Guidelines for Master of Public Health Applied Practice Experience

Academic Year 2021-2022

MPH Concentrations include:
• Community Health Education (CHE)
• Epidemiology (EPI)
• Health Policy and Management (HPM)
• Veterinary Public Health (VPH)

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Table of Contents

Forward & Contact Information................................................................. 3
Master of Public Health Program............................................................... 4
   Mission ........................................................................................................ 4
   Vision ......................................................................................................... 4
   Goals .......................................................................................................... 4
   Program Values.......................................................................................... 4
Guidelines for MPH Applied Practice Experience ........................................ 5
   I. Applied Practice Experience and the Master of Public Health Curriculum ........................................ 5
   II. Applied Practice Experience Goals and Objectives ........................................ 6
   III. Responsibilities of the UT Department of Public Health ....................................... 7
   IV. Responsibilities of the Field Organization .................................................. 9
   V. Responsibilities of the Student ................................................................ 10
   VI. Applied Practice Experience Reports ..................................................... 11
Appendix A: Public Health Competencies ...................................................... 13
Appendix B: Evaluations .............................................................................. 17
Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions ..................................................... 18
Forward & Contact Information

The MPH Applied Practice Experience is a 240-hour professional experience enabling graduate students to develop public health competencies while contributing to projects that benefit the organization. It is considered a vital component of the graduate program in Public Health at The University of Tennessee. Affording the MPH student a positive opportunity for the integration of theory and practical experience requires a planned joint effort between the Public Health Program and the participating organization. Close collaboration between the academic program and the practice setting will enhance the quality of the learning experience and the professional growth and development of the student as well as ensure that the student has the opportunity to contribute to the mission of the field organization. This document is intended to facilitate development of individualized, in-depth Applied Practice Experience.

The Applied Practice Experience serves as a major laboratory in which academic knowledge, skills, and professional experience are coordinated and expanded in a meaningful and functional manner. As a significant culminating graduate experience, the Applied Practice Experience permits the student to demonstrate communication skills, to apply knowledge independently, and to interact with other professionals in the organization. Students who have completed the Applied Practice Experience are highly enthusiastic about the many benefits of the field involvement and are eager to share their experiences with others. Additionally, students have found that the inclusion of the Applied Practice Experience component in the MPH curriculum strengthens their competitive ranking for employment following graduation.

The Applied Practice Experience may be completed as a full-time block experience for a period of six weeks or as a part-time involvement extending over a longer period of time. The latter approach typically requires 16 hours per week for a full semester of fifteen weeks. The 240 contact hours are viewed as the minimum needed to satisfy the MPH field experience requirement. Field time may be increased beyond the minimum if mutually agreeable to the field organization and to the student intern.

We extend our sincere appreciation in advance for the preceptor’s willingness to participate in an important facet of graduate education. Without the preceptor, Applied Practice Experience would not be possible.

MPH Faculty
The University of Tennessee

Contact Information

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<thead>
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<th>Veterinary Public Health</th>
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Master of Public Health Program

**Mission**
The Graduate Public Health Program at The University of Tennessee provides quality education and leadership to promote health in human populations through interdisciplinary instruction, research and community service.

**Vision**
The MPH Program is recognized for its empowerment of students pursuing public health careers which focus on community health improvement.

**Goals**
The goals of the Public Health Program reflect the major functions of the program and assist in the attainment of the mission and movement toward the vision. The goal statements are linked to instruction, research, and service.

- **Instructional Goal**: Preparation of future professionals competent in public health core content and methodological approaches.
- **Research Goal**: Public health faculty and students engaged in research projects that address health concerns and community health improvement and add to the knowledge base.
- **Service Goal**: Public health faculty and students engaged in community, government, and professional service to benefit populations at the local, state, and national levels.

