



Master of Public Health
Applied Practice Experience
Manual

**Department of Public Health Brody School of
Medicine East Carolina University**

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Introduction

This manual provides a summary of the Applied Practice Experience (APE) for all Master of Public Health Students regardless of Concentration. For the Epidemiology (EPI) concentration, the curriculum is one 2-credit course. For Community Health and Health Behavior (CHHB) and Health Policy, Administration, and Leadership (HPAL), the curriculum is a 1-credit planning course, and a 2-credit implementation course. Regardless, each concentration is required to complete the components of the APE as described in this manual.

Purpose of the MPH Applied Practice Experience

The primary purpose of the APE is to provide MPH students with an integrative public health learning experience, in which they will apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired through their coursework to real world experiences.

APE experiences will vary, but students have most, if not all, of the opportunities to:

- Increase competency for a professional career in public health.
- Apply learning outcomes to benefit a precepting public health agency by practicing public health in a safe and supportive environment.
- Work on a project or area of interest.
- Develop a mentor relationship with a qualified preceptor who has expertise in public health. Leadership experience is preferred.
- Work with community members, leaders and government officials with the goal of establishing partnerships in order to address an imbalance in outcomes.
- Develop the competencies and mastery of the skills used by professionals in the community, public agencies and other workplaces.
- Gain the potential for job references from public health professionals who can testify to one's competencies in a professional context.
- Identify the skills, knowledge, and competencies that may be needed and may be acquired through additional academic study, training, or other experience.

MPH Foundational Competencies (2024 CEPH)

Students are required to achieve **at least three** of the MPH Foundational Competencies from the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) during their APE. The identified competencies will be included in an approved proposal (see later section) and in the presentation at the end of the APE for the precepting agency. Below is a list of the 22 CEPH Foundational Competencies.

1. Apply epidemiological methods to settings and situations in public health practice.
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation or critique of public health policies or programs.
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs.
12. Discuss the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.
16. Apply leadership and/or management principles to address a relevant issue.
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation to a non-academic, non-peer audience with attention to factors such as literacy and health literacy.
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.
21. Integrate perspectives from other sectors and/or professions to promote and advance population health.
22. Apply systems thinking tools to visually represent a public health issue in a format other than standard narrative.

MPH Concentration Competencies

In addition to the Foundational Competencies, students must also achieve competencies within their own concentration. Below is a list of the concentration-specific competencies. Students must select **at least two competencies** they will achieve during their internship.

Health Policy, Administration and Leadership (HPAL)

1. Address inequities in the prevalence of chronic diseases in rural and minority populations using system thinking approaches.
2. Examine and interpret the impact of health cost, access, and quality policies on disadvantaged populations.
3. Cultivate leadership skills in strategic planning/management with a focus on reducing disparities in disadvantaged populations.
4. Perform financial analyses.
5. Develop and apply human resources management skills inclusive of diversity and disadvantaged population.

Community Health and Health Behavior

1. Apply mixed methods analyses to evaluate public health issues, programmatic needs, or intervention outcomes.
2. Design a quality improvement plan for a public health program.
3. Prepare a grant or funding proposal that supports health promotion and/or disease prevention initiatives.
4. Design an implementation plan for a public health program.
5. Apply Intervention Mapping to public health program planning, implementation, or evaluation.

Epidemiology

1. Critique an epidemiology study for its validity.
2. Justify epidemiologic study designs appropriate for examining a public health problem.
3. Evaluate and utilize secondary sources of data.
4. Generate a survey for primary data collection tools.
5. Perform multivariable analysis of epidemiologic data.

