Applied Practice Experience (APE) Handbook for the Master of Public Health Program
Applied Practice Experience Handbook
2022 – 2023

University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions

Guidelines for the Applied Practice Experience in the Master of Public Health

In this handbook, MPH students, preceptors, and mentors will find information related to approval forms, MPH competencies, and processes, from the University of Florida Master of Public Health graduate program.

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Introduction to this Handbook

Every year, over 100 students in the Master of Public Health (MPH) Program at the University of Florida serve as interns in public health agencies and related organizations. These, and more, applied practice experiences (APE) provide opportunities for our MPH students to apply skills and knowledge learned in the classroom to the real world of public health. And these applied experiences, in turn, strengthen our students’ competencies in the key activities of our field. We are very fortunate to work with a growing number of agencies and organizations in the development of APE and internship opportunities for our students.

This APE Handbook serves as a guide to the APE for our MPH students, internship preceptors, and faculty advisors. As this is still a relatively new initiative, changes will likely emerge in the future. As they do, the handbook will be updated. The most recent version of the handbook is always available at our website: https://mph.ufl.edu/current-students/student-essentials/

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What is the APE?

The APE encompasses both internship and public health service hours (PHS). MPH students in the 48-credit hour program are required to complete 150 hours of internship, in addition to another 50 PHS hours that can be completed as internship or as volunteer or other applied practice experience for a combined total of 200 hours. MPH students in the 42-credit program are required to complete 150 internship hours however, they are not required to complete PHS hours.

Per the 2016 Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) Accreditation Guidelines, APEs can be in governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. An appropriate university-affiliated setting is one that is “primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be appropriate” (p. 21). Please note that research labs are not an appropriate setting, unless the student is actively engaging with the community.

Public Health Service Hours

Students may complete their PHS hours at any time during the MPH program. PHS hours are intended to be volunteer hours or additional learning experiences in the Public Health field, and can include:

- Experiences gained through a public health service-learning course
- Public health service and volunteer activities organized by a student association
- Individual public health volunteer activities
- Participation on a Putting Families First team, or an appropriate case study competition (e.g., Clarion Competition, the Global Health Case Competition, etc.)
- Attendance at a city or county agency meeting when a public health issue is on the agenda

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• Serving as a board member for a public health agency
• Participation in MPH Program-specific opportunities (e.g., Afternoon of Learning, Common Reader book discussion, Interprofessional Learning in Healthcare)

Students are required to log their hours and write a factual report of the volunteer experience that describes a measurable objective for the experience, whether the objective was met, and how the experience contributed to at least one specific MPH competency. PHS hours will be self-tracked throughout the program; students will turn in time logs and factual reports as an assignment in PHC 6941 Applied Practice Experience.

Internships

Internships that are completed for APE hours will be completed during the semester(s) the student is enrolled in PHC 6941 Applied Practice Experience. PHC 6941 is typically completed during the final semester of the program; if a student wishes to complete their APE internship earlier, they should reach out to their MPH academic advisor, Telisha Martin or Andre McFadden II, for a review of their plan of study.

Internship proposals are due to the APE Coordinator, Karina Wilson, approximately one month prior to the beginning of the semester (exact dates will be communicated to students early in that semester). Proposals should be signed off on by the student, preceptor, and faculty advisor before being submitted to the Internship Coordinator and should include a thorough workplan and a copy of the preceptor’s resume or curriculum vitae (CV).

Internship Proposal Forms are found on the MPH website at https://mph.ufl.edu/current-students/forms/.

A successful internship will be the student supporting their internship agency by upholding their mission and purpose, with the agency supporting their intern in the strengthening of their competencies by providing them with appropriate responsibilities and guidance.

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Competencies Expected of MPH Students

All students in the MPH Program are expected to master a set of public health competencies during the course of their studies. Per the CEPH 2016 Accreditation Guidelines, the MPH Foundational Competencies “are informed by the traditional public health core knowledge areas, (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health service administration and environmental health sciences), as well as cross-cutting and emerging public health areas” (p. 17).

