

Practicum Handbook

The **Public Health Practicum** is an essential part of your public health training in the Vanderbilt Master of Public Health (MPH) Program. This handbook is intended to provide students with the information they need to plan, conduct, and complete a meaningful practice experience that meets the academic standards of the Vanderbilt MPH Program and the [Council on Education for Public Health \(CEPH\)](#), the accrediting body for schools and programs of public health.

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Section 1: Overview

As one of the three required components of the Vanderbilt MPH Program, the practicum is intended to be a meaningful learning experience for all students, regardless of prior relevant experience or intended career path.

The practicum provides students with the opportunity to develop and use the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in the academic program in professional settings where a public health function is performed. The practicum is, in short, an applied field experience in which students observe public health practice and apply classroom learning in a real-world setting.

Through the practicum, students further develop competencies that are initially introduced in didactic coursework and hone skills that will be valuable in their career. Students are required to incorporate foundational and track-specific competencies over the course of planning and conducting their practicum experience. Each student must demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which, at least three must be foundational competencies.

The purpose of the practicum is to:

- Give a supervised, practical field experience in an organization, agency, or other setting that provides planning or services relevant to public health.
- Help further develop skills or competencies learned in the academic program by applying them in a public health practice setting.
- Provide means of acquiring practical skills that are useful to public health professions and are not available through academic instruction.
- Foster an understanding of the political, economic, social, and organizational context within which public health activities are conducted.
- Expose the student to an organizational and/or community context for public health activities.

Learning Objectives

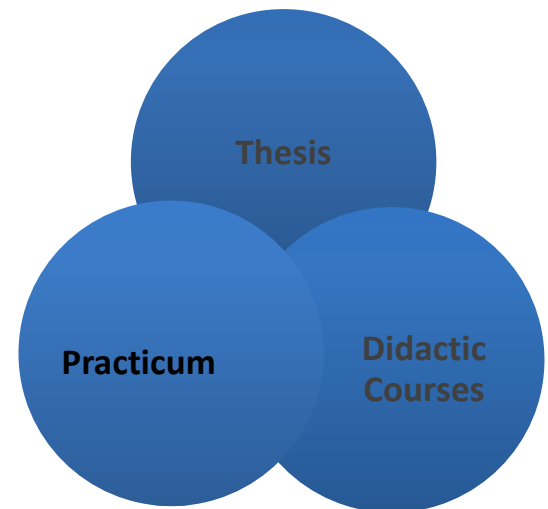
Upon completing the practicum, the student will be able to:

- Communicate theoretical principles, constructs, and models used to understand and affect health behaviors.
- Communicate public health principles and concepts through various written and verbal strategies.
- Employ ethical principles and behaviors.
- Perform professional activities with cultural competence.
- Promote cultural and ethnic diversity in public health research and practice.
- Effectively engage in interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration to advance research, policy, or practice goals.

Competencies

In the practicum, the student must demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, of which at least three must be foundational competencies. Each student will work with the practicum director and their site

Components of the Vanderbilt MPH Program:



supervisor(s) to design practicum activities that address the chosen five competencies. The practicum may address more than five foundational and concentration-specific competencies, if appropriate.

Foundational CEPH Core Competencies

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health

- Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice. **(CEPH CC1)**
- Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context. **(CEPH CC2)**
- Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate. **(CEPH CC3)**
- Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice. **(CEPH CC4)**



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Public Health & Health Care Systems

- Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings. **(CEPH CC5)**
- 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. **(CEPH CC6)**

Planning & Management to Promote Health

- Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health. **(CEPH CC7)**
- Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs. **(CEPH CC8)**
- Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention. **(CEPH CC9)**
- Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management. **(CEPH CC10)**
- Select methods to evaluate public health programs. **(CEPH CC11)**

Policy in Public Health

- Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence. **(CEPH CC12)**
- Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes. **(CEPH CC13)**
- Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations. **(CEPH CC14)**
- Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity. **(CEPH CC15)**

Leadership

- Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making. **(CEPH CC16)**
- Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges. **(CEPH CC17)**

Communication

- Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors. **(CEPH CC18)**
- Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation. **(CEPH CC19)**
- Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content. **(CEPH CC20)**

Interprofessional Practice

- Perform effectively on interprofessional teams. **(CEPH CC21)**

Systems Thinking Health

- Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue. **(CEPH CC22)**

Track-Specific Competencies

Epidemiology

- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of each type of study for population-based research and the circumstances in which each would be the preferred approach for addressing an important gap in health-related knowledge. **(VU Epi1)**
- Recognize sources of bias, including selection and information bias, and bias due to confounding, and know that bias can distort measures of association between a factor (i.e. exposure) that may influence the occurrence of a health-related state or event (i.e. disease). **(VU Epi2)**
- Demonstrate proper application of principles for building of multivariable regression models and how to make inferences from these models. **(VU Epi3)**
- Perform regression diagnostics, including residual analyses to assess how well models fit the data, inspect the presence of outliers, and assess the fulfillment of model assumptions. **(VU Epi4)**
- Understand the ethical foundation for research regulations and their principles as applied to human subjects research, including autonomy, beneficence, and justice. **(VU Epi5)**

