

NDSU

PUBLIC HEALTH

Student Practicum Manual

NDSU NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Use of this Document

The *Student Practicum Manual* is intended to guide NDSU Master of Public Health (MPH) degree candidates through the processes of selecting and completing the Practicum, which is an essential educational component of the program. Students should familiarize themselves with this manual and follow the steps described in the sections below.

Introduction to the Practicum

The Practicum is a semi-guided, applied practice experience in which MPH students partner with a professional mentor (the Preceptor) to address a real-world situation within the public health realm that is important to the Preceptor's organization (referred to as the Host Organization). The Host Organization may be a public health department, another government agency such as the Indian Health Service, a non-governmental organization such as a hospital, other healthcare provider, or a community service organization. An up-to-date listing of all available organizations can be found on the ND MPH website, www.ndmph.org

The Practicum experience should:

- Be based upon a real problem, issue or situation faced by the Host Organization that, when solved, will meaningfully advance the organization's mission;
- Provide an opportunity for the student to apply competencies, knowledge, techniques and tools acquired in the classroom;
- Challenge the student, leading them to pursue new knowledge and acquire new skills in relevant areas of public health;
- Allow the student to fully appreciate the mission of the Host Organization, its inner workings, and how the organization meets its public health mission;
- Be well defined and specific in scope, allowing the student to produce a Deliverable that signifies completion of the project.

The Practicum experience should *not*:

- Be based upon an essential component of the Host Organization's work, where significant negative consequences could arise if the project falters;
- Involve significant amounts of routine work within the Host Organization's normal scope of operation;
- Be limited to a "shadow experience."

Ethical and professional conduct is essential to the Practicum experience. As an individual training to be a public health professional, each MPH student is expected to conduct him or herself ethically and professionally according to the standards of the MPH program, North Dakota State University, and the Host Organization.

Practicums in the Place of Employment—Students are able to use their place of employment as the Host Organization if (a) the project is unique and separate from the student's employment responsibilities and (b) the Preceptor is not the student's usual supervisor.

International Students - In order to assure all visa requirements are followed, international students must consult with NDSU's [International Student and Study Abroad Services](#) before agreeing to accept a stipend or any form of payment for completion of the practicum.

The Practicum Process

For students, the Practicum process consists of the following:

Task	Timeline
1. Discuss your topics of interests as well as organizations with your advisor and/or Practicum Instructor.	Six months prior to your plan to complete the practicum
2. Contact Host Organization representatives and discuss projects that would benefit the Host Organization, be interesting to the Student, and advance the Student's educational program; choose practicum project.	Four months prior
3. Draft the Practicum Agreement between yourself (the student) and the Preceptor, in which you outline the project goals and the roles and responsibilities of both parties.	Three months prior
4. Finalize the Agreement and send to the parties for signatures (student, Preceptor, and Practicum Instructor)	Two months prior
5. Complete background check and any other required site paperwork. 6. After approval, enroll for the required number of credits in campus connection.	One month prior

Writing the Practicum Agreement

Developing a Practicum Agreement ensures that there is a well-defined project with clear goals and an identified 'product' or Deliverable that signals completion of the student's obligation. The Agreement must contain all of the following elements and can be found at:

<https://www.ndsu.edu/publichealth/curriculum/>

A. Background (1/4 to 1/2 page)

- a. Host Organization and Its Public Health Mission
- b. Preceptor's Role in Host Organization
- c. Practicum's Contribution & Importance to Host Organization

B. Project Description (1/2 to 1 page)

- a. Synopsis of the problem, issue or situation
- b. Is this a research project that will require IRB approval?
 - Yes*
 - No
 - Don't know

*If Yes or you don't know, contact stefanie.meyer@ndsu.edu before continuing.

- c. Detailed description of the *deliverable(s)*

C. Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources (1/2 to 1 page)

- a. Roles of all personnel
 - i. Student
 - ii. Preceptor
 - iii. Others?
- b. Responsibilities of all personnel
 - i. Student
 - ii. Preceptor
 - iii. Others?
- c. Resources need for the project and who will provide them

D. Communication and Scheduling Expectations (1/2 page)

- a. Communication plan
- b. Schedule expectations
- c. Will you be working on-site or remotely?

Students should make it a priority to be on-site or be present at a site as often as possible for the best experience.

