Graduate Curriculum

GRADUATE PRACTICUM AND CULMINATING EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health 295 Course Handbook

Effective March 2016
Revised November 2016
Graduate Practicum and Culminating Experience in Public Health (PH 295)

COURSE INFORMATION

Catalogue Description: Graduate Practicum and Culminating Experience in Public Health (8 Units). Provides opportunities for hands-on experience for graduate students at agencies or organizations engaged in public health practice. Students choose an internship site based on academic preparation and career goals. The practicum report integrates into a synthesis culminating experience.

Grading: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory

Course Schedule: PH 295 is offered every quarter as well as during the summer session.

Course Forms: All forms needed for processing the practicum are available on our website.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this course, students will learn to apply theory, paradigms, principles, and methodologies obtained through formal course work to inform public health practice across community, government, private industry or other institutional settings relevant to public health.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One of the recommendations of the Associations of Schools of Public Health for MPH core competencies, and a main criterion for accreditation of MPH programs by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) is that MPH students must complete a “planned, supervised, and evaluated practice experience” in public health. The University of California Irvine MPH degree fulfills this requirement through the capstone course entitled “Graduate Practicum and Culminating Experience in Public Health.”

The Graduate Practicum and Culminating Experience provides students the opportunity to work in an agency that focuses in a discipline within public health at various levels within the agency. Students are expected to apply concepts, principles, and theories learned in courses on the core competencies and cross-cutting themes of public health. The practicum experience should facilitate students’ ability to synthesize and integrate academic knowledge and skills in a
professional setting for public health practice. Being able to apply learned concepts into practice enhances students learning experience as well as begins preparing them for their professional careers after completion of the program.

**COURSE PREREQUISITES**

In order to be eligible to take Practicum, students must have:

1. Completed and passed PH 200 as well as four (4) units of PH 291
2. Completed and passed all five (5) core competency courses
3. Become eligible to advance to candidacy by passing the comprehensive examination

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each MPH student will:

1. Write a practicum project proposal that meets the needs of the agency and is acceptable to the student, the site supervisor at the agency, and the student’s faculty mentor.
2. Complete 240 hours at approved Graduate Practicum site
3. Submit a final report once 240 hours have been completed
4. Create a poster and participate in a departmental poster presentation session poster on their Practicum project and overall experience. If a student is not able to participate in the poster session based on graduation date or extenuating circumstances, they will have to present their report with an alternative assignment*

**STEPS REQUIRED TO INITIATE AND COMPLETE THE PRACTICUM**

1. Complete core competency courses
2. Pass comprehensive exam
3. Submit necessary Advancement to candidacy paperwork
4. Apply, interview, and be offered an internship at an approved Practicum site
5. Meet with a faculty member to discuss the development of the Practicum Proposal and project timelines.
6. Complete the Site Placement form in order to enroll in PH 295W.
7. Complete a project proposal approval form and obtain approval from faculty mentor. The *practicum proposal must be approved by the site supervisor and student’s faculty mentor before practicum hours may begin.*
8. Complete a UC Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity Agreement
9. Complete 240 hours at the agency to carry out project proposed by student.
10. Write and submit a report describing the practicum activities and outcome of the project with information on the integration of public health competencies.
11. Implement any changes to report as requested by the faculty mentor and turn in revised report to the Practicum Coordinator and the Faculty mentor.
12. Create a poster and participate in a departmental poster presentation session poster on their Practicum project and overall experience. If a student is not able to participate in the poster session based on graduation date or extenuating circumstances, they will have to
present their report with an alternative assignment*
13. Submit a site and practicum experience evaluation
14. Submit a MPH and Emphasis Competencies form
15. Have your site supervisor complete your evaluation

SITE SELECTION
A catalog of approved practicum agencies is available online on the Public Health Graduate Practicum Information page. Students should identify a general topic area for their practicum and search through the approved sites for one that meets his or her interest.

Please be aware that some practicum sites may require background checks on their employees and/or volunteers, which may include all practicum students. Students must comply with the requirements of the practicum agency accordingly if they wish to intern at that specific site.

It is expected that all students comply with all safety rules, regulations, policies, and procedures of the agency and all sites visited during Practicum period.

EVALUATION OF PRACTICUM
Students and their site supervisors are expected to complete a post-practicum evaluation. Students complete an evaluation on the site which includes details on their site supervisor as well as their experience in applying two (2) core competencies and three (3) cross-cutting themes. Site supervisors must complete an evaluation on student The student is responsible for making sure that his or site supervisor completes and submits the evaluation, which includes verification of number of hours spent on the practicum project.