Global Health

- Identify historical and emerging issues of significance in global health from an interdisciplinary vantage point. **(VU GH1)**
- Demonstrate knowledge of research methodologies and programmatic interventions used to ameliorate health and developmental problems, particularly in low-resource settings. **(VU GH2)**
- Describe fundamentals of organizational behavior and change, particularly in low-resource settings. **(VU GH3)**
- Recognize the role of policy development and advocacy in global health. **(VU GH4)**
- Demonstrate cultural competence and promote diversity in global health research, policy, and practice. **(VU GH5)**

Health Policy

- Identify the main features and challenges related to the financing, incentives, and delivery of health care services and public health systems in the United States. **(VU HP1)**
- Describe the complementary roles of individualized health care services and population-based interventions in maintaining and improving health status. **(VU HP2)**
- Evaluate policies and apply theories of health insurance and the incentives that various approaches to coverage and provider payment create in the health system. **(VU HP3)**
- Analyze the impact of changes in public health policy and health care financing and service delivery on health care cost growth, quality of care, and access to services. **(VU HP4)**
- Conceptualize the data and research methods necessary to address questions of significance to policymakers and other relevant system actors. **(VU HP5)**

Course Credit, Contact Hours, and Evaluation

Students register for PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum in the Summer term of Year 1 and receive academic course credit toward the MPH degree and a final grade for the practicum. The academic credit hours and contact hours associated with the practicum are listed below:

	Epidemiology Track	Global Health Track	Health Policy Track
Practicum Contact Hours (min.)	120-240	400	240
Academic Credit Hours for PUBH 5536 (max.)	3-6	8	6

Students in the same track concentration receive the same number of academic credit hours for PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum, even if the contact hours spent at the site exceed the minimum requirement or the student completes more than one practicum.

The final course grade is determined by the practicum director who evaluates each student's attainment of the public health competencies. Students demonstrate competency attainment through different course deliverables, which include written assignments, practicum products, and a poster presentation.

The final course grade is awarded and documented in the student record system (YES) only after all course requirements have been completed satisfactorily. If the course director determines that the student did not complete all course requirements, or their performance is unsatisfactory, a grade of Incomplete (I) may be given.

Deliverables

The course requirements include deliverables that the student completes prior to, during, and after the practicum contact hours have taken place. A full list of practicum deliverables can be found on the last page of this handbook. All deliverables are submitted via REDCap. Additional instructions are available on the practicum Brightspace site.

The practicum products will vary depending on each student's practicum and the needs of the site. The student works with the practicum director and site supervisor to plan their practicum products. The practicum products are described in the Practicum Agreement, and they may evolve over the course of the practicum.

Examples of appropriate practicum products include essays, reports, plans, guides, maps, proposals, health assessments, policy briefs, literature reviews, training or education curricula and learning materials, surveys, databases, presentations, etc.



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Distinguishing Between Practicum and Thesis

The practicum should be viewed primarily as a supervised field experience that meets the following criteria:

- Consists of work in a public health setting
- Applies graduate-level skills in a public health context
- Provides opportunities to engage in activities that advance career goals
- Results in at least two final deliverable products (e.g., report, manuscript, evaluation, presentation)

The practicum products must be distinct from the thesis. Although the practicum and thesis can be related, the student must be able to articulate how activities and products apply to *either* the practicum *or* the thesis (but not both).

Distinguishing Between Interprofessional Education (IPE) and Practicum

Prior to graduation, students in the Vanderbilt MPH Program are assessed on their ability to demonstrate the competency: *Perform effectively in interprofessional teams* (CEPH CC21). The Interprofessional Education (IPE) degree requirement is described in full in the IPE Guide, which is accessible on Brightspace. While many practicums will likely have interprofessional activities imbedded in the experience, students may not use their practicum to fulfill the IPE requirement. Instead, students will choose from a list of pre-approved IPE activities or they may propose their own activity.



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Roles and Responsibilities

The table below provides a brief overview of the three primary people involved in the practicum: student, site supervisor(s), and practicum director.

	Student	Site Supervisor(s)	Practicum Director
Prior to Practicum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores opportunities • Communicates with practicum director and site supervisor • Arranges logistics (travel, housing, etc.) • Researches funding opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists student in planning practicum activities and in completing Practicum Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists student in refining interests and identifying career goals • Guides student in researching potential sites • Reviews and signs the Practicum Agreement
During Practicum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes tasks as assigned • Contributes to the work of the practicum site • Communicates any unexpected situations or difficulties to practicum director • Seeks feedback on professional skills and performance • Completes mid-point deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists the student in gaining access to information, personnel, or resources required for the practicum activities and objectives • Mentors student and provides feedback on professional skills and performance • Evaluates student and signs off on necessary deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts student and site supervisor regularly throughout practicum to gauge progress • Assists student and site supervisor with any unforeseen situations or challenges that may arise
After Practicum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes course deliverables and prepares products demonstrating attainment of at least 5 CEPH competencies • Submits all course deliverables by stated deadlines • Designs poster and presents at Practicum Colloquium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews student abstract for Practicum Colloquium • Completes site supervisor evaluation form • Reviews student poster for Practicum Colloquium • If available, attends Practicum Colloquium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiles submitted deliverables and maintains student's portfolio of practicum products • Provides feedback on student deliverables, including abstract and poster design

Additional Practice Experiences

There may be instances when a student is unable to complete the course requirements for PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum through their primary practicum. If a student does not reach the number of requisite hours or demonstrate attainment of at least five competencies, the practicum director will work with the student to identify opportunities to fulfill those needs through additional practice experiences.

