Practicum FAQ for students

1. **When should I begin my search for a practicum opportunity?**
   Students should keep an open mind and be thinking about their practicum starting their first semester. Networking with professors, alumni and community partners should begin early on in your Rollins career. Typically, students will not begin a more detailed and strategic search until their second semester and usually devote the summer between first and second years to completing their practicum experience.

2. **How do I start preparing for the Practicum?**

3. **How do I find a practicum?**

4. **Do I register for the practicum?**

5. **Is permission required before starting a practicum?**

6. **Is there a minimum amount of time that must be spent on the practicum?**

7. **Are the practicum requirements the same for all MPH/MSPH students?**

8. **Can the practicum be waived?**

9. **Can I complete a practicum at my current (or past) place of employment?**

10. **Does my practicum have to focus on my department or area of study in my department?**

11. **What if I have no clue of what I want to do for a practicum?**

12. **What constitutes a legitimate practicum?**

13. **Are there restrictions on where my practicum is located?**

14. **Can I be paid for my practicum or receive reimbursements?**

15. **What is my Faculty Advisors role in the practicum?**

16. **What are the preceptor’s responsibilities for the practicum?**

17. **Can my faculty advisor be my preceptor/site supervisor?**

18. **What is the grading system for the practicum?**

19. **Can I complete more than one practicum?**

20. **Can I start working on my practicum the summer prior to enrollment?**

21. **Can my thesis count as my practicum?**

22. **Can I still graduate if my practicum isn’t completed?**

23. **Once I have documented my practicum in the RSPH Practicum Web Client, have I completed the practicum requirement?**

24. **When will my supervisor get the notification to complete the supervisor evaluation?**

25. **My supervisor hasn’t received any email notification, what should I do?**

26. **My site supervisor/preceptor is not computer savvy; can my faculty advisor complete my supervisor evaluation instead?**

27. **Can I be ‘fired’ from an internship/practicum?**
2. **How do I start preparing for the Practicum?**

   Begin by thinking about your professional goals, your strengths and weakness. List your goals for the practicum. Then explore opportunities with individuals or agencies that can provide you with the type of experience you want.

   Before starting your practicum, each student should ensure that his/her resume has been evaluated, reviewed, and revised by Career Services. Career Services offers seminars and events every semester on resumes, cover letters, and interviewing techniques, which all serve as key elements in obtaining the ideal practicum.

3. **How do I find a practicum?**

   The idea for a practicum experience can come from many places. Some students know there is an organization with which they want to work. Other students know there is a specific content area they want to explore and they seek out agencies in those content areas. The RSPH Office of Career Services has several resources that may provide practicum ideas for students:

   Sample list of internships at
   [http://www.sph.emory.edu/CAREER/internships.php](http://www.sph.emory.edu/CAREER/internships.php)

   Symplicity/NACElink which lists work-study and part-time positions at
   [https://sph-emory-csm.symplicity.com/students/](https://sph-emory-csm.symplicity.com/students/)

   Practicum Web Client which can be searched
   [http://www.sph.emory.edu/cms/current_students/login_practicum.php](http://www.sph.emory.edu/cms/current_students/login_practicum.php)

4. **Do I register for the practicum?**

   Yes. Students must register for the practicum. This can be done through OPUS, just like registering for other classes. Please see your ADAP for more information.

5. **Is permission required before starting a practicum?**

   In order to start your practicum, you and your site supervisor/practicum preceptor need to agree upon the learning objectives that structure the practicum experience. These objectives should align with the school’s core instructional competencies and the specific
program competencies of your degree. These need to be entered into the practicum database.

In addition, all international students should authorize their Curricular Practicum Training (CPT) from International Student and Scholar Programs (ISSP), for all non-campus employment, before starting their practicum. Authorization for CPT will be granted for one semester or summer term per request. If a student wishes to extend the period of authorization, a new request with new supporting documentation must be submitted.

6. **Is there a minimum amount of time that must be spent on the practicum?**
   A typical practicum experience requires students to work a range of **200-400 hours** under the supervision of an experienced site supervisor/practicum preceptor while also under the guidance of the student’s department and Career Services.

7. **Are the practicum requirements the same for all MPH/MSPH students?**
   Yes, all MPH/MSPH students are required to complete an approved practicum or structured field experience for at least 200 hours.

8. **Can the practicum be waived?**
   No. Exemptions are **not** granted for the practicum experience. The practicum is a supervised experience based upon the application of graduate level competencies gained during your professional education program. Your work experience prior to coming to graduate school, while important to a professional place of work, was not by definition guided by the learning that occurred during your educational experiences. Therefore, prior work experience does not substitute for a practicum.

9. **Can I complete a practicum at my current (or past) place of employment?**
   Yes, but it must fit into the practicum requirements. The practicum must be completed while a student is enrolled in their MPH program and the practicum must include a specific project that is beyond your previous or past position. The practicum must be tied to the school’s core instructional competencies and fit into objectives approved by the site supervisor/practicum preceptor. It cannot simply be a continuation of a previous role.
10. Does my practicum have to focus on my department or area of study in my department?

The purpose of the practicum is to ensure that professional students have a supervised experience in their chosen field or career aspirations. In general, yes, a student’s practicum should match their area of study in their department, but there may be some exceptions. This should be discussed with your department and the Office of Career Services on an individual basis.

