



CENTER FOR Public Health Practice

What is a practice experience?

Public health practice experience is the term UNTHSC-SPH uses for an internship or practicum. All Schools of Public Health accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) are required to have an applied practice experience. The purpose of the public health practice experience is to apply your skills and knowledge learned in your graduate studies in a professional public health work environment. The practice experience can be an opportunity to observe and network with public health professionals while practicing graduate skills. **There are no exemptions for the public health practice experience.**

The practice experience is to be an applied-project related work experience in a public health site such as a public health department, non-profit public health agency or hospital administration where you can advance your skills.

Is the Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 just for MPH students?

These courses are for MPH students only and may not be taken by DrPH students. Also, MHA students have their own internships.

When do I do a practice experience?

Once you have completed 21 credit hours of core and/or department required course work, you can then begin the practice experience. It is expected that students have basic public health knowledge when they go to the site.



The only exception to the 21 hour rule is if you have completed 18 hours and receive a state or federally supported semester long internship. These internships may require a full semester commitment. The Association of Schools of Public Health web site (asph.org) advertises fellowships and internships. You must contact your academic advisor to begin the process to apply for this exception.

How many hours is a practice experience?

For Practice Experience in Public Health 5397: Two hundred (200) contact hours at the site are required. That means you will spend 200 hours at the site or doing related work assigned by the site supervisor. The hours you spend preparing the poster are NOT counted in the 200 hours nor is the time used to travel to and from the work site.

Where do I find out the requirements for the practice experience?

The link to the Student Manual for Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 is located on the Center for Public Health Practice web page. You should download and read the manual. The Manual should answer all your questions plus list your responsibilities for the course, the site supervisor's responsibilities, poster session information, evaluation criteria and other helpful information. If you have additional questions, please contact Dr. Coggin (cogginc@hsc.unt.edu) or Ms. Harlin (sharlin@hsc.unt.edu).

What is the role of the Student?

When should I begin searching for a practice experience site?

You should begin searching at least one semester before you are going to sign up for the course. For example, if you are going to register for the practice experience in Spring 2010 you should start searching in Summer 2009.



Where can I go to search for an opportunity for the practice experience?

- Search the list of previous sites where students have worked on this web site.
- Search the web if you are interested in out of town or state or international sites.
- Talk with other students.
- Attend the Public Health Practice Experience Poster Session and Reception sponsored by the Public Health Student Association and Center for Public Health Practice. Talk with the students about their experiences and how they found their placement.
- Respond to announcements from the Office of Student and Academic Services, the Center for Public Health Practice and other sources.
- Students should meet with their academic advisor to discuss possible practice experience sites the semester prior to when they plan to register for the practice experience.
- Talk with Dr. Coggin and Ms. Harlin early in the semester for assistance, advice or suggestions.

Where do I do a practice experience?

Can I use my job as my practice experience?

No. Our accrediting body, CEPH, does not permit us to give credit for job or life experience.

Can I do my practice experience at my work site?



You may do the practice experience at your work site, but the duties **MUST BE OUTSIDE** of your usual work duties and expectations. You also must have someone at your work site that is willing to serve as site supervisor.

Can several experiences be combined to meet the practicum requirements?

The usual Public Health Practice Experience is with one site.

Can the experience be outside of Fort Worth or Texas?

Yes, the experience can be anywhere in the US as long as you are able to find a site supervisor.



Can the experience site be international?

Yes, the experience can be international as long as you are able to find a site supervisor. Currently the School does not have a formal international internship program. You may check other schools' sites to look for those types of programs also. Dr. Coggin will assist in the search whenever possible.



How do I get to my site location?



Does the school provide transportation?

Transportation is the student's responsibility. You may use your personal vehicle or public transportation. The school offers the opportunity to students to purchase a bus pass at a nominal charge. Students will need to contact the Human Resource Services Office regarding the availability of these passes.

Is the practice experience paid?

The practice experience may be paid or it may be unpaid. Most of the sites do not pay due to budget constraints, but this varies from site to site. Pay makes no difference to the value of the experience.



What's the next step?

Once I have found the site, what is the next step?

