments.	No action.

¹ With an organization means a student is physically based at a practice agency site, or could include work at a satellite office, branch office, or partner's office.

² If an Affiliation Agreement is not already in place with the site, email Manager of Experiential Learning the name and email address of the organization contact to start the affiliating process. This can take weeks to a few months to complete. Students cannot start their practicum until the Affiliation Agreement is established.

³ The MPH Program Director for the student's degree program provides oversight to the practicum curriculum, and must approve the Learning Contract **BEFORE** the start of the practicum.

Learning Contract

The learning contract describes the practicum project that the student has developed in conjunction with the Faculty Adviser and Site Supervisor, including a description and timeline of the project and how it aligns with the goals of the student, needs of the public health organization, and competency requirements of the practicum.

Competency Development

Each MPH student will work with their Site Supervisor to develop **a minimum of two products** for the site (see *Practicum Products for the Site “Site Products”*) that meet **five of the 22 competencies**. The competencies are mapped to products, but each product does not have to map to all competencies. For example, one product may demonstrate three competencies and the second product may demonstrate the other two competencies. As another example, students may submit five products if each demonstrates attainment of a competency. Competencies and products differ from student to student.

A maximum of **ONE (1)** competency may be selected from the Evidenced-Based Approaches to Public Health section, which helps direct students toward choosing practice-oriented competencies and developing tasks that lead to practical solutions for the site. In Table 2, example 1 is practice-oriented, focusing on team development and project management. Example 2 is research-oriented, focusing on designing survey instruments to measure resource utilization and understand access barriers for the target population. See a complete list of competencies at: <https://sph.washington.edu/mph-practicum/competencies>

Table 2: Practice- vs. Research-Oriented Competency Activities

	Example 1: Practice-oriented competency activity	Example 2: Research-oriented competency activity
Select a Competency	Competency [7] Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities’ health.	Competency [2] Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
Describe the competency the practicum plans to meet	I will stay up to date with COVID-19 summary statistics, trends, and indicator performance to strategize partnership plans with community-based organizations, and assess changes to priorities with my organization.	I will design a quantitative survey to assess current utilization of mobile clinic targeting street-based sex workers, and design a qualitative interview guide for understanding specific barriers and facilitators in accessing health services for street-based sex workers.

The learning contract must indicate that the student will:

- Spend **a minimum of 80 practicum hours onsite** at the organization’s location (suspended during COVID-19).
- Participate in work that emphasizes **applied public health skills** developed in their degree program.
- Ensure the project’s IRB status has been determined. (Practicum projects typically do not require IRB review/approval. When they do, students must seek assistance from their faculty adviser and learn how to apply for IRB approval).

Practicum Products for the Site (“Site Products”)

Site products are tangible outputs from the student’s practicum experience, supervised by a Site Supervisor with expertise in the practicum project area. Examples from prior practicums include:

- An evaluation report describing current Medicaid policy around non-opioid analgesics and barriers to changing it.
- An advocacy brief describing barriers to health and health care and the role of community health workers in developing equitable health systems.
- A framework that Boone County Health Department and their Department of Emergency Preparedness can use to complete a community recovery plan.

Practicum Assignments for the School (“SPH Assignments”)

All students must complete a written and a visual assignment at the end of their practicum. This is an opportunity for students to describe, reflect on, and self-evaluate their practicum experience.

A *Written Assignment* includes the following sections:

1. A summary or abstract of the student’s practicum experience
2. A brief analysis of the organization, including factors in determining policies and practices that either help or hinder its ability to effectively address its mission (e.g. elimination of structural bias, social inequities, and/or racism)
3. A description of the practicum project
4. Student’s self-assessment of competency attainment

A *Visual Assignment* typically involves a poster, video, infographic, digital portfolio, website, or other visual work approved by the faculty adviser. This requirement may be fulfilled by a visual site product. (See *Practicum Products for the Site*)

Faculty Evaluation (online) & Practicum Credits

The Faculty Adviser is notified to review student’s work online and will complete an online evaluation to certify student’s practicum completion. Contact your departmental advisers about practicum registration, add codes, and credits being posted to transcripts.