



College of Graduate & Professional Studies  
**Integrated Public Health Practicum Manual**  
**(GPH 747)**

**Information and forms available at:**

<http://success.une.edu/public-health/practicum/>

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## Practicum Overview

The Integrated Public Health Practicum is a required component of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requires that “all graduate professional public health degree students develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to student’s areas of specialization.” The practicum is an opportunity for students to: 1) integrate and apply knowledge and skills from coursework to a practical setting to strengthen public health competencies, 2) work with experienced public health practitioners to expand professional networks and, 3) provide a comprehensive review of a public health issue and potential or real solutions in the form of an extensive term paper and an oral presentation.

Students complete a minimum of 120 hours at a practice site under the supervision of a preceptor who has extensive knowledge and experience in the field of public health. To complement the field work, students also complete a comprehensive paper and presentation on a related topic. The paper is of the quality suitable for publication in a public health journal.

### Credit Hours and Prerequisites

GPH 747 is a 4-credit course that spans the entire semester (16 weeks). All required and elective courses must be completed prior to beginning the practicum. Students who wish to begin the practicum prior to completion of all coursework (including concurrently with remaining coursework) must submit an academic [petition](#) and demonstrate adequate preparation for beginning the practicum.

### Waivers

The practicum is an integral part of the Master of Public Health program and required for accreditation; therefore, no waivers will be granted.

### Registration

All the required paperwork must be completed before registration. Students who are registered but have not completed all the forms by the end of the “add” period will be asked to drop the class.

### Practicum Coordinators

#### **Titilola Balogun, MBBS, MPH, DrPH**

(for students who last names begin with the letters A through K)

Titi may be reached at [tbalogun@une.edu](mailto:tbalogun@une.edu)

#### **Mary Lou Ciolfi, JD, MS**

(for students whose last names begin with letters L through Z)

Mary Lou may be reached at [mciolfi@une.edu](mailto:mciolfi@une.edu)

**Practicum Administration** - [gpphpracticum@une.edu](mailto:gpphpracticum@une.edu)

## Practicum Policies

### Beginning the Practicum Before All Coursework Is Completed

Students must submit a petition that describes how they are adequately prepared to begin the practicum early. In general, students with more than two classes left are not granted permission to begin the practicum.

### Practicum Hours

Students must complete a minimum of 120 hours within a semester (16 weeks). When and how students meet this requirement will be agreed upon between students and their preceptors.

### Place of Employment

Students may complete their practicum hours at their place of employment if: 1) the practicum project is different from regular work, 2) work hours are not counted towards the practicum and, 3) the project is in a different department with a different supervisor.

### Financial Compensation

Students may receive a fellowship or merit-based stipend for practicum work, but in order to support and promote new experiences and competency-building, part-time jobs may not count toward the practicum hours without permission from your Practicum Coordinator.

### Starting the Practicum Before the Class Begins

Students may begin counting their practicum hours up to one month prior to the first day of class. (For example, if a student is taking GPH 747 for the summer and the class begins on May 4, s/he may begin the practicum on April 4). Students must submit a [petition](#) describing the reason(s) for beginning the practicum early.

### Preceptor's Credentials

The preceptors should have:

- An MPH or higher (similar degrees to MPH will be considered)
- A BA/BS with 5+ years of public health experience

### Complying with the Site's Regulation

Students must comply with all the regulations established by the sites, including any immunization requirements, background checks, or HIPAA training, if applicable to your work with the site. Speak with your preceptor prior to your start date to ensure compliance.

## Planning Your Practicum

In order to begin the practicum, students must have:

- Completed all required coursework or submitted a petition
- A practicum site, which has been identified by the student and approved by the UNE Practicum Coordinator
- A well-defined project
- A qualified preceptor
- A fully-executed [affiliation agreement](#) between UNE and the practicum site
- Submitted the three course-specific forms:
  - o [Preceptor and Site Information Form](#)
  - o [Practicum Goals, Objectives, and Competencies Form](#)
  - o [Capstone Paper Summary Form](#)

Students are responsible for finding their practicum site and capstone topic. The Practicum Coordinator is available for assistance during the planning process.

### Suggested Planning Timeline



## Planning Steps

### Pre-Planning

Review all of the information on the UNE Practicum website. There are many resources available to provide you an overview of the process, including webinar links, a suggested timeline, and a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

### Step 1: Identify a Potential Practicum Project

Towards the end of the MPH coursework, students should start thinking about where and which type of practicum to complete. Keep in mind that the practicum is meant to be a meaningful experience with authentic student participation within a team of public health professionals. It is also an opportunity for students to explore potential employment agencies upon graduation.