**Program Values**

1. **Respect** - To engage in experiences that obligate a person to take responsibility for the public’s good, to recognize human dignity, and to value the worth of individual and collective behaviors.
2. **Holistic Consideration** - To emphasize a socio-ecological systems approach for understanding and promoting optimal health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.
3. **Excellence** - To commit to highest quality in teaching-learning and in practice.
4. **Collaboration** - To advocate networking, partnering, consensus building and participatory approaches for improving population health.
5. **Diversity** - To recognize the benefits of diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives and prepare culturally competent public health professionals.
6. **Equity** - To promote equality of opportunity for individuals, families and communities.
I. Applied Practice Experience and the Master of Public Health Curriculum

A. Applied Practice Experience is a very important component of the MPH program because it allows application of academic theory, concepts and skills in a realistic setting. The experience also expands the student's understanding of the variety of organizations engaged in health-related activities.

B. Although primarily a learning opportunity for which the public health intern earns six (6) semester hours of credit (PH 587), the Applied Practice Experience program is beneficial to a participating field organization in that a placement:
1. allows the organization to contribute to professional preparation of MPH students,
2. provides additional personnel resources for the completion of special projects,
3. offers the organization the fresh perspective of the public health intern,
4. develops a working relationship between the field organization and the University of Tennessee.

C. Applied Practice Experience requires that the student be involved in the work of the field organization on either a full-time basis or a part-time basis for a total of 240 hours. The exact calendar dates are arranged between the public health intern and the field organization and must be communicated to the Applied Practice Experience Coordinator (APEC). The public health intern's role is typically that of "staff assistant" in the field organization.

D. Stipends, although not required for field organization participation, are welcomed because the intern may need to relocate. Stipend amounts vary based on the type of organization, typically ranging from $1,000 to $7,200, with an average of $3,500. On average, approximately sixty percent of placements are funded by the organization.

E. MPH students usually complete Applied Practice Experience during the last semester of study; however, this may vary based on concentration and/or dual degree status. Approval is required by advisor and Applied Practice Experience coordinator. Students must have earned an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

F. Public Health interns select field organizations on the basis of the student’s academic and prior work experience, individual interests, and professional needs. The field organization may interview the student and retains the right of final approval of each intern placement.
II. Applied Practice Experience Goals and Objectives

A. The general goal of the Applied Practice Experience is to strengthen the student's public health competencies and understanding of a particular area of public health. This is achieved by familiarizing the intern with the:

1. Practice of public health to help the intern identify with the profession of public health.

2. Organizational and administrative dimensions of public health.

3. Functional activities and involvements of a specialty area of public health.

B. The following specific objectives guide progress toward the general goal. Planned experiences should contribute to the student's general preparation by offering the intern an opportunity to:

1. Apply knowledge and skills within the framework of an appropriate field organization through:
   a. Experience in working with and without supervision within the assigned organization.
   b. Exploration of the general operations of the organization.
   c. Examination of the organization's responsibilities and constraints.
   d. Exposure to various staff, board or community meetings.
   e. Working with the organization's various publics and programs.

2. Increase self-confidence in one's ability through:
   a. Involvement in planning, organizing, or implementing activities or projects.
   b. Involvement in evaluation activities and self-evaluation.
   c. Involvement in data collection and research investigations, as applicable.
   d. Involvement in facilitating group process.
   e. Involvement in report development.
III. Responsibilities of the UT Department of Public Health

A. The Applied Practice Experience (APE) coordinator in consultation with faculty/faculty advisor will provide students with a list of past field sites as examples of possible field sites, and provide the following resources to help students identify an appropriate site:

1. **Applied Practice Experience Information Session** – first year MPH students learn strategies for developing their career interests and identifying potential field sites and preceptors as they progress through the MPH degree.

2. **Applied Practice Experience Planning Session** - second year MPH students receive guidance on completing the Intern’s Request for Applied Practice Experience form, resume and interview tips, understanding of the Applied Practice Experience requirements and guidance for students to identify and confirm their field site. Set-up a LinkedIn profile and join the UT MPH alumni group.

3. Review and approve the **Intern's Request for Applied Practice Experience form**. Requires signature by the Applied Practice Experience coordinator and faculty advisor.

B. Upon notification that a field organization is willing to accept a public health intern, the APE coordinator in consultation with faculty will:

1. Secure appropriate University signatures if contractual agreements are required.

2. Work with the field organization and intern to develop a satisfactory plan of learning objectives and activities for the public health intern.