E. Contributions to MPH Learning (1/4 to 1/2 page)

- a. Relation to the mission of ND MPH and specialization
- b. Must demonstrate attainment of *at least* five competencies, three of which must be from the foundation

[\(https://www.ndsu.edu/publichealth/mph_course_competencies_and_course_matrices/\)](https://www.ndsu.edu/publichealth/mph_course_competencies_and_course_matrices/)

F. Timeline

- a. Measurable objectives
- b. Realistic timeline to complete deliverables

Enrolling in the Practicum

Once the Practicum Instructor approves the final version of the Agreement, the signed copy is saved and access is granted to register in campus connection. Students may register for 1 to 3 credits per semester, repeated up to 3 times as needed to obtain a total of 3 credits.

It is recommended that practicum proposal and associated requirements are complete and approved by the date that online registration opens in campus connection for the next semester. These dates can be found at: <https://www.ndsu.edu/registrar/dates/>. Most full-time students will complete their practicum in the summer between their first and second year and so the guideline will be a date in April.

Please note that before given permission to enroll, students also need to have completed:

- At least 18 credits and be in good academic standing
- Any requirements of the Practicum Organization such as immunizations or Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) training
- A criminal background check

Training in Human Subjects Protection

If a student plans to conduct research as part of the practicum experience, NDSU IRB training will be required. This training includes the Social/Behavioral Research module in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online training program and will need to be completed prior to registration. Instructions for completing Human Subjects Protection training are found on the IRB website: https://www.ndsu.edu/research/for_researchers/research_integrity_and_compliance/institutional_review_board_irb/training/

Upon completion of the CITI training, please contact Kristy Shirley kristy.shirley@ndsu.edu in the Office of Research and Creative Activity to verify if NDSU IRB approval is needed for your practicum experience. If IRB approval is required, forms can be found at: https://www.ndsu.edu/research/about_rca/all_rca_forms/#c598665

Criminal Background Check

A certified background check is required to be **completed** prior to enrolling in the Practicum. The Practicum Instructor will provide instructions and program code when the student is ready to enroll. Cost is paid by the student.

www.CastleBranch.com

Completing the Practicum

The Agreement is a professional document and the student is expected to abide by it to the best of their ability. Obstacles and issues should be brought to the attention of the Preceptor and the Practicum Instructor as early as possible. Regular updates on progress should be provided to the Preceptor at the agreed upon times (per the Agreement) and to the Practicum Instructor during regular classroom sessions. Completion of the *Deliverable* (as described in the Agreement) signifies the end of the Practicum project. At that time, the Preceptor completes the electronic Preceptor's Evaluation. The student provides a copy of the Deliverable to the Preceptor and Practicum Instructor. If necessary, sensitive information may be redacted in NDSU copies of the Deliverable.

Evaluating the Practicum

The Practicum is evaluated on a Pass/Fail bases based on the Preceptor's Evaluation and the student's participation in the classroom sessions. The Practicum Instructor enters the grade into Campus Connection.

Specification of Responsibilities

Preceptor (Mentor)

- Orient the MPH student to a public health-related problem, issue, or project of interest to the host organization.
- Review and comment on draft editions of the Student-Preceptor Agreement. Sign the final edition prior to the start of the practicum.
- Meet regularly with the MPH student to discuss approaches and progress—providing constructive feedback while encouraging autonomous pursuit of creative but effective solutions.
- Provide access to all resources necessary for completion of the practicum project. (Non-disclosure agreements and redaction of information in the student's final report is possible, if necessary).
- Contact the Practicum Instructor in case of deficiency or if any concerns arise at any point during the practicum.
- Complete an electronic evaluation of the student's work on the Practicum
- Treat as confidential student educational records, which are subject to the Federal Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA).

Practicum Instructor

- Provide a list of possible Host Organizations that includes pertinent contact information.
- Review and approve the Student-Preceptor Agreement prior to the start of the practicum
- Provide permission for student to register for the Practicum
- Meet regularly with the MPH student to discuss approaches and progress—serving as a conduit between the student and subject matter experts or resources available within the ND MPH program that might be of benefit to the student.
- Provide instruction in professional development and communication.
- Intercede on the student's behalf if necessary to clarify student and Preceptor roles and facilitate understanding and agreement as to goals, conduct, commitment, and deliverables.
- Academically evaluate the student's performance and issue a grade for the Practicum.

NDSU MPH Student

- Contact potential Preceptors and discuss possible projects with them.
- Author a Practicum Agreement outlining a Practicum project based on those discussions.
- Conduct the work and produce the deliverable agreed upon in the Agreement.
- Meet regularly with the Preceptor during the course of conducting the Practicum.
- Attend course sessions (online) hosted by the Practicum Instructor.
- Comply with the policies, procedures, and operational standards of the Host Organization.
- Behave professionally at all times including attention to punctuality and meeting deadlines.
- Provide the Practicum's final Deliverable to the Preceptor and Practicum Instructor
- Complete all paperwork and evaluations required for the Practicum
- Comply with the Host Organization's privacy rules and policies related thereto and sign any necessary non-disclosure agreements.