Additional practice experiences may include any of the following:

- Course-based activities
Example: performing a needed task for a public health or health care organization under the supervision of a faculty member as an individual or group of students.
- Activities linked to service learning or co-curricular activities
Example: volunteering at community service events.
- A blend of for-credit and/or not-for-credit activities.

While students may complete experiences as individuals or as groups in a structured experience, each student must document their activities by submitting an Additional Practice Experience Form.



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Section 2: Planning

Exploring Sites

Students are responsible for identifying their practicum site through a combination of the following:

- Individualized guidance from the practicum director, track director(s), and mentors
- Networking efforts
- University-, program-, and departmental-level resources

Any organization that provides, plans for, coordinates, organizes, pays for, or regulates public health services could be an appropriate practicum site. Sites may include governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. University-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be suitable.

The practicum site should enable the student to develop further and to apply specific skills or competencies learned in the academic program along with a supervisor who can regularly schedule time with the student. Additional support from the sites may include a desk and a phone, stipends or salary, or even transportation and lodging.

Examples of practicum sites include:

- Community mental health centers
- Environmental health consulting companies
- Federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Veterans Administration, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Food and Drug Administration, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Global health organizations and clinics
- Hospitals (public, not-for-profit, for-profit, psychiatric, rehabilitation)
- Industry settings
- Insurance companies
- Low- and middle-income countries' Ministries of Health and health departments
- Managed care organizations
- Multi-specialty medical practices
- Neighborhood health centers and community clinics
- State, county, or city health departments, health or social service agencies
- Other non-profit and community-based organizations

The Vanderbilt MPH Program maintains a list of [previous practicum sites](#) that provides a short description of the student's practicum and names their site supervisor(s).

David Satcher Public Health Leadership Institute

Students with an interest in health disparities may complete their practicum in Atlanta at the [Satcher Health Leadership Institute](#) at Morehouse Medical College. The Vanderbilt MPH Program may nominate one student per year for this one- to two-month experience. Satcher Scholars take priority.

Practicum Components

Each practicum placement should have the following components:

- An opportunity to work with a practicing professional who is functioning as a leader for a public health institution, private agency, or organization.
- Opportunities to attend as many managerial meetings as possible, involving a variety of people in the organization, such as the medical staff, administrators, health educators, and other professionals. In this way, the student gains a wide perspective about the types of issues, concerns, and processes that occur in the provision of public health.
- Responsibility for one or more specific projects to carry out during the practicum. The projects should be designed so the student has principal responsibility, perhaps working with others in the organization, and the result should be a product, written or otherwise, that is of value to the organization. The number and types of projects performed by the student are left to the discretion of the site supervisor in recognition of the organization's needs, time constraints and the student's interests and capabilities.
- Responsibility for other activities that the site supervisor may assign and which have mutual benefit, thus further exposing the student to the organization and the complexities of its working environment.
- An environment that fosters development of an understanding of the political context within which public health activities are conducted.
- Regular meetings with a site supervisor who can guide the student and serve as a role model. Due to the wide diversity in field practicum opportunities available to students, there are broad possibilities as to the specific nature of this training. However, it is imperative that the site supervisor and student, with the practicum director, agree on the scope of responsibilities and duties that the student will assume at the beginning of the field practicum period.



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Practicum Agreement

Before beginning the practicum, the student must submit a signed Practicum Agreement to document information about their practicum site, site supervisor(s), objectives, competencies, and planned activities. This agreement is submitted via REDCap.

The student must have an on-site public health practitioner as a site supervisor. Written agreements for domestic and international supervisors are required.

A signed Practicum Agreement is due February 1st. The student may not begin working at their practicum site until a signed Practicum Agreement has submitted and approved by the practicum director. A Practicum Agreement without a site supervisor's approval is considered incomplete. Any activities performed at the practicum site before the Practicum Agreement has been signed by the site supervisor and approved by the practicum director may not be counted toward the minimum contact hour requirement. These activities may, however, be included in the student's portfolio as an Additional Practice Experience.

Elective Away Rotations

Students who are classified as House Staff must consult with their Program Director to determine if their practicum is considered an [Elective Away Rotation](#). The Office of Graduate Medical Education requires that requests be submitted a minimum of 7 months prior for international away rotations or a minimum of 4 months prior for domestic away rotations. Please consult the [House Staff Manual](#) for further information.

Funding and Budgets

The student may be compensated for their practicum work, but it is not an expectation that the site provides funding assistance.