GRADING CRITERIA
The graduate Practicum in Public Health is graded as “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” based on:

1. Evaluation of the final report and poster (or alternative assignment*)
   a. Submission of poster includes participation in departmental poster presentation
2. Completion of the required number of hours
3. Submission of all required documents (after the completion of the 240 hours)
   a. Site and Practicum Experience Evaluation
   b. Student Evaluation (by site supervisor)
   c. MPH and Emphasis Competencies Checklist

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICUM PROPOSAL

The practicum proposal must be approved by the faculty and site supervisor before beginning the required hours to. It is acceptable to visit a prospective practicum site and to preliminary explore day-to-day activities prior to enrolling in the practicum course. However, any of these preliminary hours will not count toward the hours required to successfully complete practicum.

To be approved to enroll in Practicum, you must submit the following:
1. A completed Practicum Enrollment Form
2. A completed and approved (signed by faculty mentor) Practicum Proposal Form
3. A 1,500 word practicum proposal with the following information:
   a. The major goal of the practicum, consistent with student’s academic concentration
   b. A description of public health concepts that you expect to be important to the success of the practicum project.
      i. Address at least two of the five core disciplines and four of the seven cross-cutting themes.
   c. A description of planned set of specific objectives and activities to meet the goal.

The following guidelines\(^2\) are useful in writing specific objectives:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Objectives should provide the “who” and “what” of project activities. Typically, the more specific a proposal equates to greater measurability.</td>
<td>A general objective: “My project will lead to an increase in vaccination rates in Orange County.” A specific objective: “My project will lead to a 20% increase in vaccination rates against H1N1 flu virus in Santa Ana by June 2011.”</td>
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<td>Measurable</td>
<td>Establish criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective. Use questions such as “How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?” to frame your criteria.</td>
<td>In the “specific” objective above, the 20% increase is measurable.</td>
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<td>Attainable</td>
<td>Objectives should be attainable within the 240 hours allotted to Practicum with the resources available to you at site.</td>
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<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Ensure that written objectives accurately address the scope of the problem or need and vision of the agency. Objectives that do not directly relate to the project goal will not help toward achieving project goals.</td>
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<td>Timely</td>
<td>Include a time frame indicating when objectives are expected to be met. This is essential in planning and executing project. The 240 hours required for the practicum should be distributed over the specific set of objectives.</td>
<td>First 60-80 hours (2-5 weeks) can be for creation of data collection tools/setting up for intervention. Second 60-80 hours (2-5 weeks) can be for data collection. Etc.</td>
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**GUIDELINES FOR THE WRITTEN REPORT**

The practicum report, which is done after the required 240 hours are completed, should be composed of a minimum of 5,000, but not exceed 12,000 words in length. This limit excludes appendices, tables, and figures.
Reports should be double-spaced using 12-point type, and paginated. Include a table of contents with the various sections, sub-sections, tables, and figures. All tables/figures should be referenced in the report.

The report should be written as a document that makes sense to both the academic faculty and the site supervisor.

REPORT GRADING CRITERIA

The paper will be evaluated according to the quality of the following sections:

1. **Title**: The title should concisely capture the essence of practicum project.
2. **Abstract (No more than 300 words)**: A summary or overview of the key points of the project.
3. **Introduction (1,000 to 1,500 words)**: Literature review and background of project. Include a description of the public health question being addressed, its significance and how it fits with the vision and responsibilities of the agency. Describe the main features of the agency, their resources, organization structure, and your position in the team. Include relevant sub-headings.
4. **Discussion (2,000 – 4,000 words)**: Discuss your role and activities in the practicum project. Provide a critical assessment of whether the proposal goals and objectives were appropriate in addressing the problem. Identify barriers and how you overcame or succumbed to them. Include relevant sub-headings.
5. **Personal Assessment (1,000 – 2,000 words)**: How has the practicum experience contributed to your understanding of public health practice? Discuss the relevance of the public health core competencies and cross-cutting themes to your practicum experience. Revisit your practicum proposal to include at least two of the five core disciplines and four of the seven cross-cutting themes.
6. **Conclusions and Recommendations (1,000 – 2,000 words)**: Provide concluding thoughts and identify opportunities for improvement and further action on the project.
7. **References and Bibliography**: Use a standard manuscript style, such as the American Journal of Public Health
8. **Appendices**: Appendices are acceptable for inclusion, but they will not count toward the manuscript length requirement. All the materials that you developed as a part of the practicum project (e.g. survey questionnaires; GIS maps) should be included in the appendix.

REPORT SUBMISSION

The electronic written report is due two weeks prior to the poster presentation. The student’s faculty mentor may request changes after submission. A grade will be not issued for the course until these revisions are submitted. Students must submit an electronic report to the Practicum Coordinator and their faculty mentor.

GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FINAL PRESENTATION

POSTER PRESENTATION
Students will create a poster on their report that will be presented at the departmental poster presentation session. The poster will be available for viewing by all faculty members, students, staff, and the general public.