Selecting an APE Precepting Agency and Student Expectations

It is in a student's best interest to choose a precepting agency that will offer the most enriching experience. Besides allowing a student to put into practice acquired skills, good APEs often lead to postgraduate professional opportunities. Therefore, careful attention and sufficient time should be invested in selecting the right APE precepting site. When choosing an APE Precepting site in consultation with the course instructor and potential preceptor, the student must ask themselves a number of questions, among others, before selecting a site:

1. Will the agency offer a stipend?
2. Does the vision of the agency align with your career goals and interests?
3. Will you be able to find transportation to the agency site?
4. Will you need to find a different housing arrangement in order to work with the agency?
5. Is there the potential for a professional paper?
6. Could this internship lead to a job? Is there the potential for networking opportunities?

Student Expectations

1. Initiate contact with the APE course Instructor, for discussion and advisement of potential APE opportunities.
2. Develop with MPH course instructor and preceptor specific goals and objectives of the proposed internship, demonstrating how competencies will be achieved.
3. Review all necessary information and forms including agreement form, student/preceptor responsibilities, expectations, monitoring and competency evaluation forms, with MPH course instructor and preceptor.
4. Demonstrate professional behaviors that include appropriate attire, attendance and patient/organization confidentiality, including HIPPA privacy and security guidelines.
5. Adhere to and follow all organizational policies and procedures.
6. Fulfill and complete all organizational projects and assignments. Maintain a bi-weekly log of activities via Canvas based on concentration requirements.
7. Complete the Final Presentation to the agency with voice over Powerpoint (or similar) shared with precepting agency and also uploaded to canvas course.
8. Complete and present two non-academic products to the agency.
9. Create and complete your online portfolio, which will include your proposal, midpoint and final competency evaluations, APE competency rubric, final presentation, time logs and minimum of two non-academic work products demonstrating competency achievement. You will create the portfolio in Portfolium.
10. Fulfill and complete all academic requirements for the APE in a timely and professional manner.
11. Demonstrate responsibility for your own education and career development (ask questions, seek out information and advice, observe and listen).

Field Site Requirements

What Agencies can Host MPH Internships?

The Agency (used broadly) hosting an MPH APE must have a public health focus. The field practice will be completed in a community-based setting which may include, but is not limited to, state and local public health departments, community-based organizations, some departments or programs within hospitals, long term care and managed care organizations that have a community engagement objective, and applicable private and non-profit institutions.

University Affiliation Agreements.

All field sites must have a University Affiliate Agreement (UAA) with ECU. UAAs protect students with liability insurance. The Department of Public Health already has many UAAs in place with common precepting agencies. However, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor with agency name. The instructor will work with the department administrative assistant who will check to determine if a UAA is currently in place, needs renewal, or if a new UAA needs to be established.

Students should proactively communicate with their instructor as soon as the agency has been identified to ensure UAA is in place prior to starting their applied practicum experience.

Agency Required Proof of Immunizations, Drug Screens, Criminal Background/Sex Offender Background Checks & Orientation Requirements

Some agencies will require interns to complete drug screens, proof of immunizations, criminal background checks and agency orientation trainings. It is the agency's right to require this information and different agencies have different methods for such reporting is to occur. There can be an expense associated with complying with the agency requirements, and the student is responsible for such expenses. Note that unsatisfactory criminal/sex offender reports may result in an agency rescinding their offer of an internship for you. ECU Health, formerly Vidant Health Systems utilizes a system called "Rotation Manager" for housing this information.

*Note that such information will not be maintained in any course files. Such information is HIPAA protected privacy information.

Preceptor Role and Expectations

Preceptor Qualifications and Requirements

Preceptors should have sufficient experience in public health to mentor students. Typically, a preceptor will have three (3) years or more experience and hold a leadership position in the organization.

The majority of preceptors hold a graduate degree in public health or a related discipline. Occasionally, a preceptor may be considered for approval by the course instructor, if the preceptor has substantial experience in public health in a leadership capacity with a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

To establish the internship, the preceptor should do the following:

1. Complete the Preceptor Acknowledgement Form;
2. Provide resume/CV or other supporting evidence of qualifications to be a preceptor.
3. Facilitate completion of the University Affiliation Agreement (UAA) between ECU and agency. There must be a current UAA between the agency and ECU.
4. Review and comment on the APE proposal and competency rubric.