There are several resources available to help students offset the cost of their practicum. The student is responsible for researching and applying for funding opportunities.

MPH Practicum Awards

The Vanderbilt MPH Program makes funding available to help offset expenses associated with the practicum. Current students in the Vanderbilt MPH Program (all tracks) are eligible to apply for an MPH Practicum Award. Award amounts vary based on availability and need.

The disbursement of MPH Practicum Awards aligns with the academic fiscal calendar (July 1 to June 30). Students may apply for funding from the MPH Program after their Practicum Agreement has been approved and signed by the practicum director.

Applications are due by end-of-day on May 15 and recipients will be notified by email no later than June 1. Funding will be disbursed to selected students by direct deposit to a U.S. bank account following the submission of an [expense report in Oracle Cloud \(SkyVU\)](#). Students selected to receive funding to support travel are required to read the [VU Travel and Business Expense Policy](#) prior to incurring any costs. All purchases associated with the award must be made by June 15 of the current fiscal year. A list of allowable expenses will be provided.

*Please note: When traveling for university purposes, all students are **required** to utilize [Vanderbilt's online booking tool](#) or contact the [travel agency](#) to make reservations.

Other Funding Sources

A list of other Vanderbilt funding sources and examples of external funding sources can be found [in the MPH Student Handbook under "Practicum."](#) There may be additional external funding opportunities for which a student is eligible to apply based on their specific background or interests.

Students should recognize that funding may be subject to delays, changes, and restrictions. If a student's practicum placement is dependent on funding, it is very important to develop a contingency plan in case funding does not come through.

Budgets

Whether the student intends to apply for funding support or not, a budget is an important part of the practicum planning process. The budget should be realistic, conservative, precise, and include a justification.

Pointers:

- *Be Realistic:* Include all necessary expenses in your budget. Do not try to lessen vital expenses at the onset because you will end up paying for them later. However, try not to include frivolous or unnecessary expenses.
- *Be Conservative:* When applying for funding, remember that funders are looking for effective use of funds. Be as honest and accurate with costs as possible.
- *Be Precise:* Make sure that the needs included in your budget adequately and accurately represent all the needs of your project. Ensure expenses listed in your budget and the requirements of your project are in agreement.
- *Provide Justification:* Even if not specified, include a justification or narrative section when submitting a budget for funding to briefly explain why your expenses are necessary.

As part of the planning process, students should prepare a comprehensive budget with any and all expected expenses associated with their practicum. Below is a sample budget for the MPH Practicum Funding Application; it includes examples of allowable expenses for this particular funding source and how they should be listed.

SAMPLE PRACTICUM BUDGET

Student Name: Cornelius Vanderbilt
 Practicum Dates: June 1, 2020 – August 15, 2020
 Practicum Location: Managua, Nicaragua

Category	Item	Details and Justification	Cost per unit	# Units	Actual or Estimated Cost (USD)
Travel	Airfare	Roundtrip, BNA - Managua; American Airlines	\$500	1	\$500.00
	Luggage Fee	American Airlines checked luggage fee	\$25/bag	2	\$50.00
	Ground Transportation	Estimated Uber rides to/from BNA	\$30	2	\$60.00
	Parking	Estimated monthly parking pass for practicum site, \$10/month	\$10/month	3	\$30.00
	Mileage Reimbursement	Daily commute from residence to practicum site <i>(must include Google map with mileage)</i>			\$100.00
	Visa Fees	Nicaraguan Tourist Card	\$10.00	1	\$10.00
Accommodations	Hotel	Best Western Managua, 2 nights during travel	\$100/night	2	\$200.00
	Guest House	Guest house accommodations at practicum site	\$25/month	3	\$75.00
Medical	Vaccinations, Medications	Rabies vaccination from VU Student Health Center	\$35	1	\$35.00
	International Health Insurance	United Healthcare Global plan	\$2/day	200	\$400.00
Total Expected Allowable Expenses					\$1,460.00

International Travel Preparation

Students traveling to international practicum sites must complete additional preparations *before* traveling.

Pre-departure online modules (*mandatory*)

Complete the pre-departure modules found on the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health's [Student Portal](#):

1. Culture Shock and Cultural Difference
2. Pre-Departure Orientation
3. Ethical Issues in Research and Service in Resource-Limited Settings
4. First, Do No Harm: A Qualitative Research Documentary

Pre-departure training (*mandatory*)

In the Spring term, after completing the pre-departure modules, the student will attend a Vanderbilt MPH Program pre-departure training session to discuss safety, health, insurance, travel, and other considerations.

Travel Health Resources (*mandatory*)

Review the information on [Travel Health Resources](#) found on the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health's Student Portal. Make sure you have adequate international health insurance coverage and have received the necessary immunizations recommended for the countries you will visit.

Safety Resources (*mandatory*)

Follow the steps outlines on the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health's Student Portal under [Safety Resources](#) and register your travel plans with the university at least two weeks prior to departure.

