Practicum FAQ for Site Supervisor/Preceptor

1. What is a practicum?
2. Why do students have to do a practicum?
3. What is the Practicum Web client?
4. Will my organization qualify as a potential practicum site?
5. How should I advertise an opportunity?
6. How can I start an internship program at my organization?
7. Does a practicum need to be paid?
8. When do students usually complete their practicums?
9. What would I be responsible for?
10. What are the benefits of becoming a site supervisor?
11. I would like to discuss an idea for a practicum. Where do I start?
12. What constitutes a legitimate practicum?
13. Is there a minimum amount of time that a student must be spent on the practicum?
14. Is the practicum graded?
15. What makes a good practicum objective?
16. When should I complete the site supervisor evaluation?
17. Does a student get to view the supervisor evaluation?
18. Is permission required before starting a practicum?
19. Are there any restrictions on where a student's practicum can be located?
20. Can a student still graduate if their practicum isn't completed?
21. I haven’t received any email notification, what should I do?
22. I am a regular user of Practicum Web Client but I am unable to view the practicum data of one of my Intern?

Introduction:
All graduate students of the Rollins School of Public Health seek opportunities to integrate and apply practical skills and training learned through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. Many of these skills which may include, analytical, financial and management skills are a great pre-graduation resource to public health agencies, organizations, and offices.
As you are probably already aware, internships, volunteer opportunities, and part-time jobs are highly sought among our graduate students. Area agencies and organizations often hire our students during peak work times or for special projects. But did you know that these opportunities may also fulfill a student’s practicum requirement?
1. **What is a practicum?**

A practicum is a unique opportunity for graduate students to integrate and apply practical skills and training learned through coursework and prior experiences in a professional public health work environment. The Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) requires all students to participate in a practicum experience, as required by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Public health work environments include not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, local health departments, and for-profit firms. A typical practicum experience requires students to work 200-400 hours under the direct supervision of a site preceptor/supervisor and the guidance of the student’s department and Career Services.

2. **Why do students have to do a practicum?**

A practicum is required by all accredited Schools of Public Health.

As a requirement established by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the organization that accredits Schools of Public Health, all MPH/MSPH degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students’ areas of specialization. All Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) graduate students are **required** to submit practica details into the Practicum Web Client.

3. **What is the Practicum Web client?**

To catalog student field experiences, the Office of Career Services maintains an electronic practicum database (Practicum Web Client) that includes the sites, objectives and student and preceptor’s evaluations of the experience. The database is available as a reference for the school and for students who may be seeking future opportunities. The database enables the school to monitor how the practicum requirement is being met and allows electronic monitoring and approval at various steps. Information entered into the Practicum Web Client transmits information about the practicum
experience to the department ADAP and faculty. The database is searchable and allows the school to monitor where students have served and their experiences.

4. **Will my organization qualify as a potential practicum site?**

   Any agency, institution or organization can be a practicum site as long as they are public health practice based. If you have any questions regarding your site’s eligibility, please contact Career Services. Some of the organizations where students have completed their practica are listed below.

5. **How should I advertise an opportunity?**

   - Email the practicum opportunity to Career Services for school-wide distribution via an email listserv and posting to the school’s Career Services job board. Please include the complete job description, location, duration, stipend/salary, and instructions on how to apply.
   - Recruit an individual student. You are welcome to work directly with an RSPH student to create a practicum opportunity.
• Contact Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu or 404-727-9957. Career Services can advertise, collect, sort, and forward resumes and cover letters of select applicants who best meet your practicum needs and qualifications.

• Work directly with a department by contacting the Academic Advisor.

The following list offers contact information for specific departments and offices within the Rollins School of Public Health. Please feel free to contact a department directly if you have an interest in students from a specific department.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Academic Advisor</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Science and Health Education</td>
<td>Deanne Dunbar &amp; Cami Dettmer</td>
<td>404-727-7877</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>404-727-3898</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
<td>Melissa Sherrrer</td>
<td>404-727-3968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career MPH (Distance Learning Program)</td>
<td>Susan Butler</td>
<td>404-727-9660</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Health</td>
<td>Ariadne Swichtenberg</td>
<td>404-727-7905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>Jena Black</td>
<td>404-727-8729</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Health</td>
<td>Angela Rozo or Theresa Nash</td>
<td>404-727-0263</td>
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<td></td>
<td>404-727-5724</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Policy and Management</td>
<td>Kathy Wollenzensien</td>
<td>404-727-5701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Applied Public Health</td>
<td>Dean Kathy Miner</td>
<td>404-727-8745</td>
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6. **How can I start an internship program at my organization?**

Designing an effective internship program is important to creating a successful experience for both the student and employer. Click here for resources we have found useful for starting and maintaining effective internship programs.

