Department of Public Health Education

MPH Internship:
Guidelines for Preceptors

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UNCG MPH Internship:
Guidelines for Preceptors

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The UNCG MPH Internship

What Is An Internship?

An internship is a structured, planned, and supervised professional experience for which the student receives academic credit. The well designed internship should engage students in a unique learning relationship involving a three-way partnership between the student, the site preceptor, and the academic coordinator. The internship should provide the student with a critical learning opportunity that links academic knowledge with practical experience while providing a beneficial service to the precepting organization. By carefully applying the graduate level skills of the MPH program into an experiential process the internship provides a different experience than volunteer or paid work. Although an internship may allow students the opportunity to build professional contacts and/or be paid, that is not its primary purpose. Neither is the purpose of the internship to provide “cheap” labor to often under-staffed or under-resourced agencies. And although an internship is typically practice-based, at its core it is an educational experience and should therefore be designed to contribute to the student’s intellectual and ethical growth.

Students plan their internship in the fall during a program planning course (HEA 648) and implement their internship during the subsequent spring semester (HEA 650). Internships are a minimum of 180 hours.

Key characteristics of an MPH internship:

1. It is an educational experience.
2. The work/activities are designed to provide both student learning/ benefits to the agency.
3. It is guided by the student’s personal learning goals.
4. It is planned. The plan consists of program goals and objectives, activities/strategies for achieving these goals and objectives; a timeline and budget (monetary and non-monetary); and an evaluation plan assessing how well the student’s achieved both the program and the personal learning goals.
5. It is situated within an appropriate agency, supervised by qualified agency personnel.
6. It involves ongoing interaction between the student and a faculty internship coordinator.
7. It involves student reflection and evaluation.
8. It involves graduate level work and assessment.

Internship Possibilities

While exposure to a professional work environment is one likely outcome of the internship experience it should not be the basis of a graduate level internship. We encourage our students to approach the MPH internship as an opportunity to apply their new skills to the needs of organizations fulfilling a public health function. We repeatedly encourage students to use this experience as an opportunity to leave an agency better off due to their internship efforts. Internship activities could cover many aspects of the profession but should specifically target 3 CEPH Foundational Competencies and 2 PHE Concentration competencies (see appendices).
**The Internship Planning Process**

**MPH Internship Proposal**
Each student must complete an MPH internship proposal prior to completing their internship learning plan and agreement. The internship proposal is a process that encourages students, their preceptors and their academic coordinator to carefully outline the objectives and boundaries of a potential internship activity. While it is understood that the specifics of the internship will be worked out during the internship planning process, the purpose of the internship proposal is to facilitate the negotiation of the internship’s initial parameters. The completion of this form will be the responsibility of the MPH student; however, the student will need the preceptor’s guidance in carefully considering the guiding questions, activities, boundaries and roles inherent in the proposed internship.

**Organizational Profile of MPH Internship Site**
Each student must complete, with the assistance of their preceptor, an Organizational Profile form which provides contact information of the preceptor and agency. This is an electronic form which the student will have access to through the UNCG University instructional web-space.

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**Department of Public Health Education**
**MPH Internship Proposal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preceptor Agency:</td>
<td>Division:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceptor:</td>
<td>Title:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceptor Phone:</td>
<td>email:</td>
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You need to complete, turn in and have approved an MPH Internship Proposal before you can begin planning your internship. You will need to obtain a mission statement from your organization as part of your Proposal. IMPORTANT: Approval of your Internship Proposal does not guarantee approval of your final Internship Plan turned in at the end of the semester. The Internship Proposal will help you solidify your internship ideas/plans and will facilitate the communication of ideas between you, your preceptor and your internship advisor. You should use as much space as you need to be clear but you are encouraged to be concise. This should be completed within the first three weeks of the semester.

Answer the following questions in preparation of your MPH Internship Proposal:

1. Provide a brief description of the Agency or Division’s mission/function/purpose:
2. Provide a description of your MPH Internship idea/proposal with a level of detail that enables someone unfamiliar with your plan to understand 1) the question you are attempting to address and 2) the process by which you will proceed to answer that question.
3. Provide a rationale for the purpose/utility of the proposed idea to both your learning objectives and to the objectives of the organization:
4. Summarize the objectives of your proposed internship:
5. Provide your estimation of the duration/time commitment of the proposed internship:
6. Provide your understanding of the resources needed as well as the resources available for carrying out the proposed internship:
7. Provide a description of the role the identified preceptor would have in assisting you with the completion of the proposed internship:
8. What is the educational training/area of study/academic degree of your proposed preceptor:
9. If your proposed internship site is with your current place of employment, provide a thorough description of the roles and responsibilities of your current position. Also include a description of your work unit and the roles and responsibilities of your immediate supervisor.
Internship Plan
In the fall semester prior to the spring internship, students develop a comprehensive internship plan for carrying out their internship. Their internship plan is to be completed in consultation with their preceptor. This plan constitutes a work agreement between the student, the site preceptor, and the internship coordinator/advisor. While the details of this plan are written up by the MPH student it is expected that the preceptor will assist in making decisions about the purpose, activities and boundaries of the internship plan. The internship plan becomes the guiding force behind the internship and should be considered a road map for the activities of the actual internship.

MPH Internship Learning Plan and Agreement
The Internship Learning Plan and Agreement should be considered a contract of understanding regarding the internship expectations agreed upon by the student, agency preceptor and Faculty Internship Coordinator. The Learning Plan and Agreement will include:

- Identified CEPH foundational competencies that will be addressed as part of the internship via the AP (see below),
- PHE concentration competencies,
- Internship learning objectives related to the stated competencies,
- Specific activities that will be conducted to achieve the learning objectives,
- Assessment strategies you will use for measuring attainment of the learning objectives and competencies, and,
- Any products that are expected to be produced.