Foreign Language Resources

Students working with international populations as part of their practicum may wish to hone their foreign language skills. There are several resources available at Vanderbilt and in the Nashville area:

- **Vanderbilt University Language Classes:** All Vanderbilt Students are eligible to audit a language class through the College of Arts and Science. Current language offerings include Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, Classical Greek, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, K'iche', Latin, Maya Glyph, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Review the MPH Student Handbook's section on Course Registration for instructions on auditing courses.
- **Tennessee Language Center:** The [Tennessee Language Center](#), under the direction of the Institute for Public Service of the University of Tennessee, offers foreign language instruction, both scheduled and customized, with classes in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and many others, as well as cultural awareness and diversity programs.
- **Work with Immigrants and Refugees in Nashville:** While refugees and immigrants in Nashville may be more eager to learn English than assist a student in learning their native language, the MPH student may gain valuable insights to cultural nuances and improve cross-cultural communication skills by engaging members/clients of these populations.

Examples of immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies in the Nashville area include:

- [Catholic Charities](#)
- [Conexion Americas](#)
- [Nashville International Center for Empowerment \(NICE\)](#)
- [Nations Ministry Center](#)
- [Project:BRIDGES](#)
- [Shade Tree Clinic](#)
- [Siloam Family Health Center](#)
- [World Relief](#)

Checklist: Before the Practicum

- Update CV/resume and LinkedIn profile
- Meet with practicum director during Fall term
- Explore potential sites, projects, and site supervisors
- Research funding opportunities
- Submit deliverables outlined in Brightspace for Fall term
- Meet with practicum director during Spring term
- Discuss potential practicum activities and competencies with site supervisor
- Determine if practicum constitutes an Elective Away Rotation and submit necessary paperwork to the Office of Graduate Medical Education (Residents and House Staff only)
- Complete and submit the Practicum Agreement before beginning any work at your practicum site
- Submit applications for scholarships and funding opportunities
- Attend international travel pre-departure training session
- Make any preparations for travel, lodging, etc.
- When Summer course registration opens, register for PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum in YES
- Arrive at practicum site
- Complete and submit an amended Practicum Agreement before beginning any work at your practicum site if practicum activities have been modified

Section 3: On-Site Specifics

Most students begin their practicum at the start of the Summer term and complete the required number of contact hours before the Fall term begins. If there are any changes to the practicum activities and products, an amended Practicum Agreement is required. Students should communicate any unexpected situations or difficulties to the practicum director. At the end of the practicum, students should meet with their site supervisor one last time to review their practicum experience. Students should ask for overall feedback, discuss the Practicum Colloquium requirements including reviewing the students abstract and poster and to remind them to complete the online Student Evaluation, which the practicum director will send by email.

Summer Deliverables

Progress Report

This report is intended to document the student's progress and activities at the placement site. The student provides a summary of the practicum activities to date and a description of their progress. This report should be brief, usually no longer than 1 page. If the student's practicum learning objectives, competencies, activities and/or products have changed, they are required to provide this information within the Progress Report. This report is submitted via REDCap.

Time Record

This record is intended to document the student's number of hours worked at the placement site and/or performing work directly related to the experience. Students may choose to submit this information by using the provided Time Record form or they may record this information in an Excel file or Google spreadsheet.



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Photographs

Students will submit 5 to 10 different photos depicting them "at work" at their practicum site. Instructions for taking photos are listed below:

Photo Instructions

Technical specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High-resolution photos• Photo sizes should be at least 800 x 600 pixels• JPEG files preferred
What kinds of photos to submit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "At work" photos: This will require the student to ask someone else to take the picture (<i>one or two selfies are OK, however, include some more formal shots as well</i>).• It may be easier to stage pictures, just make sure they realistically portray your practicum work.• Be overly respectful of patient privacy and always ask permission before taking photos with others.
Need some inspiration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider taking a series of shots that portray your "typical day in the life" at the practicum site.• Use photos to highlight something specific to, unique, or special about your practicum setting.• Plan a series of photos that illustrate the top five things you enjoyed most or learned during your practicum. These can be people, places, skills, etc.
Caption information	Include the following information for each photo you will upload: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is pictured (first and last names)• What is taking place in the photo• Where you are located When you took the photo (approximately)

Communication

During the practicum MPH students represent not only themselves, but also Vanderbilt University, the Vanderbilt MPH Program, and the host institution or project site. They should consider that all communications are a reflection of the aforementioned entities.

MPH students should be mindful of the information they choose to share publicly, as it has the potential to be highly sensitive or confidential.

Carefully consider the photos and comments posted on social networking sites and blogs; consider that not all information may be appropriate to share with certain audiences or in certain settings.

