

Requirements

Students must have the approval of their faculty advisor, be in good academic standing and have completed nearly all MPH course requirements prior to registration for their field experience. Students will have taken many of the following courses of the MPH curriculum:

SPH core requirements: Biostatistics Epidemiology Management in Public Health Public Health Concepts and Practice Environmental Health Sciences Behavioral Sciences in Public Health	CHS core requirements: Community Assessment in Public Health Public Health Planning and Evaluation Research Methods in Community Health Health Education and Health Promotion Public Health Policy and Advocacy
CHS track requirements: 2 to 3 courses are required in the students major area of interest.	

CHS and school-wide competencies which are expected of our MPH students by the time they graduate can be found in the CHS Handbook as well as at the CHS website.

Most CHS students are required to complete 5 credits (320 contact hours) for their field experience. A few students may qualify for a reduced placement of 3 credits (192 contact hours) due to prior public health experience and career goals. The field experience may be taken in a single semester or over several semesters to accumulate the required number of contact hours.

Planning

Planning for the field practicum should begin at least six months before its projected starting date. Planning begins with the student and faculty advisor discussing the student's educational goals and desired placement environment. The faculty advisor must approve the final placement selection.

A representative at the placement site is designated as the student's preceptor. A Field Learning Agreement will be mutually developed by the student and the preceptor and approved by the faculty advisor. This agreement identifies the specific assignments the student will have at the agency, any "products" that will be developed, interaction with and knowledge of other employees and their functions, and contact with other organizations to which the agency relates.

The Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting is an additional form that must also be completed and returned with the Field Learning Agreement. Two copies of the form are needed with ORIGINAL signatures by authorized agency personnel. *Both forms must be completed and returned to the CHS Academic Coordinator at least one month prior to beginning field placement.* Students may NOT register for their field experience or begin placement until these forms have been submitted and approved by the preceptor and the faculty advisor.

A copy of the preceptor's resume is also requested at the time these forms are submitted.

During Placement

The preceptor supervises the student's on-site performance. Communication is an important aspect of a successful placement. It is expected that both the student and preceptor will contact the faculty advisor at any time when questions or issues arise. Many advisors contact the preceptor to discuss the student's progress particularly at about the midpoint of the placement. During placement, students keep a weekly journal recording their experiences and submitting the entries to their faculty advisor. The purpose of journaling is to provide the student with an opportunity for self-reflection and synthesis of the practicum.

Performance Evaluations

Two weeks before the end of placement, the Academic Coordinator sends an evaluation form to the preceptor. The preceptor will evaluate the student's performance and the extent to which he/she has achieved the objectives of the Field Learning Agreement.

The student is also required to complete an evaluation form and prepare a written *Summary Report*. The report will include:

1. Description of activities performed during placement, noting any deviations from the field learning agreement.
2. How well the field experience integrated what the student learned in their formal MPH course work.
3. What the student gained from the experience, identifying problems if they occurred.
4. Extent to which the student's educational objectives (identified in the Field Learning Agreement) were achieved.
5. Extent to which overall learning objectives (identified above) were achieved.

The faculty advisor will determine the final grade for the field experience. This is based on the preceptor's evaluation, the student's evaluation with the written *Summary Report* and any other relevant information. Students are graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis.

Responsibilities

Student's Responsibilities

1. Formulates educational goals for the field experience.
2. Develops an informational packet that includes his/her resume, courses taken, skills and educational goals to give to the potential agency-designated preceptor.
3. With the faculty advisor's assistance, contacts agencies, visits selected sites if possible, and makes final choice.
4. Develops the Field Learning Agreement with assistance from the preceptor and input from the advisor.
5. Returns completed forms (Field Learning Agreement and Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting) to the CHS Academic Coordinator at least one month *prior* to registration.
6. Performs assignments and activities identified in the plan, seeking assistance from the preceptor, other agency staff or the faculty advisor when needed.
7. Maintains contact with the advisor during placement. Maintains a reflective journal with

weekly entries and regularly submits the journal to the advisor.

