Subject: Practicum

Policy Number: MPHP&P-08

1. Background

Practicum training is an essential component of the MPH program whereby students apply the concepts of public health learned in the classroom to actual public health issues in a real-life setting.

2. Policy

All MPH students are required to satisfactorily complete a 300 hour practical experience as part of the MPH program. PBHL 355 (0 cr.), Orientation to the Practicum site, is a prerequisite to the Practicum. Students who have such orientation may petition for exemption from PBHL 355.

During the Practicum period, the student works under the guidance of a site-based Practicum Preceptor who agrees to closely supervise and evaluate the work of the student. The student also coordinates closely with his/her Departmental Practicum Advisor who assists in the definition of the practicum objectives and the design of the culminating experience and periodically reviews progress. Throughout the practicum period, the student also keeps the practicum coordinator informed of any issues relating to the practicum. The Practicum Advisor, Preceptor and student (and Practicum Coordinator if necessary) meet at least once at the beginning of the Practicum preferably at the practicum site to discuss the practicum of the student and options of activities/tasks to be assigned to the student.

The Practicum consists of 2-credit-hours of public health practice which students are expected to register for upon completion of all core and concentration courses. During that semester students are expected to register for no more than a total of 9 credits. Students are allowed to register for the Practicum in the same semester with only one core and/or concentration course along with the seminar course (as long as the course not yet taken does not consist of material needed to effectively undertake the activities of the practicum). To be allowed to register a concentration course along with the practicum, the student needs to seek the approval of the concerned department.

In exceptional circumstances, part-time students working full-time who wish to complete their practicum hours over two semesters may petition to do so. The petition should be submitted to the Practicum Coordinator at least three months before the practicum placement period.
The focus, substance, and approach of the Practicum will vary depending on the student's area of concentration. However, MPH students of all concentrations are expected to gain field experience during their Practicum. In the beginning of the Practicum, the students identify 2 MPH core and 3 concentration competencies which they aim to acquire by the end of their Practicum. In order for the student to pass the practicum course, s/he needs to acquire at least 4 out of the 5 competencies identified at the outset. The grade for the Practicum is pass or fail.

Limited Practicum opportunities are available within FHS academic departments and centers.

Students are not eligible for graduate assistantships while doing their practicum.

**Related Policies:**
- Graduation requirements
- Curriculum
- Financial Assistance
- Culminating Experience

### 3. Procedures

The Practicum Coordinator presents students with different site options and a decision on a Practicum site is made by a match between the concerned students and the site’s interests. For specific details, refer to the Practicum Manual.

Students are required to spend 80 hours of rotation in the summer semester of the year that precedes their practicum if they are due for Practicum in the Fall semester or during the inter-semester break in January if they are due for their Practicum in the Spring Semester, at the selected practicum site in order to fulfill the requirements of PBHL 355 (Orientation to the Practicum Site). As for scholarship students who are expected to register their Practicum in the Summer Term, they need to complete PBHL355 prior to starting the Practicum and as soon as they are assigned to a Practicum site. To be able to do that, they need to petition to register both the Practicum and PBHL355 (its pre-requisite) in the Summer. For specific details, refer to the Practicum Manual.

During the practicum, the student must spend a minimum of 30 hours per week on site for 10 weeks. The students must have a 75% time commitment to the activities of the organization in which s/he is doing their Practicum; the remaining 25% shall be used to fulfill the objectives of the Culminating Experience project (course PBHL398).

The student is expected to keep a log of the time spent at the Practicum site to be approved by the Preceptor.

Throughout the Practicum period, the student is closely supervised by her/his Preceptor and Departmental Practicum Advisor who ensure that the learning process is running smoothly.
and that any emerging issues are dealt with promptly. The Practicum Coordinator follows up with all concerned parties. For specific details, refer to the Practicum Manual.

Part-time students working full-time who wish to complete their practicum hours over two semesters may petition to do so. The petition must include an approval from the Practicum Coordinator, Academic Advisor, Chair of the Department of concentration, Practicum Site Preceptor and the direct supervisor (if different from the preceptor) and the approval of the organization where the student works. Such students will register for the practicum in the second semester. The petition must be submitted to the Practicum Coordinator for final approval.

Students wishing to do their Practicum in a site which is not on the list of suggested sites provided by the Practicum Coordinator to the students are required to submit the following documents to the Practicum Coordinator:
- A description of the site and how it would facilitate fulfilling the concentration competencies of the student;
- A letter/email from a person at the site confirming that s/he is willing to be a preceptor; and
- A description of a few projects that the Practicum student will potentially work on if the site is approved by the student’s department of concentration at FHS.

The student should inform the Practicum coordinator of her/his intention to do the Practicum in a site not provided on the list within 1 week after the distribution of the list of potential practicum sites and the above-listed documents should be submitted by the student within 2 weeks after the distribution of the list. If the student does not commit to these deadlines, it will be less likely that the site can be considered.

**Exemptions**
In cases where students perceive that they have public health experience which is both relevant and sufficient to their chosen area of concentration, they may petition to be exempted from PBHL 355 and the Practicum.

- The exemption decision needs to be in the student file prior to the advising period of the student’s practicum term. Accordingly, students seeking exemption must submit a Practicum Exemption Form by the second week of the regular semester preceding their practicum term, together with a two-page report describing how the work experience meets at least three of the applicant’s concentration competencies, and at least two of the MPH core competencies. Actual documentation of tasks accomplished is highly recommended. (Practicum Exemption Forms can be obtained from the Practicum Manual or on the FHS website).
- Students must discuss their Practicum exemption application with their Academic Advisors and obtain their approval on the form.
- Completed forms must be submitted to the Practicum Coordinator.
- The Practicum Coordinator sends copies of these applications to the department chairs.
- Practicum exemption applications should be reviewed and decisions made in the departments concerned in the presence of the Practicum Coordinator prior to the advising week of the practicum semester.
- Discussion of exemption applications and decisions are documented in departmental meetings minutes and on the Exemption Form which is kept on file by the Practicum Coordinator. Decisions are communicated to the applicants via the Practicum Coordinator with copies to SSO.

Students exempted from the Practicum are exempted from the practicum as a course but not from the credits.

Students who are not exempted from the Practicum but who spent at least a year at the practicum site can submit a petition to their department of concentration for exemption from PBHL 355.

4. Latest Revision

Date last approved by the GSC: September 2, 2014.