Checklist: During the Practicum

- Use Excel, Word, or a Google Spreadsheet to keep a daily log of all activities; record and track and number of contact hours and your activities
- Notify the practicum director if you have any questions, unforeseen events, or challenges during your practicum
- Complete and submit Practicum Progress Report describing activities to date and any revisions to the competencies, learning objectives, and products identified in the Practicum Agreement
- Get photos of yourself in action at your practicum site
- Before your practicum ends, meet with your site supervisor(s), ask for feedback, and remind them to complete the online Student Evaluation, which the practicum director will send by email

Section 4: Deliverables

Deliverables and Deadlines

Deliverables for the practicum include assignments, photos, a record of activities and time spent on the practicum, a final report, and the products produced during the practicum. The type and number of final products may vary and should be planned by the student and site supervisor(s). Products may evolve over the course of the practicum. The site supervisor(s) should provide feedback, if needed, on any deliverables produced on-site. All deliverables and products are submitted to the practicum director for review. All deliverables are submitted via REDCap.

The Vanderbilt MPH Program will use a portfolio approach to assess each student's competency attainment during the practicum. The deliverables and products submitted by the student will make up their portfolio. These documents should clearly demonstrate the student's efforts, progress, and achievements during the practicum, as well as their attainment of the specific competencies and learning objectives identified in the Practicum Agreement.



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As part of the final practicum deliverables, each student must submit at least **two** products.

Examples include:

- Written assignments
- Journal entries
- Completed tests
- Projects
- Videos
- Multi-media presentations
- Spreadsheets
- Websites
- Posters
- Photos or other digital artifacts of learning

In addition, each site supervisor completes and submits an evaluation at the end of the practicum. The practicum director will coordinate this directly with each site supervisor(s).

Practicum Report

A written self-assessment with appendices will serve as the final report. The self-assessment is different than typical academic writing. Students should write in first-person and describe their practicum experiences. The self-assessment should be approximately 4 pages, single-spaced with 12-point font, and it should include the following sections:

Introduction (1 page)

- Site or organization with which the student has worked and its history, mission, and programs overview (1/3 page).
- Specifications: programs engaged, responsibilities, goals, objectives, and 5 competencies demonstrated during the practicum (2/3 page).

Practicum Activities (1 page)

- Describe activities completed over the practicum and how they addressed the competencies.

Evaluation (1/2 page)

- Evaluate objectives and competencies (were they met, did they change, why or why not?).

Perceptions (1 page)

- Relationship to past work experiences, didactic/academic experiences, and career interests.
- Most valuable aspects of practicum experience.

Recommendations (1/2 page)

- Programmatic (how can the MPH program improve the practicum experience for students?).
- Organizational (would you recommend the site for future students? Why or why not?).

Appendices (2 or more deliverables)

- Any deliverables the student creates for and submits to the site.
- These may include: literature reviews, data analysis reports, strategic plans, policy memos, PowerPoint presentations, survey instruments, training materials, curricula, manuscript drafts, best practice recommendations, grants, etc.
- If the products are not shareable (e.g., protected interview or survey data, computer programs, databases, etc.), provide a brief description.

Practicum Colloquium

The Practicum Colloquium provides all MPH students an opportunity to present their practicum experiences in a conference-like setting. Students have an opportunity to practice presentation skills while receiving feedback from faculty and other graduate students in attendance.

All second-year cohort students in the Vanderbilt MPH program are required to submit an abstract and to design and present a poster at the Colloquium.

For students who complete practicum requirements at two or more separate sites, they should consult with the practicum director to determine which site to use for the Practicum Colloquium abstract and poster.

Two outstanding practicum abstracts will be selected by a review committee of MPH faculty members and alumni. The winners will each receive a \$500 professional development award from the Vanderbilt MPH Program and they will also present a brief oral presentation at the Practicum Colloquium along with their poster. Winners will be notified by January 1.



**More details on
Brightspace**

brightspace.vanderbilt.edu

General Abstract Guidelines

The abstract summarizes the main points of the student's experience. Typically, an abstract will include the following sections (% total of abstract):

1. Introduction: overall objective of practicum (~ 25%)
2. Methods: practicum project design or methods (~ 25%)
3. Results: primary results or outcomes (~ 35%)
4. Conclusions: principal conclusions or interpretations (~ 15%)

Students should consult the [AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors \(10th edition\)](#) when developing their abstract. MPH students can access the electronic version for free from any VU-networked computer or by using their VU student VUnetID to log in to the VU library system. Please refer to the following sections on [abstracts](#), [references](#), [abbreviations](#), [punctuation](#), and [capitalization](#) for guidance.

When developing an [abstract](#), do not write in first person, avoid the [passive voice](#), and use full sentences. Abbreviations may be used after the term is spelled out in full once. Please verify official formal names of organizations, departments, entities, and projects before submitting abstract for review.

Specific Abstract Guidelines

- All second-year students in the MPH program are required to submit an abstract
- Abstracts should be 250-300 words
- All abstracts should include 3 keywords
- Abstracts should be uploaded via REDCap as a Word document saved with a file name using this format:
 - File name format: [Last Name]_Practicum_Abstract
 - Example: Hawkins_Practicum_Abstract

All abstracts must adhere to the following format. Use a header and address the specific questions for each of the required sections.

Practicum Abstract

Purpose/Significance

This section (2-3 sentences) should include the following:

- Overall context of practicum experience (Public Health issue being addressed)
- Name and location of practicum site
- Aims or objectives of practicum experience

Methods

This section (2-3 sentences) should describe what how you addressed your practicum objectives.