Learning objectives for the five MPH core courses were developed so to contribute to the competencies. The learning objectives also reflect the topics that will be covered in the Certification in Public Health (CPH) examination, which students are encouraged to take after graduation from the program. Additional competencies specific to each concentration were developed by the faculty, based on standards in the field.

MPH Foundational Competencies
All graduates of the MPH degree program are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

**Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health**
1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breath of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice

**Public Health & Health Care Systems**
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels

**Planning & Management to Promote Health**
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design, or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs

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1 Must address the management part of budget & resource management, not only the development of a budget.

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**Policy in Public Health**

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process\(^2\), including the roles of ethics and evidence

13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes

14. Advocate for political, social, or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations\(^3\)

15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity

**Leadership**

16. Apply principles of leadership, governance, and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making

17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

**Communication**

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors\(^4\)

19. Communicate audience-appropriate (i.e., non-academic, non-peer audience) public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation

20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

**Interprofessional and/or Intersectoral Practice**

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

**Systems Thinking**

22. Apply a systems thinking tool to a public health issue\(^5\)

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\(^2\) Broader than analyzing a specific policy. Must be able to explain how policies (on a local, state, or national level) are created with consideration to the influence of research or evaluation evidence and ethics.

\(^3\) Students must understand how to advocate for a particular issue. Students must produce a product that would be part of an advocacy effort (e.g., legislative briefing paper or fact sheet).

\(^4\) "Select" = determine how to communicate with different groups by considering the needs and usual practices of the target audience.

\(^5\) Must be non-narrative. Students must show that they can actually apply systems thinking tools by constructing something like a concept map, causal loop diagram, etc..
Program Concentration Competencies
Each concentration offers a unique curriculum of courses designed to ensure that students gain the skills necessary to become competent practitioners. (Public Health Practice concentration students may have a blend of the five concentrations below.)

Biostatistics Competencies
1. Apply standard probability distributions to public health outcomes.
2. Apply and interpret common statistical descriptive and inferential methods, including confidence intervals and hypothesis tests in one-sample, two-sample, and multivariable regression settings.
3. Build and interpret appropriate multivariate regression models to analyze public health data.
4. Develop practical skills in using statistical software packages for data management and analysis of public health data.
5. Develop written reports based on statistical analyses.

Environmental Health Competencies
1. Examine the direct and indirect human and ecological health effects of major environmental agents.
2. Develop a quantitative risk assessment framework for environmental hazards.
3. Apply knowledge of environmental legislation to case studies to determine jurisdiction and approach.
4. Apply approaches for assessing environmental exposures, including exposure assessment design and methods.
5. Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and appropriate communication when engaged in public health practice and research.

Epidemiology Competencies
1. Assess potential confounders in epidemiology studies.
2. Evaluate interaction, effect modification, and mediation in epidemiology studies.
3. Evaluate the multifactorial etiology and pathophysiology of chronic diseases.
4. Apply criteria for identification, prevention, and control of infectious agents.
5. Manage, analyze and interpret large-scale epidemiologic data.

Population Health Management
1. Integrate systems thinking theory to incorporate multiple stakeholders at state and local levels to address a public health issue.
2. Create an evaluation plan for a public health initiative.
3. Apply principles and theory of budget preparation, managerial accounting, and financial management to organizations in the health sector.
4. Develop a survey instrument that validly examines public health research questions and produces data that addresses health implications and their relationship to policy and contexts.
5. Conduct an economic analysis of a major health policy issue.

Social and Behavioral Sciences
1. Evaluate public health social and behavioral science research so that research decisions, strengths and limitations are addressed.

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2. Integrate social and behavioral science theories and concepts in the development of interventions/solutions to public health problems.

3. Design and conduct a community needs assessment.

4. Design, implement and evaluate a public health intervention

5. Design and develop effective communication products that convey health information to diverse audiences that increase recipients’ knowledge and positively impact attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
Portfolio Work Products Overview

Per CEPH 2016 Accreditation Criteria (D5. MPH Applied Practice Experiences), “MPH students demonstrate competency attainment through applied practice experiences. The applied practice experiences allow each student to demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies” (p. 21).