Poster formatting guidelines are posted on the program website, please refer to those guidelines regarding content, structure, and presentation day expectations. The departmental poster session will be held during the first few days of finals week of the respective quarter, but this may vary depending on necessity.

A student may petition to not participate in the departmental poster session if he or she has an extenuating circumstance* which will be reviewed by Student Affairs and the student’s faculty mentor. Official documentation for validation of the extenuating circumstance will be required. Contact the Practicum Coordinator for the petition.

*Please note that an extenuating circumstance is an event that is outside a student’s control. Thus, some petitions may be denied if they are incomplete, lack valid documentation, and/or are not considered an extenuating circumstance. In this case, students will present their report and project to his or her faculty mentor and an additional faculty member from the student’s emphasis area during an alternative date and time from the poster presentation.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

PRACTICUM PERSONNEL

Faculty members with core or adjunct appointments in the Program in Public Health serve as advisors or members of the Practicum Faculty Committee. Additional support for the course is provided by the Practicum Coordinator. The faculty and staff are available to assist students in their quest to identify practicum opportunities, to develop strong proposals, and to complete their projects successfully.

Each student is assigned a Faculty Mentor at the beginning of joining the MPH program. Students should consult with their faculty mentor about their plans for the practicum since they will need to give approval to project proposal prior to enrolling and beginning practicum hours.

The Site Supervisor is, typically, employed by the practicum agency, and is responsible for supervising the student’s activities during their practicum period at his or her agency. All site supervisors may choose to collaborate with the student in the development of the practicum proposal, but they are not required nor expected to do so. In addition, the site supervisor should introduce the student to the culture of the practicum agency, review agency policies, and well as provide ongoing and training as needed. Site supervisors must provide an evaluation of the student at the end of the project in order to ensure that students receive credit for their internship.

Qualifications for a site supervisor are:
(1) A professional degree in Public Health (e.g. MPH, PhD, DrPH, etc) or the healthcare professions (MD, RN, DO, etc)

OR

(2) An advanced degree (Masters or PhD in a related field and 2 years of experience or more including the supervision of interns

*Note: Exceptions may be granted for individuals with significant (10+ years working experience in public health or a related field with previous experience supervising interns.

Please note that University of California Faculty members cannot serve as site supervisors.

ADDING A PRACTICUM SITE

A student may request that a site be added by having that site contact the Program in Public Health Practicum Coordinator with interest in becoming part of the Graduate Practicum Program. The Practicum Coordinator will then send the prospective site representative an online application and schedule a site visit. In order for a site to qualify into the program, it must meet at least one of the core competencies in Public Health, and they must be equipped with projects to sustain a student’s 240-hour internship. Once the site meets all criteria, they will be added to the program’s Graduate Practicum Catalog.

Site supervisors will be given information on the timeline and deadlines for each school year to assist them when interviewing and selecting students. In addition, the site visit done as part of the application process is the opportunity for the Practicum Coordinator to provide information to prospective site supervisors on processes, procedures, and requirements for internships.

Guidance on the internship criteria and deadlines is given on a regular basis to all established and newly established sites throughout the school year.

HUMAN SUBJECTS

Some practicum experiences may include working with human subjects. Students in such situations must ensure that all protocols have been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Some sites that may require further involvement from Risk Management may take longer to approve, please consult early if your site may involve this.

Students should consult the Human Subjects office website, to be familiar with Human Subjects Research and the IRB process. Practicum agencies may also require additional human subject approval. Most practicum projects are expected to be practice-based and do not require review by IRB.
DISABILITY AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Students may seek exemptions, adjustments or other special treatment according to the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding the implementation of the practicum project. Such students should plan to consult early in the process with the Practicum Coordinator.

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC CONDUCT

All courses taught in the Program in Public Health enforce strict codes of academic conduct and integrity. Program faculty and staff members expect all students enrolled in the practicum course to demonstrate honesty and courtesy in all proceedings of the course, including interactions with other students, faculty members and staff, and agency staff members. Academic misconduct, which includes cheating, plagiarism, falsification of records and/or official documents, data fabrication, and intentional misuse of materials or equipment, will not be tolerated.

Faculty members expect that all proposals, reports, and presentations submitted for evaluation are the student’s own efforts. In addition, appropriate credit must be given to sources of information through proper citations and referencing. All students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the UC Irvine Academic Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. Questions of academic dishonesty arising within the Program are treated on an individual basis.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & REFERENCES

The preparation of this practicum syllabus and guidelines benefitted from consultation of published documents and guidelines including those of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) and the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH). Other sources of information include practicum guidelines of Schools of Public Health at the University of Washington, Seattle; University of California, Berkeley; The University of New Mexico; The University of Iowa College of Public Health; Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University; and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.