

**2.4 Practical Skills. All graduate professional public health degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students' areas of specialization.**

### **Required Documentation**

**2.4.a Description of the school's policies and procedures regarding practice experiences, including selection of sites, methods for approving preceptors, opportunities for orientation and support for preceptors, approaches for faculty supervision of students, means of evaluating student performance, means of evaluating practice placement sites and preceptor qualifications, and criteria for waiving, altering, or reducing the experience.**

MPH students are required to complete a five to eight-credit internship, which is usually conducted in the student's final semester after all MPH and concentration core courses have been completed. The internship provides opportunities for a range of public health experiences, but it must include a special project that serves as the focus for a final paper and presentation. The final paper and presentation constitute the culminating experiences of the MPH program of study, as described under Criterion 2.5.

To begin an internship, students prepare an Internship/Special Project Proposal Form, which includes a description of the project with goals specific to the individual student. The faculty advisor and the internship coordinator assist with conceptualization of the proposal and they review and approve the final document. Goals must specify the fulfillment of at least one MPH core competency and one concentration core competency. Most projects incorporate more than one of each. Students are not eligible to register for an internship, PHC 6946, unless they have completed a proposal and obtained signatures of the preceptor, faculty advisor and internship coordinator.

**Selection of sites.** Sites for internships have been identified over several years, and new opportunities become available on a regular basis. We look for sites in established public health or community agencies that can provide appropriate supervision and opportunities for the students to become part of a team serving the mission of the agency or organization. Affiliation agreements are developed for internships in which students are not compensated. These documents are developed with legal advice and signed by the Dean and the Senior Vice President for Health Affairs. Current Affiliation Agreements are in the Resource File.

Students may develop their own internships or they may select from a variety of opportunities identified and compiled by the MPH internship coordinator. In either case, they work closely with the internship coordinator and their faculty advisors to ensure that there is congruence among the MPH competencies, the proposed learning experience, and the student's career goals.

Internship sites, guidance for selecting internships, and forms that must be completed are in the “Internship” section of the *MPH Student Handbook* and on the MPH website at: <http://mph.ufl.edu/internship/>. The *MPH Student Handbook* is included in the Resource File. It is also online at <http://mph.ufl.edu/students/student-handbook/> for the campus students and at <http://online.mph.ufl.edu/student-information/handbook/> for online students.

Before students select their internships, they are expected to do the following:

- Complete an Internship/Special Project Questionnaire to identify their interests and professional goals;
- Submit a current resume to the internship coordinator;
- Review the Internship/Special Project section of the Student Handbook;
- Attend a mandatory Internship/Special Project Orientation;
- Review their concentration-specific expectations for internship sites and experience; and
- Obtain a list of potential internship options, based on the student’s responses to the Internship/Special Project Questionnaire, from the internship coordinator.

Students are also encouraged to attend a Preceptor Luncheon held every fall semester, which serves as a mechanism for faculty and students to foster and maintain relationships with past and potential preceptors. This event provides students the opportunity to meet potential preceptors and to discuss options for special projects.

**Approval of Preceptors.** Selection of internship sites and approval of preceptors are closely related activities. The internship coordinator and the faculty advisor review the resumes of potential preceptors for academic qualifications and employment experiences that are appropriate for the proposed internship. Preceptors are expected to hold at least a master’s degree, except under unusual circumstances. Preceptors must also be willing to work with the student to develop an internship proposal and to commit the time to meet regularly and provide adequate supervision throughout the placement.

Students are encouraged to communicate with the internship coordinator and/or the faculty advisor if they are not receiving adequate guidance during the internship. Such a report triggers an effort to improve the situation, which is almost always successful. Students also evaluate their internship sites and preceptors at the end of the internship period. These evaluations are given serious consideration by the program.

**Orientation and Support for Preceptors.** When a preceptor agrees to supervise a student, they are contacted by the internship coordinator who provides a link to the *MPH Preceptor Handbook*: <http://mph.ufl.edu/files/2011/12/siPreceptorHandbookFall2011.pdf> and to a voice-over PowerPoint presentation of the key elements and requirements for student supervision and guidance: <http://streaming.video.ufl.edu/~seminars/PreceptorforMPHInternship.mp4>. These materials are in the Resource File. In addition, the MPH internship coordinator contacts each preceptor mid-semester to assess progress and assist with any challenges. All preceptors are encouraged to contact the MPH internship coordinator as often as necessary during the

internship period. Most preceptors have worked with the program for several years and are very familiar with requirements.

As indicated, a luncheon for preceptors is held each fall at the College. This is an opportunity to thank preceptors for their contributions, to obtain informal feedback on the internship program, and to introduce them to students scheduled for internships in the current academic year. The luncheon is consistently well-attended.

**Faculty Supervision.** Faculty advisors participate in development of the internship proposal and must sign it before students may register for the course. If IRB approval is required, faculty advisors also assist with development of the application and must sign to indicate their approval. During the internship, students participate in an informal evaluation session with the faculty advisor and preceptor partway through the internship in order to receive feedback and modify the special project. They also consult with the faculty advisor on development of the final report and presentation. Most students and faculty advisors are in regular ongoing contact throughout the internship. The faculty advisor must approve the student's special project in written report form in order for the student to be scheduled for an oral or poster presentation. A voice-over PowerPoint orientation to MPH internships for faculty is available on the website at: <http://streaming.video.ufl.edu/~seminars/UFMPHInternshipsFacultyOverview.mp4> and in the Resource File.