3. Send an official letter confirming placement (to be completed usually two months prior to the start of the desired Applied Practice Experience period.)

4. If requested, visit the field organization, typically at midpoint, to discuss progress with preceptor and intern. Out of town site visits may be conducted via Zoom video call or telephone.

C. The APE coordinator will orient students to the purpose of Applied Practice Experience and its role as an integral part of the MPH degree curriculum. In addition, the APE coordinator in consultation with faculty/faculty advisor will:

1. Guide the student in selecting Public Health Competencies (Appendix A) to develop during Applied Practice Experience and assist in the selection of a field organization able to provide the desired experiences.

2. Provide and explain "Applied Practice Experience Check List."

3. Discuss with the student a format for the development and submission of Applied Practice Experience reports, including written objectives with related competencies, Applied Practice Experience in Action write-up, and final Applied Practice Experience report and presentation.

4. Discuss the method of evaluation of student performance.
5. Indicate the continuing availability of the APE coordinator and faculty advisor throughout the Applied Practice Experience period to confer regarding the student's learning experiences and progress toward objectives.

6. Review the preceptor's evaluation report, with follow-up discussion with the student. The evaluation is included in the student's permanent academic record.
IV. Responsibilities of the Field Organization

A. Accepts responsibility for collaboration with the UT Department of Public Health in providing Applied Practice Experience for a specific public health intern for a designated period of time and in so doing, provides a designated student work space that offers the intern appropriate experiences to assist in professional development.

B. Designates a field preceptor by name, business address, e-mail address, phone number, and academic degree(s) by completing a Preceptor Form. The preceptor should possess a graduate degree in public health or related field, or have equivalent experiences, ideally holding a supervisory position with decision making authority. A field preceptor shall be responsible for planning and conducting the Applied Practice Experience. As well as performing this primary function, the field preceptor should:

1. Assist the public health intern in determining specific, mutually agreeable, written objectives for the field experience.

2. Orient the public health intern to the field organization's mission, programs, policies, and other information.

3. Commit time for instructional interaction and dialogue with the intern (an average of at least 1 hour per week).

4. Provide supervision of the public health intern's activities.

5. If desired, plan for a visit by the APE Coordinator and/or faculty advisor during the Applied Practice Experience period, usually near midpoint.

6. Review Applied Practice Experience reports, and, if indicated, resolve conflicts with field organization policy. A copy of the student’s Applied Practice Experience in Action write-up will be emailed to you for approval to feature on the MPH website or other publicity materials (optional).

7. Complete an online midpoint and final evaluation of the public health intern and discuss the ratings and comments with the intern.

8. Share any comments and/or suggestions about the Applied Practice Experience program or the MPH curriculum with the APE Coordinator or faculty advisor.

9. If available, attend the student’s culminating experience oral presentation on UT campus, typically held near the end of the semester. Out of town preceptors may join via Zoom video call or telephone.
V. Responsibilities of the Student

A. Before the Applied Practice Experience Period - A vital part of the Applied Practice Experience planning process is the student’s selection of an appropriate preceptor and field site. In the first fall semester of starting the MPH
1. Attend a group Information Session with the APE coordinator to review purpose of Applied Practice Experience and discuss strategies for identifying appropriate field site. If unable to attend, watch the recording and review the slides.
2. During the next few semesters, update and tailor resume with public health-focus, create a LinkedIn profile, conduct informational interviews with potential preceptors or alumni to develop connections, participate in networking opportunities. Be proactive in identifying and cultivating potential Applied Practice Experience connections.

B. In the fall semester before the Applied Practice Experience
1. Attend a group Planning Session with the APE coordinator to review requirements, revise resume, and discuss strategies for identifying appropriate field site, and submit a Request for Applied Practice Experience. If unable to attend, watch the recording and review the slides. If needed, students may also schedule an individual meeting with the APE coordinator.
2. Contact prospective field sites. Provide a resume, cover letter, and Applied Practice Experience guidelines to prospective field sites. Communicate relevant courses completed and goals for the internship. Interview with preceptor. If accepted, send preceptor the Preceptor form to confirm placement.