The MPH program assesses each student’s competency attainment through a portfolio approach, reviewing at least two practical, non-academic applied work products that the student produced for the site’s use and benefit. Faculty review the work products to validate that they explicitly demonstrate the student’s attainment of the designated competencies. More information on our college’s CEPH accreditation can be found at https://phhp.ufl.edu/about-phhp/ceph-self-study-drafts/.

Examples of Portfolio Work Products include but are not limited to:

- Advocacy tool
- Asset mapping report
- Business plan
- Communications and outreach plan
- Community assessment report
- Community profile report
- Conceptual model
- Cost-tracking instrument
- Course module
- Curriculum
- Dashboard user guide
- Data analysis results or output
- Data extraction
- Data collection & analysis report
- Dissemination plan
- Environmental scan report
- Evaluation, evaluation plan, or evaluation tool
- GIS map
- Grant proposal
- Sustainability plan
- Health communication campaign
- Health communication materials (e.g., brochure, fact sheet, infographic)
- Training guide or manual
- Health resource booklet
- Webpage designed by student
- Key informant interview summary report
- Facilitation of an intervention (must provide a link to video)
- Literature review
- Message testing summary report
- Monitoring & evaluation tool development
- Multi-media presentations
- Policy analysis or brief
- PowerPoint presentation (with script)
- Program or project management plan
- Quality improvement plan
- Qualitative data collection protocol (e.g., focus group guide)
- Recommendations report
- Research study proposal
- Resource guide
- Risk assessment analysis report
- Social marketing plan
- Standard operating procedures
- Statistical analysis plan
- Survey or data collection tool

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**Evaluation of the Portfolio Work Products**

Work products should be created by the student for the benefit and use of their internship agency, with the agency providing guidance on the professionalism and clarity that they expect.

The work products are turned in during the final weeks of the semester along with a reflection on those products, which gives the student an opportunity to outline how their products display competencies and to reflect on how it supports the competency.

When viewing the work products, the faculty advisor completes a Portfolio Work Product Assessment Form to determine if the student has demonstrated competency attainment with their products. If the student does not receive a Full Pass, the faculty advisor will work with the student to revise their products before the semester’s end.

**Portfolio Work Product Assessment Rubric:**

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>Are there at least two portfolio work products?</td>
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<td>Are at least 5 competencies clearly demonstrated?</td>
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<td>Are at least three of those competencies foundational health competencies?</td>
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<td>Is there a quality reflection provided for each product?</td>
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**Grading Interpretation**

| If all criteria are met with “yes”, then the portfolio products are a Full Pass. | If there is one or more “no” for any criterion, the student receives a No Pass and must revise their products before resubmission. |

**Important Notes regarding Portfolio Work Products:**

While these work products are to be of benefit and use to the agency, please note that these products may also be featured in the student’s portfolio, and will be shared with faculty advisors, MPH staff, and possibly the Council on Education for Public Health as

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part of curriculum data. If there are special concerns regarding this, such as confidentiality concerns, that might prevent the student from presenting any product, please contact the student’s faculty advisor to discuss the issues and how to best address them.
The Special Role of the Preceptor

Preceptors play a critical role in the education of MPH students. They have the knowledge and experience to guide students to new opportunities, and to demonstrate how classroom-introduced skills are implemented in the professional practice setting. Many of our students develop relationships with preceptors that influence their future careers in public health.

Preceptors for our MPH students must have relevant and sufficient professional experience to mentor the student and provide a meaningful learning experience that supports the competencies and learning objectives.

At a minimum preceptors must have:

- Working knowledge and practical experience in the project areas assigned to the student;
- A graduate degree and at least three years of full-time, professional experience in public health; OR A terminal degree (e.g., PhD or MD) and current, professional experience in public health; OR A BA/BS with 5+ years of public health experience;
- An interest in and commitment to helping a graduate student;
- Time to commit to mentor a student.

