

Frequently Asked Questions
About the SPHHS MPH Student Practicum
The George Washington University

(1) Where can I get the information I need about the practicum requirements?

- Start with the SPHHS practicum website:
<http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/practicum/>. This is the governing site for the school's practicum program.
- Consult your track's practicum syllabus (PubH 214) available on the practicum website or from your Practicum Director.

(2) Are there any requirements I must complete before registering for the practicum?

Yes. Prior to enrolling in the practicum, you must complete the following:

- Courses
 - PubH 205 (Policy Approaches to Public Health)
 - Department- and program-specific prerequisites (see your Practicum Director)
 - CITI Course in The Protection of Human Research Subjects (<http://www.citi.org>). *Print 2 copies* of the certificate at the end of the course. *Submit 1 copy to Student Records* (Ross Hall, Suite 222) and keep a copy for yourself.
- Meetings
 - Meet with your departmental Practicum Director or Faculty Advisor, according to your department's policy.
 - Attend the SPHHS Practicum Training Session. See the SPHHS Practicum website for the dates and instructions for upcoming sessions.

(3) When should I begin the practicum planning process?

- It is never too early to begin thinking about your practicum.
- You can network and attend meetings during your first semester to learn more about organizations that may host a practicum student.
- You should **begin your planning process no later than the semester before you intend to begin the practicum experience.**
- Full-time MPH students typically complete their practicums during the second year of their studies.

(4) How do I find a practicum site and site preceptor?

You are expected to be proactive and demonstrate initiative in selecting a practicum site and site preceptor. The following are resources that you may find helpful in securing your experience:

- Web resources
 - SPHHS Practicum Website at <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/practicum/>
 - SPHHS Jobs Database at <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/careers/jobs/>
- SPHHS alumni
 - E-mail Mallory Boyd (Office of Student Affairs) at Mallory@gwu.edu for contacts.
- Your departmental Practicum Director

(5) I'm already in a job/internship/fellowship; can this count as my practicum?

You may complete the practicum requirement at your current place of employment, internship, or fellowship; however, this is not encouraged.

If you do decide to use the same site, you **must** abide by the following:

- The site and site preceptor **must** meet SPHHS practicum qualifications and be verified on the school's practicum website before you begin your practicum.
- Your site preceptor CANNOT be your current supervisor.
 - All of your contact hour requirement (e.g. 120 hours) must be completed on site under the supervision of your practicum Site Preceptor.
- The content and activities of **the practicum must be distinct from your regular work**, and must be clearly outlined in your Student Practicum Plan.

(6) May I complete my practicum on The George Washington University campus?

School policy clearly discourages practicums on campus; one goal of the practicum is to broaden students' practical public health experience. Furthermore, SPHHS faculty members are not permitted to serve as site preceptors.

The preferred setting for a practicum is offsite; the practicum must be supervised by a preceptor who is an employee of the site organization. If you wish to request an on-campus practicum, you must submit a request using the SPHHS Graduate Petition

form, available on the SPHHS website at
<http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/forms/>

(7) Is the practicum the same as my culminating experience?

No. The practicum and culminating experience are two distinct requirements. However, the practicum may or may not be linked to the culminating experience depending on your work, interests, and track's requirements. For example, the practicum can be developed into a central thesis theme that can be further explored during the culminating experience.

(8) Do I have to complete the practicum in one semester?

No, your practicum can be completed in as little as three 40-hour weeks, but not over more than two semesters (a maximum of 30 four-hour weeks). Be sure the time frame you envision is pre-approved by your Practicum Director and Site Preceptor (e.g., clearly state the start/end dates and hours/week in your Student Practicum Plan).

You only need to **register once** for the practicum; **you must register in the semester in which you begin your practicum.**

(9) Am I able to receive financial compensation for the practicum?

Yes, stipends are sometimes provided. However, financial arrangements are a matter to be negotiated between you and your Site Preceptor. The possibility of payment is not a consideration in the approval of the practicum. In most cases, because of the limited duration and nature of practicum placements, practicums are unpaid experiences.

It is your responsibility to cover any fees that may be associated with your site (e.g. required immunizations, personal protective equipment, and travel).

(10) Am I able to complete my practicum overseas?

Yes. This takes additional, early planning on your part. See the Student Guidebook for more information. You **must** review and adhere to requirements of The GW International Travel Approval Policies found on the International Travel website: <http://my.gwu.edu/files/policies/InternationalTravelApprovalFINAL.pdf> .

(11) Is it possible to be exempt from the practicum requirement?

There are no automatic exemptions or waivers of the SPHHS practicum. In rare situations, it is possible to receive "Practicum Equivalent Experience" (PEE). If granted, the 2 academic credits (for the practicum) must be completed by taking 1 or more courses to fulfill the required number of credits for graduation.

Please refer to the PEE section of the SPHHS Practicum Guidebook. **If you wish to apply for PEE, you must file a written request during your first semester of matriculation in the MPH program.** See your Practicum Director to begin this process.

(12) I think I've found a good opportunity. What do I do now?

Complete the following steps in the sequence shown.

- a) Meet with your Practicum Director or Faculty Advisor (according your department's policies) to determine if the proposed practicum opportunity is suitable.

- b) Sign-in to the SPHHS Practicum Website:
 - Complete your Student Profile
 - Ask your Site Preceptor to complete and submit:
 1. A preceptor application, if the preceptor is not already in the system as an approved preceptor
 2. A site application, if the site is not already in the system as an approved site
 3. If you are not choosing an existing Practicum Project Description, ask your preceptor to submit one.
 - Finally, submit a Student Practicum Plan in conjunction with your Site Preceptor.

- c) Register for the practicum course using a **paper copy** of the Registration Transaction Form (RTF) which is on the SPHHS Web page under "Forms." Go to <http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/studentres/forms/>
 - Print and complete the form
 - Take it to your Practicum Director for signature
 - Once signed by your Practicum Director, take your RTF form to Student Records (Ross Hall Suite 222).

Note that you cannot register for the practicum course online; the RTF and related process must be used.