



MPH Practica: Frequently Asked Questions Office of Field Education (OFE)

What is a field instructor?

A field instructor is a professional who must have:

- A master's degree or Ph.D. in a related field to supervise MPH students
- At least two years of post-graduate experience and demonstrated expertise in the field
- A minimum of one-year employment at the practicum organization
- Support and approval from organization to serve as a field instructor

What are the responsibilities of the field instructor?

- Define the role and scope of the student in practicum
- Orient student to the staff, clients, culture, policies, and procedures of the organization
- Supervise a maximum of three students per semester-An exception to this policy may be made for professionals whose primary job is to supervise practicum students or volunteers
- Assist the student in completion of the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)
- Complete the field instructor section of the ELA
- Provide a minimum of one hour per week, face to face, individual supervision
- Participate in a site visit to discuss the student(s) progress
- Commit to graduate-level field education by:
 - Developing a graduate level learning experience
 - Attending to individual student needs
 - Supporting and mentoring students' professional development
 - Sharing professional expertise and providing ongoing feedback
- Provide student with adequate work space i.e., access to office equipment, computer, telephone, etc.
- Review student's self-evaluation and complete a final evaluation
- Contact the OFE 314-935-3456
 - should any problems/concerns arise
 - if there is any change in contact information for the field instructor or organization
 - excessive unexcused absences of the student or field instructor

What are the benefits of being a field instructor?

Brown School field instructors are provided the following benefits:

- Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Three CEUs are granted each academic year to active field instructors
- Continuing Education and Professional Development Events at a reduced cost
 - Access to the Professional Development Series
- Opportunity to audit Brown School courses
 - Requires permission from course instructors
- Libraries
 - Access to the Brown School Social Work Library and Olin Library
 - Access to online Evidence- Based Practice (EBP) Resource Area

What is a task supervisor?

- A task supervisor is a staff member who assumes specific responsibilities for students' practicum learning as delegated and monitored by the field instructor
- A task supervisor does not replace the field instructor nor can the task supervisor substitute for the field instructor weekly supervision obligation
- The task supervisor is not expected or required to meet Brown School's criteria for field instructor responsibilities, but should be informed of practicum requirements and procedures

How do I attract students to my agency?

- Students follow a process of self- or- guided selection
- Agencies develop flyers and brochures for posting and advertisement
- Practicum Agency Fair is held annually (September)
- Agency on-campus visits are available every semester

How long does it take for students to complete practicum?

- Practicum hours are scheduled based on a student's educational plan and the organization's need
 - Schedules are negotiated between the student and the field instructor
- Practicum can be completed on a part-time or full-time basis adding up to no more than 40 hours per week

How many practicum hours do MPH students complete?

- 360 practicum hours
- Lunch hours and travel time to and from the practicum setting are not counted as time worked
- Students cannot exceed a 40-hour practicum work week

Can MPH students split their practicum between two sites?

- No, unless there are extenuating circumstances (field instructor leaves, or there is an agreement between two organizations to share the student's time).

What is the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA)?

- The ELA serves as the learning agreement, independent study plan, and guide to frame the students' progress towards gaining competency in the field experience
- In consultation with the field instructor, students are required to complete the (ELA) specific to their practicum level and concentration
- Each practice behavior listed in the ELA must be addressed during the course of the practicum experience

When are students eligible to do their practicum?

- MPH students must wait until after they complete their foundation MPH coursework, which is typically after their 2nd semester in the program (starting in their first summer). There are a couple of exceptions:
 - If a student is in the MD/MPH joint degree program, they may begin in the spring semester of their first year
 - If a student is applying for the Jefferson City legislative practicum opportunity, they may do so during the spring semester of their first year

Can MPH students do out-of-state or international practicum?

- Out-of-state: Yes, following the same application process as MSW students. They would follow the deadlines to apply for summer out-of-state practicum.
 - Many out-of-state opportunities for MPH students also require organization-specific applications and have their own deadlines, so it is important to advise students to begin researching these opportunities in the fall semester.
- International: Yes, if the student is in the Global Health specialization and completes the required global coursework prior to departing.
 - Students follow the same application process through the Global Programs Office, applying by the November 15th deadline for the following summer.

What are the MPH Specializations?

- Generalist – this is now considered a specialization, and students have to choose specific competencies to address in practicum from the other specialization competencies.
- Global Health
- Health Policy Analysis
- Epidemiology/Biostatistics
- Urban Design

If a student is interested in applying to a large NGO, the CDC, NIH, or other national organization:

- Encourage them to look at the organization's specific internship opportunities, process, and deadlines
- They must make sure that the organization has opportunities that are over the summer, are graduate-level, provide 360 hours of experience, and are supervised by a master's-level professional.
- They must follow the steps to affiliate that organization (typically by applying for out-of-state practicum and working with the MPH Program Coordinator or Manager).
- Encourage them to apply to a variety of opportunities, including some local options, as these internships tend to be very competitive and it is helpful to have some backup options.

Are there any additional requirements for MPH practicum that do not apply to MSW practicum?

- **Epidemiology/Biostatistics supervision:** All epi/biostats practicum must be supervised by someone with an MPH and/or specific training in epidemiology and/or biostatistics.
- **University-based sites:** Students placed in university settings must have opportunities to engage with stakeholders and community outside of the university setting. Opportunities that are solely research focused without interaction with participants or stakeholders are not eligible for practicum.
- **Specialization approval:** All new specialization sites (including generalist) must go through an approval process in addition to the affiliation process. Students must apply using the [MPH Practicum Specialization Form](#) found on Inside Brown at least 30 days prior to beginning practicum.
- **Portfolio Products:** All MPH students entering in fall 2018 and after must complete 2 portfolio products during their practicum.
 - These should be products that are mutually beneficial to the organization and the student. These should be determined by the student and the field instructor early on in the practicum.
 - Examples include, but are not limited to: written assignments, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, policy briefs, publications, photos, or other digital artifacts of learning.

Can students complete practicum at their place of employment?

- **The** OFE does not recommend that students complete practicum at their place of employment
- For more information contact the Office of Field Education

Additional resources:

- Brown School External Website: <http://brownschool.wustl.edu/Pages/Home.aspx>
- St. Louis Social Work Field Education Collaborative: <http://www.fieldedu.com/>