Students may work in a variety of public health agencies that fit their skill sets and career goals. Potential practicum sites include community-based organizations or clinics, local or state health departments, hospitals, schools, assisted living facilities, universities and research centers. The practicum project can be completed at the student's current place of employment if: (1) the practicum project is different from the students' regular employment, (2) normal work hours are not counted towards the practicum, and (3) the practicum project is in a different department with a different supervisor.

Generally, a practice experience entails one or more of the following roles:

- Assessing, monitoring or analyzing data to ensure equity and quality of public health services
- Planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating public health interventions
- Developing disease prevention and health promotion, media advocacy, or risk communication materials
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating public health laws, regulations, and policy
- Participating in administrative/management activities, which could include quality improvement, organizational analysis, and/or strategic planning
- Supporting the development and goals of public health coalitions through community organizing and advocacy efforts, needs assessments, strategic and participatory community planning
- Participating in the development and/or execution of applied public health research, including translational, evaluation, and epidemiological research efforts that contribute to the evidence-base and efficacy of public health practice

The Practicum Coordinator is available to assist with identification of potential practicum sites and projects in your area. Click [here](#) to view a list of sites at which students have completed their work.

The following questions may be helpful in identifying a practicum project:

- a) What skills would I like to develop/enhance? (e.g. quantitative skills, communication and facilitation skills)
- b) What strengths and expertise would I bring to the organization?
- c) Which type of setting would I like to explore? (e.g. a state health department or a small community-based organization, working domestically or abroad)
- d) How much flexibility would I need to complete a project? (e.g. consider whether your schedule and availability would be compatible with those of the organization)

## Step 2: Secure a Practicum Site

At least six months before the practicum begins, students should reach out to potential practicum sites in their areas and start the application process. Students should prepare an updated resume and cover letter describing their interests, skill sets, a brief description of practicum requirements (a minimum of 120 hours over a semester, a defined project with a preceptor, etc.), and the types of opportunities (unpaid, evening hours, etc.).

### Tips for Applying:

- Have a colleague, a career service professional, or Jennifer Healy, the UNE Online Public Health Career Services Advisor review your resume and cover letter.
- Local job postings may be a good resource to identify potential sites. Even though students may not be looking for a full-time job, job postings may be helpful in identifying available public health organizations in your area.
- Nonprofit agency associations (e.g. Maine Association of Nonprofits) are good places to see lists of public health-related agencies in your state, and their accompanying contact information.
- Many agencies post internship/volunteer opportunities on their website.
- Although e-mail is a good way to make an initial inquiry/contact, seek out opportunities to meet with potential colleagues and preceptors in person (e.g. requesting informational interviews, attending and volunteering at outreach events/seminars).
- Maintain a spreadsheet to keep track of organizations/date of initial contact/follow up.
- When meeting with potential preceptors, it is important to discuss interests and career goals while remaining open to learning more about the organization and available projects.
- Follow up with contacts as appropriate and remember to always be courteous and professional.

## Step 3: Contact Practicum Coordinator

Contact your Practicum Coordinator to discuss potential sites and specific work or projects at the site in which you may be participating and the MPH competencies that you are likely to achieve during your practicum. This is the time to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have about your experience and review the list of required paperwork and deadlines for completion of all documents.

#### Step 4: Complete Paperwork

At least three months before the practicum begins, students should start filling out the necessary paperwork. The following forms, all of which should be returned via email to the practicum administrative email address [gpphpracticum@une.edu](mailto:gpphpracticum@une.edu), are required:

1. An [affiliation agreement](#) between UNE and the practicum site
2. An IRB review of human subjects research, if applicable (see [this](#) site)
3. [Preceptor and Site Information Form](#)
4. [Practicum Goals, Objectives and Competencies Form](#)
5. [Capstone Paper Summary Form](#)

#### 1. Affiliation Agreement – Must be finalized before students begin practicum work

This is a legal document between UNE and the practicum site. It must be signed by someone at the practicum site with contracting authority. The UNE template may be downloaded on the practicum planning webpage (<http://success.une.edu/public-health/practicum/>) and sent to the site for review.