7. **Does a practicum need to be paid?**

Ideally, a practicum opportunity will be a paid position for a student. However, depending on financial needs, some students may be willing to work in unpaid opportunities if the project is closely aligned with their career goals and interests.
Students’ stipends depend on their previous experience, education, and other qualifications. Stipends also vary depending on the type of organization the student will work for. RSPH Career Services can help you in determining what an hourly rate or stipend should be.

8. **When do students usually complete their practicums?**
   If the position is full time, most students complete their practicum during the summer between their first and second year of graduate school. If the position is part time, positions may be completed at any time.

9. **What would I be responsible for?**
   A preceptor, or site supervisor, will serve as a liaison between the school and work site, providing direct supervision to the student. Often, 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.

10. **What are the benefits of becoming a site supervisor?**

- Aid students in fulfilling their practicum requirement
- Benefit from students offering support on your current projects
- Raise awareness of your organization
- Reserve the opportunity to hire the best
- Serve as a valuable mentoring resource to RSPH
- Contribute to the development of new public health professionals
11. I would like to discuss an idea for a practicum. Where do I start?

The Office of Career Services welcomes your ideas for practicum experiences and should you decide to become a practicum site, we are also pleased to serve as your go-to source throughout the student's practicum experience. Not only does Career Services want its students to maximize their practicum potential but also ensure that each organization's professional goals and needs have been met.

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

At a minimum, students must complete a practicum of at least 200 hours, but a typical practicum experience usually 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 faculty advisor and Career Services.

14. Is the practicum graded?

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 including the practicum objectives, student evaluation and site supervisor evaluation.

15. What makes a good practicum objective?
The supervisor and the student should meet, construct and discuss objectives at the beginning of the practicum. It is recommended to use the 'SMART' guidelines in order to assure that each objective is:

- **Specific** - A specific objective has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general one. To make an objective specific, make sure to include the Who, What, When, Where and Why (e.g. A general objective would be "Get in shape." A specific objective would be "I will join and attend a health club at least three times per week for three months in order to lose 15 pounds.")

- **Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective. Ask yourself "How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?" In the objective above, the 15 pounds is what makes it measurable.

- **Attainable** - Objectives should be achievable given the resources and time available.

- **Realistic** - Objectives are realistic when the skills needed to reach the objective are available and the goal fits with the overall strategy and goals of the organization.

- **Timely** - When setting objectives, you should ensure that there is an understanding of a begin date, end date, and how much time it will take to reach the objective within the timeframe. In the objective above, the 3 months is the time frame for achieving the goal.

16. **When should I complete the site supervisor evaluation?**

   Once the student has submitted his or her 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. Please remember to update your profile (educational and current job information), interest (activities in which you would be interested in participating), and upload your resume.

17. **Does a student get to view the supervisor evaluation?**
No, the students do not have an access to the supervisor evaluation. But, it is recommended that you meet with the student to discuss the completion of objectives and overall evaluation. This provides the student with an experience similar to performance evaluations that typically occur in the workplace.

18. Is permission required before starting a practicum?
   In order to start a practicum, the student and the 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 data-base.
   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. For extension of the period of authorization, a new request with new supporting documentation must be submitted by the student to ISSP.

19. Are there any restrictions on where a student’s practicum can be located?
   No, as long as it a public health practice site. Students can seek practicum experience in a range of field sites. In the past, students have completed practicums in the Atlanta metropolitan area, in other locations throughout the state, across the country and around the world.

20. Can a student still graduate if their practicum isn’t completed?
   No, the completion of the practicum is a graduation requirement for all accredited Schools of Public Health. All the components in the practicum web client, including objectives, student evaluation and supervisor evaluation, have to be complete before a student can be cleared for graduation. Hence it is recommended that you complete the site supervisor evaluation as soon as possible.
21. I haven’t received any email notification, what should I do?

Please check your spam/junk folders for email from practicum@sph.emory.edu. A student can resend the email notification if you require. If you still don’t receive the email, you may contact Office of Career Services at rsphcareerservices@emory.edu to receive a printable version of the site supervisor evaluation form. It’s recommended to email or post the completed form directly to Office of Career Services at,

The Office of Career Services
Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health,
1518 Clifton Road, NE,
Atlanta, GA 30322.

22. I am a regular user of Practicum Web Client but I am unable to view the practicum data of one of my Intern?

Once the student has submitted his or her 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. This email is the trigger in creating a student account in your database. You will be able to view only the students for whom you received an email.

Please click here to download the Practicum FAQ for Site Supervisors.

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