B. During the Applied Practice Experience Period
1. Follows policies, rules, and regulations of the field organization.
2. Maintains the mutually agreed upon hours.
3. Obtains professional liability insurance coverage, if necessary and not provided by field organization. (Available by purchase from staff in 390 HPER.)
4. Seeks the preceptor's guidance and appraisal of performance throughout the Applied Practice Experience period.
5. Shares with the preceptor any feelings and ideas concerning the Applied Practice Experience as it progresses.
6. Plans for meetings with the preceptor.
7. Plans participation in activities and secures approval of the field preceptor.
8. If applicable, participates in the preceptor's planning for visits by the APE coordinator or faculty advisor.
9. Submits objectives and weekly reports to Canvas on time and incorporates feedback and requests for revisions in a timely manner.

10. Prepares a preliminary draft of the final Applied Practice Experience report and Applied Practice Experience in Action write-up and clears it with the field preceptor and/or other appropriate field organization personnel.

C. After the Applied Practice Experience Period

1. Completes final Applied Practice Experience report and submits it to the APE coordinator and faculty advisor.

2. Forwards letter of appreciation to the field preceptor.

3. Prepares a PowerPoint presentation that synthesizes major projects with public health competency development and career interests.

4. As a Culminating Experience, delivers PowerPoint oral presentation to faculty advisor, APE Coordinator, preceptor (if available), and other faculty and students.

5. Evaluates APE experience using the online student evaluation form.

VI. Applied Practice Experience Reports

A. Purpose of Applied Practice Experience Reports
   1. To demonstrate an ability to communicate at a level appropriate to the degree.

   2. To structure and organize the student's learning experience to enhance integration, synthesis and conceptualization of the Applied Practice Experience activities. (i.e., thinking through and putting various daily involvements into perspective)

   3. To provide a permanent summary and record of the professional training experiences and exposures encountered while participating in Applied Practice Experience.

   4. To enhance and strengthen the relationship of the field preceptor and the intern's APE coordinator and faculty advisor.

B. Submission of Applied Practice Experience Reports
   1. Upload all reports to Canvas site for review by APE coordinator and faculty advisor.
      a. Objectives. Draft objectives are due before first day of Applied Practice Experience. Revised version of objectives is due by second week of Applied Practice Experience. Midpoint objectives are due at midpoint. Final evaluation of objectives is due during the last week of Applied Practice Experience. Note: Use the objectives template provided on Canvas.

      b. Weekly reports should be maintained weekly. Use the Weekly Report Template. Continue submitting reports until you have completed all the required hours.
c. **Final Field Report:** Use template and rubric provided on Canvas. Electronic version due by the last day of class unless prior arrangements are made. Recommended to upload draft to Canvas before printing.

f. **Applied Practice Experience in Action Write-up:** Due by the last day of class. Students fill out the template provided, which summarizes major projects, includes 1-3 personal quotes, a headshot, and 1-3 other images attached as .jpg files. Student and preceptor sign consent form on page 2.

2. To the Field Preceptor
   a. Copies of all "official" reports submitted to the APEx coordinator (at the field preceptor's discretion).
   b. Project reports requested by the field preceptor.
Appendix A: Public Health Competencies

MPH Foundational Competencies

All MPH graduates demonstrate the following competencies:

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth 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

Policy in Public Health

12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, 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
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

19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation

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

Interprofessional Practice

21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

Systems Thinking

22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

*These competencies are informed by the traditional public health core knowledge areas, (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration and environmental health sciences), as well as cross-cutting and emerging public health areas. They are in compliance with the most recent criteria established by The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) in 2016.
Competencies for Concentrations

Competencies: Community Health Education concentration of study

Upon graduation an MPH/CHE graduate should be able to . . .

1. Demonstrate how fundamental social causes of health and disease produce differences in health and health inequity in specific health outcomes.

2. Identify strategies designed to reduce structural bias and social inequities that produce health disparities.

3. Formulate Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART) research questions for behavior change interventions.

4. Explain key ethical issues and challenges to conducting research in communities.

5. Prepare a high-quality program grant proposal.

Competencies: Epidemiology concentration of study

Upon graduation an MPH/EPI graduate should be able to . . .