The site may suggest edits/modifications using “track changes” for the UNE legal department to review and sign. If the site wishes to use its own template, send the document to your assigned Practicum Coordinator (see page 3) for review and submission to UNE. The UNE Contracts Administration Office works with the site to develop a fully executed agreement and a final copy will be provided to the site as well as the student.

The affiliation agreement must be in place before students start their practicum hours. It is best to bring to the attention of your preceptor that the Affiliation Agreement must be signed by someone at the practicum site with authority to enter into a binding legal contract.

Depending on the changes needed to the Agreement, this process may take 1 to 6 months to complete.

#### 2. Practicum Site and Preceptor Information Form – Due 3 weeks before class begins

This form is designed to collect more information on the site and the preceptor. The preceptor at the site must complete and sign the form. Your practicum coordinator reviews the form for approval and returns an approved, signed copy to the site and student.



### 3. Practicum Goals, Objectives and Competencies Form – Due 3 weeks before class begins

This form is designed for the student and preceptor to discuss the project in more detail and agree on the expectations, tasks, outcomes and timelines. It is recommended that students meet with their preceptor to complete the form. The preceptor must acknowledge approval by signing the completed form before the student returns it to [gpphpracticum@une.edu](mailto:gpphpracticum@une.edu).

Tips for filling out the Goals, Objectives and Competencies Form:

- **Goals:** The Goal is the overall purpose of the project that the student undertakes (e.g. better collaboration among providers for dental services; greater participation by employees in worksite wellness initiatives, etc.). There may only be one goal for each project. If there is a second project, a second goal must be added.
- **Objectives:** For each goal, list 1-3 objectives. Objectives should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused, and (realistically) Time-bound. Objectives may include specific deliverables (e.g. products) that students will be working on as part of the practicum project. Students should describe tasks needed to complete the objective(s) and include the approximate completion date. *Tasks must support each objective and the objectives must support the goal.*
- **Competencies:** Students must identify five (5) specific public health competencies to be met through their practicum work. At least three (3) of these competencies must be foundational competencies. Students should choose competencies that relate to objectives and tasks they will accomplish during their practicum. For a list of public health competencies, see the last page of the goals and objective form. This list should be made available to the preceptor.

### Step 5: Obtain Registration Clearance

Once all of your practicum forms have been approved by the Practicum Coordinator, the Affiliation Agreement is signed by the UNE Contracts Administration Office *and* your site, and you have received clearance to register for GPH 747 in an email from the Registrar's Office, you can register through [U-Online](#).

Example of Section 2 of Practicum Goals, Objectives and Competencies Form

Goal	Objectives	Tasks	Completion Date
Goal 1: Provide <i>Let's Go!</i> Dissemination Partners with regional specific data in a useable format	Objective 1.1: Develop a template to be used for each of the 17 regional reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review any current or past templates.</li> <li>b. Draft an updated template.</li> </ul>	June 1, 2018
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Seek feedback on the template from <i>Let's Go!</i> staff and a sample of <i>Let's Go!</i> Dissemination Partners. Incorporate feedback.</li> </ul>	June 15, 2018
	Objective 1.2: Analysis of regional data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Create charts, tables and/or graphs to compare 2017 to 2016</li> </ul>	July 30, 2018
	Objective 1.3: Interpret regional data and present key findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Draft talking points based on charts.</li> </ul>	August 15, 2017
Goal 2: Develop one or more evidence-based fact sheet that supports the <i>Let's Go!</i> Strategies for Success.	Objective 2.1: Obtain the most recent evidence supporting the <i>Let's Go!</i> strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conduct scientific literature reviews.</li> <li>b. Summarize key findings with citations.</li> </ul>	August 22, 2017

### Capstone Paper Summary - Due 3 weeks before class begins

- Using the required form, submit a capstone paper proposal with:
  - a. a brief background on the public health issue of interest
  - b. a brief analysis of current programs and interventions (if any)
  - c. the research question(s) of the capstone project
  - d. a proposed intervention to address the public health issue of interest

The capstone paper may be likened to a “major term paper” or “small thesis.” This 15-20 page paper will provide an extensive background of a public health issue, summarize available interventions /programs and discuss recommendations for how to address the issue via all appropriate public health strategies (e.g. public policy, community mobilization, patient or provider education, health communications, etc.), and include a new intervention that you would propose, along with an accompanying evaluation plan. Your Capstone Paper Summary Form will include a preliminary summary of these paper components.