11. What if I have no clue of what I want to do for a practicum?

Review your professional goals; the practicum should be closely related to these. If you are still having problems, schedule a meeting with your faculty advisor, ADAP or Career Services.

12. What constitutes a legitimate practicum?

A typical practicum experience requires students to work a range of 200-400 hours under the supervision of an experienced site supervisor/practicum preceptor.

A practicum has the following criteria:

- Project-oriented work in a public health site;
- Application of graduate level skills in a public health context; and
- Opportunity to engage in activities that will advance a student’s career potential and goal.

13. Are there restrictions on where my practicum is located?

No. Students can seek practicum experience in a range of field sites. Students have completed practicums in the Atlanta metropolitan area, in other locations throughout the state, across the country and around the world.

14. Can I be paid for my practicum or receive reimbursements?

Yes, usually a practicum opportunity will be a paid position for a student. However some students may be willing to work in unpaid opportunities if the project is closely aligned with their career goals and interests. The school manages and funds several programs to facilitate field placements, such as the RSPH Practical Experience Program, Global Field
Experience and Emory Public Health Training Center. Many students are attracted to Rollins because it promotes an “earn while you learn” approach in an environment offering numerous opportunities for gaining an experience in the practice of public health.

15. What is my Faculty Advisors role in the practicum?

Faculty advisors may help locate practicum opportunities and possible site preceptors, review learning objectives and certify completion.

16. What are the preceptor’s responsibilities for the practicum?

A preceptor, or site supervisor, will serve as a liaison between the school and work site, providing direct supervision to the student. Occasionally, they will serve in a mentoring role, providing the students with valuable guidance, insights and lessons that can only be gleaned from years of professional experience.

Site supervisors/preceptors are responsible for the following:

- Develop mutually agreeable goals and objectives with the practicum student(s) at the beginning of the experience
- Remain available (on site) to supervise and direct students during the experience
- Provide feedback to the student and the school by completing an online evaluation form at the end of the experience. Supervisors should schedule time to meet face-to-face and discuss this feedback.

17. Can my faculty advisor be my preceptor/site supervisor?

No. A site supervisor/preceptor is someone who oversees and supervises a student’s work in the field and evaluates their work. Whereas, a faculty advisor is the one who would help a student locate practicum opportunities and possible site preceptors, review learning objectives and certify completion.

18. What is the grading system for the practicum?

The practicum grading system at the Rollins School of Public Health is on a Pass/Fail grading system. Students cannot graduate with a masters level professional degree until they have a completed a practicum. To complete the requirements, students must be enrolled in OPUS,
complete the actual practicum and have completed all the requirements in the Practicum Web Client.

19. Can I complete more than one practicum?
Yes. While many practicum experiences are in-depth enough to provide the student the required 200-400 hours, many students choose to complete more than one practicum experience in order to gain additional skills and experiences.

20. Can I start working on my practicum the summer prior to enrollment?
No. The practicum experience must occur while a student is enrolled in the MPH Program.

21. Can my thesis count as my practicum?
No. The practicum and thesis are different experiences. A practicum is an applied and practice-based experience where as a thesis is an academic pursuit. It is important to remember that even if the practicum and culminating experiences are related to each other, they must be distinct projects that are independent from one another and can be described as such.

22. Can I still graduate if my practicum isn’t completed?
No, practicum is a graduating requirement for all accredited Schools of Public Health.

23. Once I have documented my practicum in the RSPH Practicum Web Client, have I completed the practicum requirement?
Once a student has evaluated their practicum experience, an email will be sent to the Site-Supervisor asking that individual to complete an evaluation.

The student and site supervisor evaluations are reviewed by the department ADAP and Career Services, who certifies that the practicum requirement was met. The Office of Career Services reviews and approves the practicum completion and assigns a grade once all components are finished. The director of enrollment and financial aid services finally certifies that students have completed this requirement for graduation.
24. When will my supervisor get the notification to complete the supervisor evaluation?

Once the student has submitted his or her student practicum evaluation to the Web Client, the site supervisor will be prompted by email from practicum@sph.emory.edu to log-in to the Practicum Web Client to evaluate the student’s practicum performance. The specifics of the log-in and approval process will be provided in the email prompt.

25. My supervisor hasn’t received any email notification, what should I do?

Please ask your practicum supervisor/preceptor to check their spam/junk folders for email from practicum@sph.emory.edu. A student can also resend the email notification by clicking on the resend notification button on the left navigation bar. If the supervisor has still not received an email you may contact Office of Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu to receive a printable version of the site supervisor evaluation form, to be completed and emailed directly to career services by the site supervisor.

26. My site supervisor/preceptor is not computer savvy; can my faculty advisor complete my supervisor evaluation instead?

No, you may contact Office of Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu to receive a printable version of the site supervisor evaluation form. This has to be returned in a sealed envelope signed by site supervisor or emailed directly to Career Services by the Site Supervisor.

27. Can I be ‘fired’ from an internship/practicum?

Unsatisfactory performance or student misconduct can result in dismissal. Agencies are required to communicate any problems directly to the student and Career Services/ADAP/Faculty Advisor in a timely fashion in order to avoid dismissal if possible. It’s vital that interns learn the agency’s policies and procedures, confidentiality requirements, employee conduct expectations and other rules in addition.

Please click here to download the Practicum FAQ for Students.

Please click here to download the full copy of the Practicum Guide for Students.