- Practicum project design or methods

Results/Outcome

This section (2-3 sentences) should describe your practicum results or outcomes.

- What were the outcomes
- What practicum products were produced

Conclusion

This section (2-3 sentences) should describe your principle conclusions or interpretations of your practicum.

- General interpretation of the results and their significance to public health
- If applicable, description of impact related to public health
- Lessons learned, did you achieve your overall practicum goal
- Any ongoing challenges

The **first** draft of the practicum colloquium abstract is due no later than 5:00 p.m. on September 1. The **final** version is due no later than 5:00 p.m. on November 2.

Poster Content

Posters should include the following elements:

Practicum Poster Content

- **Title:** project title
- **Collaborators:** student's name, site supervisor's name, names of collaborators, and affiliations
- **Introduction (Purpose/Significance)**
- **Aims/Objectives**
- **Methods**
- **Results/Outcomes**
- **Discussion**
- **Summary/Conclusion:** include any lessons learned
- **Acknowledgements:** include any sources of funding and assistance received

Poster Design

- Due to the constraints of the boards used at the Practicum Colloquium, the maximum dimensions of the poster should be:
 - 36" height x 44" width (horizontal orientation)
 - If you have previously presented or will present your practicum poster at another conference and used different dimensions than to create your poster and wish to use that poster at the Practicum Colloquium, you must contact the practicum director for prior approval.
- Your poster can be created software applications such as PowerPoint, Illustrator, and Publisher.
- The Vanderbilt School of Medicine Poster Printing Office has a number of tips and resources for designing your poster:
 - [Poster - Advice & Tips](#)
 - [Poster - PowerPoint Set-Up Guide](#)
 - [Poster - FAQs](#)
- Please refer to these additional resources on designing a scientific poster:
 - [Ten Simple Rules for a Good Poster Presentation](#)
 - [Designing Conference Posters](#)
 - [Poster Perfect: How to drive home your science with a visually pleasing poster](#)

Submitting Your Poster for Printing

- The [Vanderbilt School of Medicine Poster Printing Office](#) in 307 Light Hall will print all MPH students' posters for the upcoming Practicum Colloquium at no cost to the student.
- All posters must be submitted using Vanderbilt iLab.
 - [Instructions for using the poster printing service.](#)
 - [Instructions on setting up and registering an iLab account.](#)
- Submit your poster file via iLab to the Poster Printing Office no later than January 18, 2021.
- Your final poster file should be saved as a PowerPoint, PDF, Illustrator, or Publisher file with your last name in the file name.
- If you have any questions or problems submitting your poster, please [contact Rebecca Mohr](#).
- You will receive an email from the Poster Office when your poster is ready for pick-up from 307 Light Hall.
- Each student is responsible for picking up their printed poster and bringing it to the Practicum Colloquium. Pins will be provided at the venue.

Links

- [Vanderbilt School of Medicine Poster Printing Office](#)

Oral Presentation Guidelines

- Each oral presenter should prepare a PowerPoint presentation based on the abstract he or she submitted.
- The length of the presentation should be 10 minutes, with your PowerPoint file consisting of 10-12 slides (approximately 1 minute per slide).
- After each presentation, there will be five minutes for questions from the audience.
- Click [here](#) to download the official Vanderbilt of School of Medicine logos to use in your presentation.
- At the Student Life Center, there will be a PC computer and laser pointer for you to use.

Day-of Instructions

- The Colloquium will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Vanderbilt Student Life Center.
- Each student will have a designated space/poster board to display your poster.
- Please arrive at the Student Life Center no later than **10:45 am** to set up your poster.
- When you arrive, check in at the registration table to receive your poster location and then pick up a lunch.
- Place your lunch at a seat in the first three rows of tables, then find your poster location.
- Push pins will be provided.
- Set-up should be completed with everyone standing by their posters. A professional photographer will be taking individual photos from 11:00 a.m.
- If your practicum site supervisor is able to attend, we will also have a photo taken of you with them at your poster. Rebecca will help coordinate photos with site supervisors.
- Beginning at 11:30 a.m. through 12:30 p.m., the poster presentation portion of the Colloquium occurs. All students will stand by their posters to discuss their practicum experiences with Colloquium attendees including students, faculty members, and community public health practitioners.
- Do not leave your poster between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
- At 12:30 p.m., students and attendees will return to their seats and enjoy lunch while the oral presentations get underway.
- Attire: business casual.
- [Tips for presenting your scientific poster at a conference](#) (*Scientifica*).

Day-of schedule for second-year students:

10:45 a.m.	All second-year MPH students arrive to set-up posters.
11:00 a.m.	Set-up should be completed and students standing by their posters, ready for professional photographer to take individual photos during this time.
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	MPH students stand at their posters to discuss their practicum experiences with Colloquium attendees including students, faculty members, and community public health practitioners.
12:30 p.m.	Oral presentations begin. Those not presenting find a seat in the audience and have lunch.