The Internship Site

MPH students are required to complete at least 150 hours of internship (some students will complete more depending on their credit-hour registration). As noted previously, internship sites must be “primarily focused on community engagement.” The activities performed at the internship site “should be mutually beneficial to both the site and the student” such that the student is gaining appropriate Public Health experience that allows them to demonstrate their competency in the field.

APE Internship Timeline and Role for Preceptors

Before the internship starts...

- Familiarize yourself with the requirements outlined in the PHC 6941 Applied Practice Experience syllabus at https://mph.ufl.edu/current-students/courses/
- Identify a project or set of projects for a student to complete
- If the internship is completed on site, identify an appropriate workspace for the student
- Interview with interested students who contact you
- Review the student’s portfolio (if available) and discuss competencies that the student will work on strengthening during the course of the internship
- Work with the student and faculty advisor to complete, review, and sign the student’s Internship Proposal Form, which includes developing a detailed internship workplan

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During the internship...

- Arrange a schedule that will allow the student to complete their required hours
- Orient the student to ensure a smooth transition
- Allow sufficient time for supervision and instruction in the form of routine interactions – we recommend scheduling frequent check-ins
- Guide the student throughout their projects as needed - review work, offer feedback, and ensure that the student has the resources and time for an optimal learning experience
- Keep a record of the student’s progress, hours, and work
- Keep in contact with the APE Coordinator and respond to requests for feedback on the student’s performance

After the internship...

- Complete a final evaluation of the student: sign off on and logs or paperwork that the student needs to complete their internship experience
- Provide an updated Internship Site Profile Form – these are shared with students who are seeking future internships

Tips for a Successful Internship

Work together to develop the internship
One of the first tasks that preceptors carry out with students is the development of objectives that will assist the student in strengthening MPH competencies while meeting the organizational needs of the preceptor and agency. Faculty advisors help students and preceptors identify these activities.

Focus on competencies to be strengthened during the internship
Reviewing the student’s portfolio at the beginning of the internship to assess which competencies students still need to develop or strengthen helps to keep all parties on task.

Be familiar with internship requirements
The internship conducted by the student must meet the requirements of the course syllabus on the MPH website at https://mph.ufl.edu/current-students/courses/

Arrange an orientation to the agency
Properly introducing the student to the agency or organization is crucial to the overall success of the internship. Beginning with an orientation, the preceptor provides the environment in which the student can gain confidence in his or her ability to perform successfully as a public health practitioner.

Find the right pace
Frequently, the preceptor and the student are working together for the first time during the internship. A thoughtful assessment of the student’s abilities
helps to avoid assigning too much responsibility too soon or withholding responsibilities that they may be able to complete.

Schedule regular meetings
Regular meetings in which the student updates the preceptor on progress and identifies any problems or issues are key to successful internships. Students are required to maintain a log of hours and internship assignments. This log can be signed weekly or monthly by the preceptor to assure that not only the hour requirement for the internship is met but that the student is on track with previously established goals and objectives.

Maintain Contact with the MPH Program & Faculty Advisor
Communication is key. Questions will arise, many of which can be handled with a quick phone call or email. Don’t hesitate to contact the APE Coordinator or the student’s faculty advisor to discuss any issue that may arise.

Be sure to review the important information in this handbook about Portfolio Work Products.
Student, Faculty, and Program Roles

Student
The student is responsible for choosing an internship site of interest and for contacting the potential agency/preceptor. Once a placement has been made (i.e., the Internship Proposal form has been signed and approved), the student is expected to:
• Function as a professional in all projects and activities.
• Be professional in appearance, both in dress and conduct.
• Adhere to the schedule predetermined with the preceptor.
• Notify the preceptor if there is a possibility of being late or absent.
• Practice professional courtesy when communicating with clients and other professionals.
• Clearly identify themselves as a UF MPH student when interacting with the public or with other professionals.
• Report directly to the preceptor.
• Communicate concerns or issues to the preceptor, faculty advisor, and APE Internship.
• Fulfill the learning goals, course objectives, and assignments.
• Follow agency policies and procedures (including policies on confidentiality, documentation, dress code, etc.).
• Initiate three-way conversation among student, preceptor, and faculty advisor to assess the progress of the Internship and prepare the final written and oral reports. This can be done by conference call or meeting.
• Complete an evaluation of the agency/preceptor at the end of the experience