The Learning Plan and Agreement will also be used as the principle, but not sole, basis for the final evaluation of the student’s internship. At the completion of the internship, the student, the preceptor and the faculty internship coordinator will revisit this form to assess the degree to which each area was completed and the quality of effort. The learning goals must include objectives commensurate with an advanced/graduate level health education degree. **IMPORTANT:** This document must be signed (electronic signature is suffice) by the student, the internship coordinator/advisor, and the agency preceptor before the student can receive a grade in the program planning course and before the student formally begins the 180-hour internship.
Applied Practice (AP)

As part of an internship, students are required to complete an 2 applied practice opportunities (AP). An AP is a planned and thoughtful real-world experience in partnership with the internship site to apply practical skills and knowledge learned in coursework to a public health setting that complements the student’s interests and career goals. The AP is supervised by a student’s MPH advisor and requires approval from the internship preceptor. The AP requirement will be met successfully by completing the AP activities during your final year of the MPH program of study. The AP experience should be mutually beneficial to both the community partner site as well as the student. To ensure that student’s select an appropriate project to successfully meet the AP requirement, all students must obtain pre-approval from their MPH Advisor. Each AP will result in 2 products.

Once the Internship Begins

Once the on-site internship activities begin there are several requirements of the student, agency preceptor and internship coordinator; listed below are minimum requirements:

- **Internship Log**
  - Each student will be accountable for maintaining an internship log recording internship activities and hours.
  - Preceptors are encouraged to check-in regularly with their intern regarding the Internship log.

- **Mid-Project Meeting**
  - A mid-project meeting (in person or by phone) will take place between preceptor and the faculty internship coordinator. The faculty member will also conduct a mid-project meeting with the student (by phone or face to face). During this meeting, any challenges hindering progress or barriers to a rewarding internship experience will be discussed. The meetings purpose is to adjust the internship plan for ensuring the internship activities are completed on time and task. After the meeting, a revised learning contract should be developed to reflect any changes in the timeline or scope of work. Regardless of whether a mid-project meeting takes place, the student and preceptor will be asked to complete a mid-project evaluation form.

- **Evaluation of Student Performance**
  - The student’s internship grade (pass/fail) will be determined by the internship coordinator; however, the student’s preceptor will be asked to complete and evaluation form to assist in this determination. The Internship Learning Plan and Agreement forms the backbone of the final evaluation but preceptors will also be asked to assess students on the following skills:
    - **Time Management and Follow Through** (sets priorities and reasonable deadlines, completes tasks on time, fulfills commitment to others)
    - **Verbal Communication** (verbal skills, listening skills, asks for and gives feedback)
    - **Written Communication** (writing documents clearly, succinctly, as instructed)
    - **Critical and Strategic Thinking** (assesses information to make informed decisions; sees the big picture and understands how actions fit into a plan; problem solves)
Preceptors will also be asked to provide general observations of the student’s professional aptitude and to provide targeted feedback by which the student can strive to improve:

- Describe new skills the student acquired or unexpected contributions the student made to the organization during the internship.
- Describe areas in which the student can improve, including concrete suggestions for how the student can begin to make changes in these areas.
- Please describe the student’s professional promise in terms of leadership and ability to make an impact on a particular field or on the profession of public health in general.

**Student Self-Evaluation and Evaluation of Preceptor Performance**

- The student will be asked to self-evaluate their performance based on an assessment of their ability to achieve internship objectives and the quality of their work.
  - General Comments
  - How successful was the Internship in helping you obtain new skills and competencies?
  - How clear were departmental expectations for the Internship? (circle best answer)
  - My overall experience with the Internship was: (check one)
  - My overall rating of the Internship as a valuable learning tool is: (check one)
  - In the space below write anything else you would like us to know:

- Students will also be asked to provide feedback about the internship site, the preceptor support for internship activities and general observations:
  - The following questions are about your Preceptor:
    - Preceptor was available... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor provided clear direction ... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor provided helpful and timely feedback ... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor provided agreed upon resources ... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor coordinator/advisor was available... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor coordinator/advisor provided clear direction ... (circle the best answer)
    - Preceptor coordinator/advisor provided helpful and timely feedback ... (circle the best answer)
CEPH Master of Public Health Foundational Competencies

All MPH core courses are designed to provide learning experiences for students to be competent in foundations of public health practice. Foundational competencies are the building blocks of professional practice – they literally form the groundwork, or foundation, of public health. Upon completion of the MPH core courses, students should be competent in:

Showing ability in Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health, including being able to:
1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative/qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a 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

Showing ability in Public Health & Health Care Systems, including being able to:
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

Showing ability in Planning & Management to Promote Health, including being able to:
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values/practices to the design/implementation 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

Showing ability in Policy in Public Health, including being able to:
12. Discuss dimensions of 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

Showing ability in Leadership, including being able to:
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges

Showing ability in Communication, including being able to:
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

Showing ability in Interprofessional Practice, including being able to:
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams

Showing ability in Systems Thinking, including being able to:
22. Apply systems thinking tools to public health issues
AP Internship: CEPH Foundational Competencies

The purpose of the AP is to demonstrate practical, applied mastery of competencies that have been covered in the MPH curriculum. Students will choose two (2) CEPH Foundational Competencies from the list below. The selected competencies will be mapped to (e.g. represented by) products that students develop in their internship. Products must be tailored and useful to the internship organization.

Students can submit one product that demonstrates both selected competencies OR two products that each demonstrate one selected competency.

**CEPH Foundational Competencies (student selects 2)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
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