8. Assesses the extent to which the field experience has met his/her needs by preparing a written *Summary Report* and completing other assignments required by the field experience.
9. Completes the Student's Evaluation of Field Experience form to be returned to the CHS Academic Coordinator.

Faculty Advisor's Responsibilities

1. Assists the student in clarifying his/her educational goals for the field experience.
2. Interprets the purpose and requirements of the field experience; approves requests for its registration.
3. Assists the student in selecting potential sites; sometimes makes contacts with organizations, explains the purpose of the field practicum and introduces student.
4. Approves the Field Learning Agreement that describes the mutual expectations of the student and the agency-designated preceptor.
5. Maintains communication with the preceptor and student. Is responsive to the student's needs during placement and provides consultation periodically.
6. Determines the final grade for the student's performance with input from the preceptor.

Preceptor's Responsibilities

1. Assists the student in developing the Field Learning Agreement.
2. Is accessible to the student and provides general guidance and training during the field experience as identified in the agreement.
3. Opens opportunities for the student's involvement in agency activities, and provides exposure to the agency's interaction with other community organizations.
4. Maintains communication with the faculty advisor.
5. Evaluates the student's performance during the field experience by completing the Preceptor's Evaluation of Student Performance form to be returned to the Academic Coordinator.

Request for More Student Placements

If you would like to consider placement of other public health students in the future, please complete and return a Field Experience Opportunities form.

Documents and Forms

(Found on the SPH Website at http://www.uic.edu/sph/students_forms.htm#practica)

- Competencies for the MPH Degree
- Field Learning Agreement
- Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting
- Student's Evaluation of Field Experience
- Preceptor's Evaluation of Student Performance
- Field Experience Opportunities
- IPHS Registration Form

MPH Field Experience in Public Health (IPHS 650)

The field experience (practicum) is a component of the capstone experience and is required of all MPH students in Community Health Sciences. The experience provides the student with a practical experience in a public health setting requiring the student to apply and integrate the skills and knowledge learned during their graduate study.

Overall Objective: Students will learn relevant skills in a public health practice setting.

Learning Objectives - Through the field experience, MPH students will be able to:

1. Integrate public health theory, knowledge, and skills in a practice setting;
2. Experience the “realities” of public health practice - organizational structure, local and organizational politics, program administration, community relationships, program coordination;
3. Complete a defined project(s) in an area of public health practice including core public health functions such as a needs assessment, program plan, program evaluation, policy development, educational campaign, applied research project;
4. Gain/expand/develop skills and knowledge in an area of interest not covered in depth elsewhere in the student’s educational plan;
5. Demonstrate competence in a public health practice area(s);
6. Demonstrate leadership, teamwork, communication skills and creativity in the development of a public health practice activity.

Requirements: Most CHS students are required to complete a 5 credit (320 contact hours) practicum. A few students may qualify for a reduced practicum of 3 credits (192 contact hours) depending on their prior public health experience and career goals. To qualify for a 3 credit practicum, a student would need to have had at least two years paid experience in a public health setting. At the time of the initial submission of the student’s program proposal, the faculty advisor must submit a letter documenting how the student’s experience has met the CHS practicum objectives, thereby allowing the student to request a reduced practicum.

The field experience is waived infrequently; however, this requirement may be waived for students who have had three or more years paid relevant public health practice experience in a field of public health that is similar to the one in which they currently are preparing to pursue a career. A petition to waive the field experience must be submitted at the time the student's initial program proposal is presented to the CHS Graduate Studies Committee for approval. The petition must include a description of the nature and extent of the student's prior experience, and describe how that experience is related to the student's future public health career goals. It must specifically describe how the student's prior experience fulfills each of the overall learning objectives for the field experience listed above. Prior completion of a clinical degree (e.g., MD,

RN) and/or clinical experience does not justify a waiver of the field experience. The petition must include a separate, signed statement from the advisor that specifies the reasons why the advisor does or does not support the petition. A student who is eligible for the waiver may still elect to include up to 5 semester hours of a field experience in his or her program.