Master of Public Health Program
Specific to the APE and the Internship, the APE Coordinator is the primary point of MPH program contact for the student, preceptor, and faculty advisor. The APE Coordinator will:
• Assist the student in selecting potential sites for the field experience.
• Arrange affiliation agreements.
• If needed, guide students through the IRB process.
• Respond to the needs of the student and preceptor during the placement, and provide consultation to students and preceptors upon request.
• Maintain regular communication with preceptors, faculty, and students throughout the internship.
• Continuously evaluate old internship sites and seek new opportunities.
• Oversee PHC 6941 Canvas site.
• Ensure the student receives grading and feedback for PHC 6941 Coursework.

Faculty Advisor
Faculty advisors work with their students in multiple capacities. Specific to the Applied Practice Experience and the Internship, the faculty advisor will...

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• Assist the student in clarifying educational goals and competencies to be strengthened by the placement.
• Assist the student in selecting potential sites for the field experience.
• Respond to the needs of the student and preceptor during the placement and provide consultation to students and preceptors upon request.
• Maintain regular communication with the student, preceptor, and APE Coordinator throughout the internship.
• Assess the professional work products (for competency alignment) that are developed as part of the APE.
• Provide grading and feedback for PHC 6941 Coursework, including inputting final grade for course.
Frequently Asked Questions

When do I take the APE course?

The formal Applied Practice Experience (PHC 6941) course will still come at the end of your program, along with the Capstone (PHC 6940) course. This will generally be in the final semester.

What are some examples of internships?

See the Internship Opportunities & Additional Resources page for a list of up-to-date, available internships.

Will the MPH program help me find an internship?

Our APE Coordinator will be available for consultations regarding internship opportunities. However, it is the student’s responsibility to contact, interview with, and solidify the proposed internship plan.

How soon can I start my internship?

All students are required to complete all the public health core courses before starting an internship. Students are only registered for internship once a signed Internship Proposal form has been submitted to the Internship and Outreach Coordinator and approved. Students must have a 3.0 GPA to enter the Internship phase of the program.

Can I do my internship at my current place of employment?

To ensure the development of competencies in a variety of public health settings, this is not recommended. The MPH program may approve an internship in settings in which students are employed, provided certain safeguards can be established to preserve the educational quality of the learning experience. Students must:

- Have been employed by the organization with satisfactory performance.
- Be assigned duties different from those regularly performed as an employee.
- Have assignments that are applicable to the public health core and concentration areas.
- Have assignments that offer opportunities for new experiences and learning.
- Be able to work on and develop two work products.
- Be assigned to a different department or program and/or to a supervisor other than their employment supervisor to oversee the internship.

Can I get paid for my internship?

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Paid internships may be available in your community, but this will depend on whether the agency you are working with permits payment of interns and if it has funds available for an intern. If they cannot pay for an internship, you may request a mileage reimbursement from them.

**How long is my internship?**

The MPH program requires that students take a 3-credit APE course which is comprised of 50 hours of internship work per credit hour. A 3-credit internship equates to 150 total contact hours. Students can add more credits of internship, if requested. Fill out the Additional APE Hours Approval Request located in the Forms section of the APE website page.

**Do I need to complete all internship credit hours in one semester?**

The MPH program permits internship credits to be divided into more than one semester.

**Does my preceptor need to have an MPH degree?**

Preceptors for our MPH students must have sufficient, relevant experience to mentor the student and provide a meaningful learning experience that supports the competencies and learning objectives. At a minimum, preceptors must have:

- A working knowledge and practical experience in the project areas assigned to the student.
- A graduate degree and at least three years of full-time, professional experience in public health OR a terminal degree (e.g. PhD, MD) and current, professional experience in public health OR a BA/BS with 5+ years of public health experience.
- An interest in and commitment to helping a graduate student.
- Time to commit to mentor a student.