Host Organization

- Provide a mentored, practical learning experience related to public health for the student.
- Provide a qualified person (employee or affiliate) to mentor the student (the Preceptor).
- Certify that it has in place policies that protect MPH students and employees from sexual harassment and discrimination while they are onsite during the Practicum. Host Organization agrees to provide the University with copies of its non-discrimination and sexual harassment policies.
- Provide a name badge, as necessary.
- Provide an orientation to each MPH student at the beginning of the experience, which includes an overview of site's mission and goals and physical facilities, personnel and other operational systems needed for the student to function appropriately at the site.

NDSU MPH Program

- Ensure that the student has completed sufficient coursework to conduct the proposed Practicum.
- Complete a background check of the student prior to approving the student for the proposed Practicum.
- Ensure that the student meets all policy requirements of the College of Health Professions
- Notify the Host Organization if at any time a student files a grievance in which the Host Organization is a party.

Professionalism and Ethics

Students must consistently demonstrate the core attributes of professionalism. NDSU College of Health Professions has defined the following behaviors as indicators of professionalism:

- Commitment to Excellence
- Honesty and Integrity
- Respect for Others
- Empathy and Compassion
- Professional Responsibility
- Social Responsibility
- Altruism

Students must possess the emotional health necessary for full utilization of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of sound judgment, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with members of the academic program and community. They must have a high level of compassion for others, motivation to serve, integrity, and a consciousness of social values and possess sufficient interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, all ethnic backgrounds, and all belief systems. Academic dishonesty and professional misconduct are considered unacceptable. If there is doubt about whether or not academic or professional conduct is appropriate, students should query the guidance provided in university and NDSU MPH bulletins. This is available at:

NDSU College of Health Professions policy manual, Section 3.01:

https://www.ndsu.edu/healthprofessions/college_information/policy_manual/

If you have any questions about the Practicum's purpose and process, please contact:

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North Dakota State University

PH 794: Practicum in Public Health

Credits: 3
Instructor: Stefanie Meyer, PhD
Office Address: Aldevron Tower 640U
Office Phone: 701-231-6549
E-mail: Stefanie.meyer@ndsu.edu

I. Bulletin Description

In the didactic component of the Practicum in Public Health, students will gain a conceptual framework and actionable strategies for maximum success in their individual practical experiences.

II. Course Description

This course is unique in that it includes both a didactic and experiential component. The two components function synergistically, each strengthening the other to enhance the overall educational value of the Practicum.

III. Course Prerequisites

Enrollment requires submission and approval of a Practicum proposal per the Practicum Handbook guidelines.

IV. Methods of Instruction and Work Expectations

Current information is available in Blackboard. Please check your email and Blackboard regularly for updated information.

It is expected that students will devote *at least* 240 hours of work toward their practicum project. As long as continual progress toward the project goals is maintained, some amount of independent work is allowable. However, there may be specific preceptor limitations on this such as organizations that do not allow removal of data from their physical location. Time spent in the Blackboard portion of the course and time spent working on the project plan *should* be considered as working toward the project goals (while time spent reading supporting material shouldn't be). The 240-hour requirement is a lower limit and reaching that lower limit will not compensate for failure to meet the project goals or the preceptor's expectations. (The corollary to this is that the project scope should be attainable within approximately 240 hours.)

V. Required Student Resources

1. Bornstein, D. and S. Davis. (2010). **Social entrepreneurship: What everyone needs to know.** Oxford University Press. New York, NY.

VI. Course Objectives and Competencies

The overall student objectives for the practicum experience are:

- Apply competencies, knowledge, techniques and tools acquired in the classroom,
- Gain practical experience in a public health and/or community health setting,
- Develop skills in the field of study,
- Learn the inner workings of a public health organization, and
- Explore a potential career choice.

The didactic portion of PH 794 supports these overall objectives with the following learning goals:

- Conduct a project analysis and develop an actionable project plan within the realistic environmental and organizational confines of your practicum situation.
- Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories in managing effectual change efforts in both large and small organizations.
- Develop skills in self-expression, professional communication, and negotiation.
- Find and use resources for answering questions, solving problems, or avoiding obstacles during project implementation.
- Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- Share experiences and insights about the inner workings of diverse public health organizations in several possible career areas.

