

## 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.**

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

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). The 150 hours are typically completed in a single internship experience, but students may request to split time between two internship experiences if they feel that will better serve their needs. In addition, students in the 48-credit curriculum must complete an additional 50 hours 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 the internship and the volunteer and applied practice public health service hours as well as the APE portfolio products:

### **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.

### **Public Health Internship**

Students complete their public health internship requirement as part of the PHC 6941 Applied Practice Experience course, typically in the final semester of the degree program. Internship placement opportunities are identified through faculty advising, through program connections with established internship sites and through identification of sites of interest by students. Students meet with their faculty advisors in advance of internship to discuss their practice areas of interest and to learn about potential internship sites that match those interests. In addition, students may meet with other faculty who may have a background or expertise in the area of interest and who may be able to connect the student with an internship site. The MPH program hosts an annual internship preceptor fair, which is attended by representatives from local public health agencies, who inform students about their agency and their internship opportunities. Students are also encouraged to research and identify potential internship and fellowship opportunities on their own that will meet their needs. This latter approach is often the one used by online MPH students because the program may not have knowledge of internship sites in their geographic location. Faculty are available to assist in facilitating the connection between a student and their self-identified internship site. In the spring of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic caused wide-spread stay-at-home orders, several students were not able to carry out their internship opportunities as planned. The MPH program director was able to reach out to prior internship preceptors from multiple areas of the country to link both campus and online students to virtual internship opportunities.

### **Applied Practice Experience Portfolio Products**

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. This is accomplished by completing the required Portfolio Products Proposal Form (see ERF D5-3). 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. Each individual portfolio product may be graded at the time of its submission, but no later than the final due date for the course. 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 (i.e., 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.**

The APE was first implemented for the fall 2019 cohort of students, most of whom will complete this experience in spring 2021. Therefore portfolio products are not available at this time for five students in each concentration. All available 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:

- The majority of the 2019 fall cohort will complete the APE in spring 2021. The new model will be assessed via feedback from students on the MPH exit survey and via faculty through forums. This feedback from students and faculty will play a crucial role in this process and improvements will be developed to address any shortcomings.

