DrPH Practicum Requirements and Policy
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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PLEASE REFER TO SECTION 5, REGARDING DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICUM. CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THIS SECTION OF THE DOCUMENT TO REFLECT THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN DRPH STUDENTS SIGNING UP FOR PRACTICUM CREDIT.

1. Rationale

All Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health DrPH students are required to complete a practicum in order to comply with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) requirements. This note serves to set common minimum guidelines for the DrPH practicum, which departments may further elaborate.

DrPH students entering the program already have significant work experience (3 years minimum). The purpose of the DrPH practicum is to further the development of higher level competencies, and in particular applied competencies and critical thinking relevant to the student’s area of specialization. Practica should form an integral part of student learning, complementing course work, special studies and student dissertations in a way that responds to student learning objectives.

The DrPH program consists of both full time and part time students. Many part-time students are in full-time employment. The practica requirements apply to both of these groups of students, and have been crafted so as to provide valuable learning opportunities for both.

2. Minimum Practicum Requirements

i. **Applies and further develops public health skills and competencies** - the objectives of student practica should be clearly identified as part of an integrated, individualized, academic plan that is approved in advance of the practicum. Students will identify competency domains in which they wish to achieve high-level skills and the DrPH student practicum presents an important opportunity for the application of these skills.

ii. **Is framed and carried out in a public health context** – the practicum will include population-level activities carried out at, or in collaboration with, an organization or agency. Students should not merely crunch numbers, or
administer surveys but should be engaged in the larger public health context of their activities.

iii. *Is supervised and supported* – The practicum preceptor will be qualified to evaluate the student’s professional competence and will supervise the student throughout the project. The preceptor will typically be from an outside organization (i.e. community-based organization, health department, private corporation, etc.), but can be a JHSPH faculty member if appropriate. The preceptor will provide background information, directions, feedback, and guidance with regards to student progress on well-defined learning objectives. The faculty advisor will be kept informed of the student’s practicum activities and progress and may provide additional assistance if warranted.

iv. *Is significant* – Given that DrPH students already have significant work experience, the practicum should be more than an opportunity for additional work experience. Practicum projects should make a significant contribution to the organization with which the student is collaborating, as well as constituting a significant investment of student time and effort. There is no minimum number of hours required, but it is estimated that the typical DrPH student may spend 100-300 hours on practica projects. Student practica may take the form of one significant large project or several smaller practica experiences. DrPH student practica do not need to be individual projects, students may work independently but may also be part of a student team, or a team composed of other members of the organization with which they are collaborating. If students are members of a broader team, then their role on the team should be clearly defined.

v. *Is evaluated* - Students will be evaluated on achievement of defined learning objectives and deliverables by the preceptor. Faculty advisors will be informed and have an opportunity to provide feedback on the student’s progress if they choose to do so. As part of the practicum experience students will reflect on and evaluate their overall practicum experiences, particularly as they relate to their career goals. Clearly identified outputs from the practicum experience (not necessarily written products, but oral presentations or a new management or information system) should be identified in advance.

The DrPH practicum is designed to be flexible, and to respond to individual students’ prioritized learning needs, as such the practicum should be an important part of the program for all DrPH students, and waivers for practica will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

3. Practicum opportunities
The DrPH practicum is an opportunity to apply skills acquired in the classroom, as such it can take multiple forms, for example all of the following could constitute practica:

- Work on a project at a specific outside organization such as a health department, community organization, international agency or private corporation;
- Applied work on a research project in which JHSPH faculty are involved, for example, assisting with the coordination of a clinical trial, or translating research findings into a form where they are actionable by practitioners and advocating for their uptake;
- For part time students in employment, the practicum is most likely to take the form of a special project in his or her place of work;
- Some courses provided by JHSPH may count toward practica requirements where they require working closely with outside organizations, in applied public health issues.

For part-time DrPH students in employment, ongoing routine work within their current work place does not count towards the practicum. Full time students however, may return to a previous place of employment for their practicum, so long as their work there presents clear opportunities for professional growth.

The students’ advisors, Departmental DrPH Directors and the DrPH office, will all assist students with the identification of relevant practicum opportunities.

4. Mentoring/Approval of preceptor

All preceptors must be approved by JHSPH prior to the commencement of the practicum. Current JHSPH faculty may act as preceptors where this is appropriate, for example where the faculty member is engaged in collaborative work with an outside agency. Many other individuals working in relevant practice positions will already have an adjunct position at the School, and thus are “preapproved” as preceptors. Where the preceptor does not have a faculty position at the School, their CV should be submitted to the Department DrPH Program Director, along with the practicum proposal, for approval.

5. Documentation and evaluation

- During their first term at JHSPH new DrPH students complete an individual goals analysis that helps them to identify the competency areas they wish to develop, and different modes of developing those competencies. This goals analysis should be discussed with their advisor and initial ideas about potential practica shared at this point.
- When a student wishes to proceed with a practicum opportunity they will complete a short practicum proposal form that outlines the nature of the
project, how it fits with their learning objectives, the location of the practicum, the preceptor, a time frame for the work and outputs. This should be discussed with and approved by the student’s advisor and departmental DrPH Director and the form will be added to the student’s file at the department.

- At the completion of the practicum, an additional form (the practicum completion form) should be completed by the student and the preceptor that reflects on the experience and lessons learned, and provides constructive feedback to the student. Final outputs from the project should be attached to the form and these should all be submitted to the Department.

- Departmental Academic administrators will be responsible for notifying the Registrars Office which will annotate the student’s file to signify completion of their practicum.