The preceptor must:

1. Facilitate interaction and collaboration with other members of the organization.
2. Have ability and time to devote to mentoring and supervising the student to ensure the student's successful performance in the field placement.
3. Provide supervision for intern to complete the minimum number of required hours (see specific concentrations for number of hours).

Specific Preceptor's Activities

The preceptor and the course instructor for the field practicum courses play a collaborative role in evaluating the performance of a student. Besides supervising the day-to-day work of a student during his/her field placement, the preceptor also helps evaluate the mastery of course competencies and objectives as outlined in the proposal. The following is a guide to the evaluation process.

1. The preceptor acknowledgement form, which is signed by the preceptor before the internship begins, delineates the student's work schedule, including starting and ending dates, the number of hours per week, as well as vacation and days off.
2. Internship Proposal: The internship proposal defines the work product deliverables that the student will develop and deliver during the internship. The preceptor proposes ideas, projects, and activities. Through an iterative process, the preceptor and student mutually agree on the two required deliverables for the proposal.
3. Preceptor Evaluation: The preceptor with student and instructor completes the competency achievement form at both the midpoint and end of APE. It is important to record a score (Likert scale) with specific feedback that describes the students progress for competency attainment for each competency (both foundation and concentration).

The midterm competency evaluation is the first major opportunity for the preceptor to evaluate the student's performance. The midpoint competency evaluation will take place between the preceptor, student and instructor. The competency table rubric of selected foundation and concentration competencies will be provided by the student to allow the preceptor to complete. This is repeated at the end of applied practicum experience. The Final Presentation takes place directly before the final competency evaluation. The student gives a final presentation with voice over to provide an overview of his/her internship experience and work.

Developing an Internship Proposal

MPH students must demonstrate competency attainment through APE. This output of the APE focuses on two high quality deliverables developed by the preceptor and the students and both sign-off on the deliverables before the APE begins.

The proposal is approved by the MPH course instructor before the student can enroll in the concentration-specific APE course. Students should specifically describe the type and nature of the work to be performed and the tangible work products, referred to as deliverables, that will be produced in the allotted hours. See the Concentration-Specific Canvas site for specifics on developing the APE Proposal.

Specific guidance from CEPH accreditation pages 25 of the 2024 revised criteria on the APE are:

“Applied practice experiences may involve governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. To be appropriate for applied practice experience activities, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be appropriate.

The school or program identifies sites in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the agencies or organizations involved. Activities meeting the applied practice experience should be mutually beneficial to both the site and the student.

The applied practice experiences allow each student to demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies.” (CEPH, 2024, p. 25)

“The school or program assesses each student’s competency attainment in practical and applied settings through a portfolio approach, which reviews practical, applied work products that were produced for the site’s use and benefit. Review of the student’s performance in the APE must be based on at least two practical, non-academic work products AND on validating that the work products demonstrate the student’s attainment of the designated competencies.

Examples of suitable work products include project plans, grant proposals, training manuals or lesson plans, surveys, memos, videos, podcasts, presentations, spreadsheets, websites, photos (with accompanying explanatory text), or other digital artifacts of learning. Reflection papers, contact hour logs, scholarly papers prepared to allow faculty to assess the experience, poster presentations, and other documents required for academic purposes may not be counted toward the minimum of two work products.” (CEPH 2024 revised criteria, pages 25)

Each Concentration has an APE Proposal guide for development of the Proposal.

See the specific concentration for more details.

A useful tool for students to develop their proposal is the use of [blooms taxonomy verbs \(PDF\)](#).

Final Steps to Complete APE

Before a final grade for the course is recorded, students are required to use the Portfolio tool in Canvas to store the artifacts of your APE.

1. Create and complete your online portfolio,
2. which will include your proposal,
3. APE competency rubric,
4. final presentation,
5. time logs and
6. minimum of two non-academic work products demonstrating competency achievement.