**Evaluation of Student Performance.** Upon completion of the internship, the preceptor provides an evaluation of the student's performance, including professional behavior, performance on MPH and concentration-specific competencies, and overall score for contribution to the agency. The Internship Evaluation Form is in the *MPH Student Handbook*. This information is taken into account when assigning the student's internship grade (Pass/Fail). In addition, summaries of the data are compiled by the MPH internship coordinator and reviewed by the Public Health Executive Committee after each semester.

Evaluation of student performance in the internship is separate from evaluation of the special project paper and presentation. The special project, paper and presentation comprise the culminating experience and are graded independently, as described under Criterion 2.5

**Evaluation of Practice Sites.** Each student provides an evaluation of the internship site and preceptor at the completion of the internship. This information is used by the program to determine whether to continue to use the site.

**Waivers.** The MPH program does not permit waiving, altering, or reducing the internship requirement. All MPH students must complete at least five credits of internship. Some students take an additional three credits for longer or more complicated internship experiences. These decisions are made collaboratively by the student, faculty advisor, internship coordinator and preceptor.

**2.4.b Identification of agencies and preceptors used for practice experiences for students, by program area, for the past two academic years.**

Agencies and preceptors that have worked with MPH students in the past two academic years are identified in Table 2.4.b.1 in the Resource File. The variety of internship opportunities outside Florida has expanded greatly in the past five years. Many students, however, prefer to remain in this area because of family responsibilities and costs of duplicate living arrangements.

The College has actively nurtured internship opportunities with three projects with strong ties to the MPH program: the UF Public Health Laboratory in Gressier, Haiti, the Rural South Public Health Training Center, and HealthStreet.

Gressier, Haiti is near the epi-center of the 2010 earthquake. UF has been involved in nutrition and agricultural projects there for 20 years, adding public health in the past four years. MPH student internships are based in school health centers, the communities surrounding the schools, and the UF public health laboratory, which opened in 2011. Projects focus primarily on detection and management of environmental hazards; prevention and control of communicable diseases; and school health. Students engage in internship preparation activities, such as conducting literature reviews, creating data collection tools, and preparing IRB applications, prior to spending approximately four weeks in Haiti. They return to Gainesville to finalize their projects and reports.

The Rural South Public Health Training Center (RSPHTC) provides competency-based training for the public health workforce to enhance public health services and decrease disparities in access to services in medically underserved areas in Florida. The center conducts regular assessments of training needs of the public health workforce and of residents in medically underserved areas, and tailors training and services based on those needs, with a special emphasis on needs related to HIV/AIDS. The RSPHTC provides internship opportunities for MPH students in rural public health agencies. The center is funded by HRSA and offered stipends and travel funds to encourage students to practice in underserved areas in 2011-12 and 2012-13. Because of federal budget reductions, student support is not available in 2013-14.

HealthStreet is a community-based initiative of the Department of Epidemiology. Community Health Workers engage residents in the community and at the HealthStreet facilities in Gainesville and Jacksonville. They discuss their health concerns, health problems and needs for services. This information becomes the basis for offering the opportunity to participate in relevant research, and to receive referrals to health and social services. HealthStreet is a successful model of community engagement funded by the NIH that is being replicated internationally. Internship opportunities at HealthStreet provide training in community outreach and engagement, such as networking with community agencies or neighborhood groups, sponsoring community prevention activities, and engaging in targeted data analyses.

Students tend to be very pleased with their internship placements. Table 2.4.b.2 shows mean scores from students on three aspects of internships. Data were collected via the MPH exit survey following completion of the internship. The response scale ranged from 1=extremely dissatisfied to 5= extremely satisfied. Full summaries of MPH exit surveys are in the Resource File.

**Table 2.4.b.2 MPH Student Satisfaction with Internship Experience, 2010-2013**

Semester/Year	Fall 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2011	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2012	Fall 2012	Spring 2013
Number of students	15	25	11	14	40	11	14	45
<b>Please rate your experience on the final internship:</b>								
Increased knowledge and understanding of the field	4.67	4.52	4.91	4.50	4.48	4.27	4.71	4.49
Strengthened competencies (MPH and concentration)	4.80	4.44	4.73	4.36	4.43	4.36	4.64	4.42
Applicability to career goals	4.53	4.52	4.82	4.36	4.50	4.27	4.50	4.42

**2.4.c Data on the number of students receiving a waiver of the practice experience for each of the last three years.**

The MPH program does not permit waivers of the internship requirement.

**2.4.d Data on the number of preventive medicine, occupational medicine, aerospace medicine, general preventive medicine, and public health residents completing the academic program for each of the last three years, along with information on their practicum rotations.**

One aerospace and occupational medicine resident completed his MPH in fall 2012. His internship was at the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute and the Naval Branch Medical Clinic, Occupational Health Department. Both units are located at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. During his internship, he learned how to assess occupation-related exposures and develop mitigation strategies to prevent disease and injury. His special project was a descriptive epidemiology of skin cancer in military aviators. A copy of his final presentation is included in the Resource File.

**2.4.e Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of the school's strengths, weaknesses and plans relating to this criterion.**

This criterion is met.

**Strengths:**

1. All students in the MPH program are required to complete a planned, supervised and evaluated practice experience.

2. Internship guidelines for students, faculty and preceptors have been developed and are updated regularly.
3. A wide range of local, state, national and international internship sites are available to MPH students for internships.
4. The program provides an internship coordinator to work with students to find the most appropriate internship for their career goals, to facilitate placements by assisting with IRB submissions and affiliation agreements, and to troubleshoot issues that arise during the internship.

**Weaknesses:**

1. A growing student body has increased the time required for administrative tasks associated with establishment and oversight of internships.

**Plans:**

1. Continue to cultivate well-qualified sites and preceptors for practical experiences to accommodate the needs of a growing student body.
2. Hire a program assistant to support the administrative tasks associated with internships.