Checklist: After the Practicum

- Write a thank you note to your site supervisor
- Submit practicum deliverables, including abstract, photos, and practicum products

- Research poster designs and best practices
- Design poster and any additional hand-outs you would like to have at your poster for Colloquium attendees
- Submit poster for printing at the School of Medicine Poster Printing Office
- Prepare for Practicum Colloquium; rehearse a 2-minute description of your poster; anticipate questions from visitors
- Update CV/resume and LinkedIn profile with practice experiences, including Practicum Colloquium presentation

Appendix

Frequently Asked Questions

When do I begin my practicum?

The practicum typically begins in May or June of the first year. However, students begin planning their practicum experience in the Fall term.

How and where do I start the process?

Identify practicum topics based on your specific areas of interest and career goals. Meet with the practicum director to discuss ideas for your practicum and explore the options available. All MPH students must develop their own goals, objectives, and timelines for the practicum in consultation with the practicum director and site supervisor(s).

Each MPH student is responsible for initiating and following through with the entire practicum process.

How do I find a practicum placement?

Finding placement is like finding a job. Use all available resources. Examples include:

- Practicum sites in [MPH Student Handbook](#)
- Previous practicum sites [on MPH website](#)
- [VIGH Global Health Opportunities Database](#)
- [VUConnect](#)
- LinkedIn (including [Vanderbilt MPH Program group](#))
- [Vanderbilt Career Center's Resources](#)

Identify organizations and agencies that are working on health issues that are related to your specific areas of interest. Talk to faculty members, mentors, MPH administrators, and second-year students who have completed their practicum requirement.

The practicum director will work with each student to address any challenges that arise as they seek a practicum site.

Do I register for the practicum?

Yes, students register for the practicum as PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum, typically in Year 1, Summer term. The section number and number of credit hours vary according to the student's track designation.

<i>Track</i>	<i>Course Code and Title</i>	<i>Section Number</i>	<i>Academic Credit Hours</i>
Epidemiology	PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum	01	3-6
Global Health		02	8
Health Policy		03	6

The number of credit hours may vary for students with atypical courses of study. Please consult Annie Smart if you have questions about course registration and academic credit hours.

Is it necessary to get the practicum director's approval to begin the practicum?

YES, this is **mandatory!** Students may not begin logging hours toward the practicum without a Practicum Agreement approved by the practicum director.

Will I be paid for the practicum?

The MPH Program does not compensate students for the practicum. Practicum placements can be paid or un-paid. Compensation is at the discretion of the agency/organization you choose.

Practicum Deadlines: Class of 2023

PUBH 5536 Public Health Practicum deadlines for students in the Class of 2023. Detailed instructions are available on the Brightspace practicum course site. Contact: Brad Hawkins, brad.hawkins@vanderbilt.edu.

Due Date	Deliverable	Additional Information
Sept. 3, 2021	Sign up for September meeting	Individual 30-minute practicum process and planning session
Sept. 10, 2021	Practicum Assignment 1 (EPI/HP only)	Brainstorm your upcoming practicum
Oct. 15, 2021	Sign up for November meeting	Individual 30-minute practicum planning session
Nov. 1, 2021	Practicum Assignment 2	Investigate potential practicum sites
Nov. 23, 2021	Sign up for December meeting	Individual 30-minute practicum planning session
Nov. 29, 2021	Practicum Assignment 3	Prioritize potential practicum sites.
Dec. 11, 2021	Sign up for January meeting	Individual 30-minute practicum planning session
Jan. 3, 2022	Practicum Assignment 4	Finalize practicum site(s), draft learning objectives, and choose competencies
Feb. 1, 2022	Practicum Agreement	Develop agreement; reviewed and approved by site supervisor(s) and MPH practicum director
Half-way point (or no later than July 25, 2022)	Practicum Progress Report and Time Record	Progress report; revisit initial learning objectives, competencies and practicum products; reviewed and approved by site supervisor(s)
Aug. 8, 2022	Practicum Completion Form: I	Photos: Submit at least 5 high-resolution photographs with descriptions Colloquium Abstract (draft): Initial draft the practicum abstract
Aug. 9, 2022	Sign up for Sept. Meeting	Individual 30-minute practicum debrief session
Sept. 1-9, 2022	Practicum Debriefing Meeting	Discuss your practicum experience and receive feedback on your colloquium abstract.
Sept. 12, 2022	Practicum Completion Form: II	After completing practicum contact hours, submit the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time Record: Record the total number of hours completed as part of your practicum activities. - Practicum Report: Provides an overview of the practicum and includes a self-assessment - Practicum Products: Products that demonstrate competencies attainment (2 products minimum)
Nov. 1, 2022	Colloquium Abstract (Final)	Submit revision based upon prior feedback
Dec. 2022	Poster Development Workshop	Attend workshop: The Do's and Don'ts of an Effective Poster Presentation
Jan. 1, 2022	Colloquium Poster (Draft)	Draft of poster for colloquium
Jan. 23, 2023	Colloquium Poster (Final)	Final version of Practicum Colloquium poster presentation
Jan. 27, 2023	Practicum Colloquium	On-campus conference with faculty, staff, administration, community partners, and colleagues