1. Selects appropriate study design(s) to investigate a public health concern given the strengths, limitations, and feasibility of the design(s).

2. Assesses, synthesizes, and critically evaluates epidemiologic scientific literature.

3. Communicates epidemiologic evidence to lay and scientific audiences.

4. Demonstrates proficiency in basic and intermediate epidemiologic methods and principles.

5. Conducts a reproducible data analysis project.

Competencies: Health Policy and Management concentration of study

Upon graduation an MPH/HPM graduate should be able to . . .

1. Apply the policy-making process to improve population health.

2. Apply the principles of evidence-based public health in practice and policy formulation.

3. Apply appropriate strategic planning methodologies and other decision support tools to organizational management.
4. Apply quality improvement and performance management concepts to organizational planning and management.

5. Evaluate the macro-economic effects including ROI of existing and proposed policies and services

**Competencies: Veterinary Public Health concentration of study**

Upon graduation an MPH/VPH graduate should be able to . . .

1. Assess health related risks to individuals and communities with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, foodborne illness and injuries associated with animals.

2. Communicate health risks to individuals and communities with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, foodborne illness and injuries associated with animals.

3. Apply techniques of surveillance, recognition, prevention, control and management of infectious diseases, with special attention to zoonotic and emerging diseases, foodborne illnesses, and potential bio- or agroterrorism agents.

4. Evaluate intervention programs that aim to reduce health risks associated with foodborne illness, zoonotic or emerging diseases, or hazards associated with animals.

5. Outline the steps needed to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of foods of animal origin.
Appendix B: Evaluations

Preceptor Evaluation of Intern
Midpoint evaluation – To be completed online by preceptors when the student finishes approximately half of their hours (i.e. -120 hours for a 240-hour placement)
Link to Midpoint evaluation of public health intern - https://utk.questionpro.com/t/AOiMZfGnf

Final evaluation - To be completed online by preceptors during the student’s last week of Applied Practice Experience. Preceptors are asked to discuss evaluation results with the intern.
Link to preceptor’s Final evaluation of public health intern - https://utk.questionpro.com/t/AOiMZfGnb

Student Evaluation of the MPH Applied Practice Experience
To be completed online by students after finishing all Applied Practice Experience reporting activities, including the final oral presentation.
Link to Student's evaluation of the APE - https://utk.questionpro.com/t/AOiMZfGna
Appendix C: Timeline

It is the student’s responsibility to find an appropriate field site and preceptor.

The following timeline describes steps in the process.

**Applied Practice Experience (APE) timeline for student planning**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least two semesters before</th>
<th>Semester before</th>
<th>During Applied Practice Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information session (fall)</td>
<td>Planning session (fall)</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International placement</td>
<td>Request for APE form</td>
<td>Weekly reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning (start early)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Midpoint evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU (if required by agency)</td>
<td>Preceptor form</td>
<td>Final evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of deliverables and related competencies (part 1, objectives template)</td>
<td>APE in action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MOU completed (if applicable)</td>
<td>Final report</td>
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Oral presentation
Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the student deadline to confirm a field site? (confirm is defined as having a completed Preceptor Form)
- Spring internships should be confirmed by November 20.
- Summer internships should be confirmed by April 1.
- Fall internships (less common) should be confirmed by July 15.

Who is responsible for finding the field site?
- The student is ultimately responsible. The intern coordinator and faculty advisors will support the intern by providing a list of past field sites and sharing contacts of prospective sites. However, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the field site and secure a placement.

What happens if an intern cannot find a field site?
- The student will have to delay their internship until the next semester. The Applied Practice Experience (6 credit hours) is required for the MPH degree.

How is Applied Practice Experience graded?
- Satisfactory/No Credit.

Who grades the intern?
- The faculty advisor determines if a student has met requirements for a Satisfactory grade.

Why would a student get an Incomplete?
- An intern could receive a Satisfactory Incomplete (SI) for reasons such as: not submitting all of the required reports on time; not incorporating requested edits/revisions to reports; not meeting the minimum requirements in terms of contact hours, deliverables, and/or demonstration of public health competencies. A student given an Incomplete will have one year to complete the incomplete requirements.