To be eligible to register for the practice experience, you must have completed a total of 21 semester credit hours of core and/or department required course work. You will need to submit

1. Intent to Register form
2. Current Resume
3. Copies of the (CITI) IRB Training Certificate
4. HIPAA Training Certificate
5. Confidentiality Agreement
6. Photographic Consent and Release Form
7. The Online Professional Behavior Training Certificate



When can I start accumulating hours toward my practice experience?

You will meet with your academic advisor to identify the competencies that will be addressed in your practice experience. You will also talk with your site supervisor to agree on these competencies along with your goals and objectives for your practice experience. Once you have attended the orientation session and submitted copies of the required forms:



Appendix G: Agency Agreement of Supervised Public Health Practice Experience

Appendix H: Site Supervisor Approval Form

Appendix I: Description of Practice Experience in Public Health 5397

Appendix J: Competency to Activity Form

you may begin accumulating your practice hours. Students will keep the originals of these forms to include in their notebooks. Often students want to start during the break time between semesters and that is permitted with permission of your site supervisor.

Do I have to pay for the practice experience just like any course?

Yes, you will pay for Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 just like any other course in the curriculum.

Can I use an experience that I completed previous to enrolling in the course?

No, you may not use experience you have had prior to enrolling in Practice Experience in Public Health 5397. No credit will be given for previous experiences. You can only count the public health activities and experiences in which you participate during the time you are registered for the course.

Can I do the practice at a site one semester and then sign up for the course credit in another semester?

No. You must sign up for Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 and begin the practice experience in the same semester.

What if I don't finish my practice experience in one semester?



You must finish the hours and turn in the notebook by the date of the poster session. When you complete the practice experience hours, turn in the notebook, and participate in the poster session then a grade change form will be completed for you. You may certainly continue to volunteer at the site as long as you and your site supervisor wish, but no further credit will be awarded.

Students have two consecutive semesters to complete their practice experience without having to re-register. **However, if the practice experience is the only course that you have to finish and will not be registered for any other course in the second semester, you will need to contact Dr. Coggin or Ms. Harlin.** During the second semester, you will be required to submit two progress reports. These are in addition to the two reports that you submit during the first semester. The first report should include all activity from the last progress report to date. The second report would cover any left hours and you would also indicate if you will be participating in the poster session.

What if I am not able to finish the hours and then have to take a leave of absence from school?

If you have to withdraw from school for any reason, you will have to register for Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 and fulfill the requirements as if you had not started the class before.

What is the role of the departmental academic advisor?

Your academic advisor is the content expert for your practice experience. That professor will advise you regarding questions you may have about the actual content of your experience. They will also review your notebook and poster and give you a grade. You must also include them in the email practice experience updates you send Dr. Coggin and Ms. Harlin during the semester.



Are there sample posters and notebooks I can view?

The Center for Public Health Practice has sample posters and notebooks you may view. Students should use a three-panel, tri-fold poster board. The notebooks need to be a 3-ring binder with tabs indicating each section. Refer to the student manual for each section listing. Please contact Ms. Harlin to schedule a time to view sample posters and notebooks.

Final Steps . . .

What is a poster session?

Once you complete the practice experience it is required that you present your work at the Public Health Practice Experience Poster Session and Reception co-sponsored by the Public Health Student Association and Center for Public Health Practice. At the poster session reception, each student is expected to be present with their poster and be able to provide a brief (3-5 minute) overview of their experience to Dr. Coggin, your academic advisor, students, faculty, staff, site supervisors and other guests. You can bring any brochures, pamphlets, etc. related to the experience to distribute to guests. You are encouraged to invite your site supervisor to the poster session. The instructions for preparing for the poster session are available in the manual.

Do I get a grade for the practice experience?

Yes. A letter grade following the SPH grading policy will be assigned.

How will I be evaluated and how is the grade determined?

Your grade is determined by a combination of input from your academic advisor, your practice site supervisor, and Dr. Coggin. The grade is the average of the grades from Dr. Coggin, your academic advisor, and the site supervisor. See Practice Experience in Public Health 5397 manual for detailed evaluation criteria.