Dietetics MPH Knowledge Outcomes, Program Competencies, and Educational Approaches

Knowledge Outcomes:

- KRDN 1.1: Demonstrate how to locate, interpret, evaluate and use professional literature to make ethical, evidence-based practice decisions.
- KRDN 1.2: Use current information technologies to locate and apply evidence-based guidelines and protocols.
- KRDN 1.3: Apply critical thinking skills.

Competency Outcomes:

- CRDN 1.2: Apply evidence-based guidelines, systematic reviews and scientific literature.
- CRDN 1.3: Justify programs, products, services and care using appropriate evidence or data.
- CRDN 1.4: Evaluate emerging research for application in nutrition and dietetics practice.
- CRDN 1.5: Conduct projects using appropriate research methods, ethical procedures and data analysis
- CRDN 1.6: Incorporate critical-thinking skills in overall practice.
- CRDN 3.1: Perform the Nutrition Care Process and use standardized nutrition language for individuals, groups and populations of differing ages and health status, in a variety of settings.
- CRDN 3.3 Demonstrate effective communication skills for clinical and customer services in a variety of formats and settings.

IV. Evaluation Procedures and Grading

The Practicum is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis that includes a holistic view of participation and performance in both the didactic and experiential components of the course. In order to receive a grade of “satisfactory”, students must do the following:

1. Complete all necessary paperwork in a timely manner, both from the NDSU MPH program and the host organization.
2. Attend and fully participate in Blackboard discussions.
3. Complete all practicum assignments in a timely and professional manner.
4. Deliver the final deliverable to the practicum organization and practicum instructor. Sensitive information can be redacted in MPH copies.
5. Adhere to the NDSU Code of Conduct and general principles of professional behavior at all times.

Assignment	How to ensure a satisfactory grade for each assignment
Discussion Board	Create 3 original video posts and 1 thoughtful response to classmate post
Preceptor Interview	Submit a thoughtful, concise report of the interview
Competency Matrix	Submit a thorough matrix with clear examples
Poster	Submit a professional poster
Final Deliverable	Final deliverable is submitted

Additionally, the Practicum instructor may complete the following:

1. Arrange a site visit to your practicum location to meet your preceptor and observe you at work.
2. Correspond with your preceptor as needed to determine your progress.
3. Meet with practicum students individually, as needed.

Approximate Course Schedule (Course is self paced)

Assignments	Readings	Timeline
Discussion Board Posting	Bornstein and Davis Part 1	First ¼ of semester
Discussion Board Posting	Bornstein and Davis Part 2	Second ¼ of semester
Discussion Board Posting	Bornstein and Davis Part 3	Second ¼ of semester
Preceptor Interview		Midterm
First Draft of Poster		Midterm
Competency Matrix		Final ¼ of semester
Final Version of Poster		Final week of semester
Final Deliverables		Final week of semester
Preceptor Evaluation		By last day of semester

Assignments:

Discussion Board – Post a brief video (3 minutes or less) answering questions related to the readings. Respond via discussion board to one other peer video. More details are in blackboard

Preceptor Interview—Conduct an interview with a public health professional, preferably your preceptor. Follow the instructions posted on Blackboard.

Poster—Create a poster based on your practicum project. Poster content must demonstrate attainment of competencies outlined in proposal. Specific instructions are in blackboard

Competency Matrix—This is a reflective tool that helps you put your Practicum activities into context with respect to foundation and specialization competencies. Instructions are in blackboard.

Final Deliverable—The final deliverable will vary for each student according to the practicum proposal and project plan. The deliverable must demonstrate attainment of competencies outlined in the proposal. Whatever is delivered to the host organization is what should be turned in through blackboard. Work with instructor if sensitive information is not able to be shared.

Incomplete Grades:

An instructor can assign a grade of incomplete, "I," when, due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., sickness, death in the family, military leave, unusual events at the practicum host organization, etc.), the student was prevented from completing the work of the course on time. The assignment of an "I" requires that a contract be initiated and completed by the student before the last day of class, and signed by both the student and the instructor. The student specifies the time and manner in which the student will complete the course requirements. Extension for completion of the work will not exceed one year.

VII. Attendance

According to [NDSU Policy 333 \(www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf\)](http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf), attendance in classes is expected.

Veterans and student service members with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible and are encouraged to provide Activation Orders.

VIII. American Disabilities Act for Students with Special Needs Statement

Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services Office as soon as possible.

IX. Academic Honesty Statement

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. [NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct](#) applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the [Office of Registration and Records](#). Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty.

X. Other Course Information

It is an expectation that students follow the NDSU code of student conduct <https://bulletin.ndsu.edu/student-resources-policies/code-of-student-conduct/>