Planning: Students must be in good academic standing and have completed all MPH course requirements prior to registration for IPHS 650. Students must have the approval of their faculty advisor prior to registration for the field experience. The field experience may be taken in a single semester or over several semesters. Students who take their field placement across two semesters should register for the full credit during the first semester. The student will receive an incomplete until a final grade (satisfactory or not satisfactory) can be given.

A CHS Roundtable Discussion is scheduled during the academic year to provide the student with more information about how to plan for or create a field practicum opportunity, steps toward a successful field experience and journaling techniques. See the current Roundtable Discussion schedule on the CHS website for the date when this will be held. Handout materials are available online.

Planning for the field practicum should begin at least six months before its projected starting date. This begins with the student developing his/her own educational objectives with the approval of the faculty advisor. Placement recommendations are discussed with the advisor. The CHS Academic Coordinator maintains a listing of students' past field experiences and other agencies that have expressed a desire to have students placed within their organization. On occasion, students may identify a site on their own or the advisor may suggest one. Selection must be agreed upon by both the student and the advisor.

Before visiting sites, students should develop an informational packet including their resume, courses taken, skills, and practicum objectives to show the agency's representatives. They should also take a Preceptor's Handbook that describes the academic requirements of the field experience. Once a site location has been selected and the agency agrees, an agency representative will be designated as the student's preceptor.

The following three forms are due at least one month prior to registration for the Field Experience (IPHS 650):

1. The Field Learning Agreement identifies the student's educational objectives, specific assignments the student will have at the agency, interaction with and knowledge of other employees and their functions, and contact with other organizations to which the agency relates. The student and preceptor with the advisor's approval mutually develop the plan. A copy of the preceptor's resume should also be attached.
2. The Agreement for Student Placement in a Practice Setting must have original signatures by authorized practicum facility personnel on each of two required copies. In many cases, this form may be optional. The student should check with the CHS Academic Coordinator about this requirement.

3. The IPHS Registration Form will document the advisor's permission for the student to register for their practicum.

All forms must be completed and returned to the CHS Academic Coordinator at least one month prior to beginning field placement. Students may NOT register for IPHS 650 unless these forms have been submitted and approved by the faculty advisor.

International students are recommended to contact the UIC Office of International Services (312-996-3121) for Curricular Practical Training Approval (CPT). Students with a F-1 visa seeking a paid placement must have CPT approval. Allow 2-3 weeks to process this request).

Reflective Journal and Summary Report: During placement, students are to keep a journal recording their weekly experiences. The purpose is to provide the student with an opportunity for self-reflection and synthesis of the practicum. Students are also expected to prepare a written Summary Report. The Summary Report should include:

1. Description of activities performed during placement, noting any deviations from the field learning agreement.
2. How well did the field experience integrate what the student learned in their formal MPH course work?
3. What the student gained from the experience, identifying problems if they occurred.
4. Extent to which the student's educational objectives (identified in the Field Learning Agreement) were achieved.
5. Extent to which overall field experience learning objectives (identified on preceding page) were achieved.

Performance Evaluations: The preceptor supervises and evaluates the student's on-site performance. During placement it is expected that there will be communication between the faculty advisor and the student, and between the faculty advisor and the preceptor, particularly when questions or issues arise. At midpoint through the placement period, contact is made by the advisor to discuss the student's progress. In addition, two weeks before the practicum is to be completed, the Academic Coordinator distributes evaluation forms to both the preceptor and the student.

The faculty advisor will determine the final grade for the practicum. This is based on the preceptor's evaluation, the student's evaluation, the written Journal and Summary Report and any other relevant information. Students are graded on a satisfactory/not satisfactory basis. If a student's work is unsatisfactory, a student may be required to complete an additional practicum experience.