The capstone paper can be related to the topic of your fieldwork, but you can also choose a topic unrelated to your fieldwork if you have a particular area of interest. The capstone paper is a substantial body of work and we want you to be interested and engaged in the effort.

Many practicum projects require students to develop a questionnaire, or evaluate a program, or analyze some data – but no reports. Others require reports. If your site requires a written report, you will be writing two (2) separate papers, one for your practicum site requirement and one for the capstone paper requirement. The focus of the capstone paper is not so much on large numbers and data analysis, as it is on your ability to critically analyze the information and communicate it effectively.

#### Example:

A student worked with a local hospital to develop strategies for improving employee participation in work-sponsored wellness programs.

- Developed and administered a survey regarding accessibility of the wellness programs (time, location, incentives)
- Designed and implemented a campaign to increase awareness of wellness programs

#### Capstone Paper that is Related to Fieldwork:

Analyzed survey results to determine main barriers for employee participation in the wellness programs, performed literature research and discussed characteristics of a successful wellness program, compared them against current hospital strategies and provided evidence-based recommendations for improvement to employee participation based on the local context and available resources.

## Overview of GPH747 Assignments

- Weekly Discussions (original post in the first week and responses in the following three weeks)
- Progress Reports (after every 40 hours of practicum work)
- Final Report of 3-5 pages (3<sup>rd</sup> progress report)
- Preceptor evaluation
- Capstone paper (divided into smaller assignments during the semester)
  - 1) Capstone description
  - 2) Introduction/background/rationale for the public health issue of interest
  - 3) Current efforts or programs with strengths/weaknesses
  - 4) Proposed interventions
  - 5) Implementation/evaluation plans
  - 6) Final capstone paper
  - 7) Final capstone paper presentation - (45-minute PowerPoint presentation on Blackboard Collaborate; 35 minutes of talk time + 10 minutes of Q & A capstone presentation feedback)
  - 8) Facilitate completion of preceptor's student evaluation

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Student

The student is expected to function as a professional at all times and is responsible for completing all activities and deliverables agreed to in the *Goals, Objectives, and Competencies Form*.

The student is also expected to:

- ✓ Contact the Practicum Coordinator at least six months before the practicum start date to start the planning process
- ✓ Commit to identifying potential practicum sites and capstone topics in a timely manner, and follow up as needed
- ✓ Provide professional quality work
- ✓ Comply with the policies and procedures of the host organization including any immunization and health insurance requirements
- ✓ Maintain regular communication with the preceptor and course instructor
- ✓ Ensure that all required paperwork is in place before the practicum begins
- ✓ Complete the required course assignments on time

## Preceptor

The preceptor should be familiar with the student's project and have appropriate credentials (MPH or higher, other similar degrees or 5+ years of public health experience). During the practicum, the preceptor reviews and signs the student's quarterly reports and completes the "preceptor's student evaluation form" at the end of the course. The student provides the preceptor with the evaluation form, which should be returned directly to the Practicum Coordinator via email or fax.

The role of the preceptor is to:

- ✓ Clarify expectations for students' practicum work
- ✓ Ensure that students are adequately introduced to the site, colleagues and project
- ✓ Ensure the student assists the organization with appropriately challenging and substantive projects
- ✓ Oversee the student's activities and provide feedback and expertise as needed
- ✓ Provide mentoring and exposure to different parts of the organization
- ✓ Communicate with UNE Practicum Coordinator as needed
- ✓ Review and sign the student's quarterly reports
- ✓ Participate in a final assessment of the student's work
- ✓ Complete CITI training if IRB application is required for the student's project

----- End of Manual. Links to Forms Follows Below -----

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## Practicum Forms

### Links to Forms:

- [Practicum Site and Preceptor Information Form](#)
- [Practicum Goals, Objectives, and Competencies Form](#)
- [Capstone Paper Summary Form](#)
- [Affiliation Agreement](#)
- [Practicum Early Start Petition Form](#)
- [Practicum Petition Form](#)
- [Information for Preceptors](#)
- [Progress Report](#)

Fillable forms may be downloaded at:

<http://success.une.edu/public-health/practicum/>

Forms should be returned to your assigned Practicum Coordinator:

[tbalogun@une.edu](mailto:tbalogun@une.edu) (for students whose last names begin with A-K)

[mciolfi@une.edu](mailto:mciolfi@une.edu) (for students whose last names begin with L-Z)