

## **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 (as defined in Criterion D2). The competencies need not be identical from student to student, but the applied experiences must be structured to ensure that all students complete experiences addressing at least five competencies, as specified above. The applied experiences may also address additional foundational or concentration-specific competencies, if appropriate.**

**The school assesses each student's competency attainment in practical and applied settings through a portfolio approach, which demonstrates and allows assessment of competency attainment. It must include at least two products. Examples include written assignments, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos or other digital artifacts of learning. Materials may be produced and maintained (either by the school or by individual students) in any physical or electronic form chosen by the school.**

In March of 2018, the Public Health Policy Committee began discussing methods of engaging MPH students more effectively in community service. In order to accomplish this goal, the program changed the internship requirement. Previously, students completed 5-8 credits of internship. As the program transitioned to a more flexible approach, students were initially given the option to replace some of the required 5-8 credits of internship hours with public health service hours. This became the basis of the new Applied Practice Experience course, PHC 6941. Beginning with the Fall 2019 entering class, students in the 48-credit and 42-credit programs must complete 150 hours of formal APE internship hours (totaling 3 credits). In addition, students in the 48-credit curriculum must complete an additional 50 but they can fulfill these hours through any combination of internship, volunteer, or other applied practice experience. This change provides students the flexibility to acquire volunteer work and applied practice experience in areas of interest.

The Applied Practice Experience (APE) encompasses both the internship and the volunteer and applied practice public health service hours. Students who complete public health service hours may do so at any time during their MPH program. Public health service hours are pre-approved by the Internship Coordinator and students are required to log their hours and write a critical reflection of the volunteer experience that describes a measurable objective for the experience, whether the objective was met and how the experience contributed to a specific competency.

Examples of opportunities include participating in maintenance of the working garden at the local homeless center, Grace Marketplace; planning and delivering a health fair for the community; assisting with a DDEA Drug Take back event; and assisting with a workshop on cultural humility for OB/GYN and psychiatry residents at a local medical center. Additionally, the new APE model has also created an opportunity for MPH students to participate in the [Putting Families First initiative](#). In this program, inter-professional groups of students team together to carry out home visits with volunteer families to determine ways for the families to maintain or improve their health.

### **1) Briefly describe how the school identifies competencies attained in applied practice experiences for each MPH student, including a description of any relevant policies.**

For each applied practice experience portfolio product, students must receive pre-approval from their faculty advisor; they must identify in advance the intended MPH Foundational and Concentration Competencies and develop a measurable objective for the experience. Following the experience, the student develops an individual portfolio product that clearly communicates the objective, the experience, an analysis of how the experience met the objective and how the experience grounded the chosen MPH competency in practice. Students submit products, which can take many forms and include mixed and multi-media, along with a reflection on how the portfolio submission meets the stated program criteria and provides clear evidence of developing

competency. Faculty advisors then grade the portfolio product based on the demonstration of attainment of the selected competencies, as well as the effectiveness of the product and written reflection. Students must receive a “full pass” for each component of the portfolio product grading in order to achieve an overall satisfactory grade for the portfolio product requirement.

**2) Provide documentation, including syllabi and handbooks, of the official requirements through which students complete the applied practice experience.**

The official requirements through which students complete the APE are outlined in the syllabus for PHC 6941 MPH Applied Practice Experience and in the APE Handbook; these can be found in ERF D5-2. These documents are available to current and prospective students on the MPH website. In addition, APE assignments are described and tracked in the e-learning APE course site. Students are also informed about APE requirements through a seminar session during which they can ask questions about the process.

**3) Provide samples of practice-related materials for individual students from each concentration or generalist degree. The samples must also include materials from students completing combined degree programs, if applicable. The school must provide samples of complete sets of materials (ie, Template D5-1 and the work products/documents that demonstrate at least five competencies) from at least five students in the last three years for each concentration or generalist degree. If the school has not produced five students for which complete samples are available, note this and provide all available samples.**

Portfolio samples can be found in ERF D5-3.

**4) If applicable, assess strengths and weaknesses related to this criterion and plans for improvement in this area.**

Strengths:

- The APE model adopted by the MPH program still requires internship hours that were a former program requirement. However, it reduces the overall time requirement and adds flexibility by allowing students to acquire experiences through less formal methods if they choose to do so, such as volunteer activities outside of a formal class structure.

Weaknesses:

- The APE model was implemented for students who began in fall 2019 or later. Thus, the model is new to both faculty and students and there are a limited number of portfolio products that have been submitted to date.

Plans for improvement:

- A process for assessing the new model will be developed in 2020-2021 and applied to the first cohort of students using it. Feedback from students and faculty will play a crucial role in this process and improvements will be developed to address any shortcomings.