



## *Applied Practice Experience (APE)*

### Guidelines for Master of Public Health Degree Candidates

#### (MPH-generalist and MPH-CHPS)

#### **Applied Practice Experience Goal**

The goal of the APE is to provide students with the opportunity to attain and demonstrate attainment of public health competencies through a practice-based experience. The final product of the APE is a portfolio that includes at least two distinct products, as well as an oral presentation. Students must have completed 12 credits of core courses prior to enrolling for the APE.

#### **I. APE Competencies**

In collaboration with an APE academic advisor, the students select an organizational setting and site mentor for their APE. The student, APE academic advisor and site mentor (referred to as the APE team) identifies at least five competencies as the focus of the APE. At least three must be foundational competencies and at least two must be drawn from the concentration areas of the student's program (MPH-Generalist or MPH-CHPS). The APE team identifies methods to assess competency attainment through a portfolio approach.

#### **Foundational Competencies (must select at least 3)**

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software as appropriate
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings
6. 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
7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs
12. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence
13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
14. Advocate for political, social and economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations

15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity
16. Apply principles of leadership, governance and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration and guiding decision making
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges
18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content
21. Perform effectively on interprofessional teams
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

**Generalist Concentration-specific Competencies (select at least 2 for the MPH-Generalist track)**

1. Gather, integrate and analyze descriptive health data from rural or frontier settings.
2. Identify the common demographic characteristics of rural or frontier areas and their implications for provision of public health services.
3. Explain the challenges associated with provision of environmental health services in the context of rural or frontier areas.
4. Demonstrate basic understanding and respect for a multiplicity of values, beliefs, traditions and experiences and feelings of satisfaction or distress stemming from social determinants in rural or frontier settings.
5. Utilize basic statistical skills to reason about problems associated with the populations of low density and widespread geographic dispersion.

**Community Health and Prevention Sciences-specific Competencies (select at least 2 for MPH-CHPS track)**

Area I: Assess Needs, Resources, and Capacity for Health Education/Promotion

Area II: Plan Health Education/Promotion

Area III: Implement Health Education/Promotion

Area IV: Conduct Evaluation and Research Related to Health Education/Promotion

Area V: Administer and Manage Health Education/Promotion

Area VI: Serve as a Health Education/Promotion Resource Person

Area VII: Communicate, Promote, and Advocate for Health, Health Education/Promotion, and the Profession

For more information on these Community Health and Prevention Sciences-specific Competencies, please visit the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing website:

<https://www.nchec.org/responsibilities-and-competencies>

## II. Selection of APE Sites

APE sites may be governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. To be appropriate for an APE site, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may be appropriate.

It is the student's responsibility to find, arrange, and complete a satisfactory APE experience that fulfills program requirements. The faculty, department, and the school can, and will assist students, but the student retains the final responsibility. Faculty advisors are not expected to find placements. One of the benefits of this process is that each student will learn to contact and communicate with professionals in their field. Under certain circumstances, students may complete an APE at their place of employment.

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The work site must provide students with opportunities to integrate MPH course content with professional practice. The APE must be clearly differentiated from the student's employment. Students are also encouraged to apply for funding to support their APE experience.

A list of previously utilized APE sites with mentor contacts is available on the website or by contacting the SPCHS office. Additionally, University of Montana Internship Services provides assistance with developing APE sites.

Each APE site should have the following characteristics:

- A.** The site enables the student to develop further and apply specific skills or competencies learned in the academic program (e.g., assessment, program planning, evaluation, management, data analysis, policy development, etc.).
- B.** An opportunity to work with a practicing professional who is functioning as a leader or in a similar capacity for a public health institution, private agency, or organization is the basis for the field APE. The site should provide a mentor who is willing and able to spend regularly scheduled time with the student and provide guidance.
- C.** The site should afford the student contact with public health practitioners. Students should have the opportunity to attend as many, and as varied as possible, managerial meetings 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.
- D.** The site should be a good match with the needs of the student. The student should be assigned one or more specific projects to carry out during the field APE. The projects should be designed so the student has the principal responsibility, perhaps working with others in the organization, and the result should be products that are of value to the organization.
- E.** The site should exhibit a willingness to provide support, ranging from a desk, a computer, and a phone to stipends or salary, transportation, and/or lodging.
- F.** The student should conduct other smaller functions within the organization that contribute to an understanding of the complexities that the organization faces. Any reasonable activity in which the student contributes to the organization through assisting other individuals, and which provides a learning experience for the student, are appropriate.
- G.** The student should undertake any 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. The site supervisor should exhibit a willingness to gradually increase student responsibility and independence over the duration of the APE experience.
- H.** The student develops an understanding of the political context within which public health activities are conducted.

### III. APE Products

A minimum of two separate and distinct products must be produced as result of the APE. For example, products can be videos, multi-media presentations, journal entries, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos or other digital artifacts of learning. Different sections of one product can be used to demonstrate multiple competencies. For example, the introduction section of a report could serve as documentation for foundational competency 6 (Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health) and the results section of the same report could serve as documentation for foundational competency 3 (Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software as appropriate). Nonetheless the APE must result in two discrete products, such as a website page and a fact sheet.

### IV. Involvement in Community and Professional Service

Involvement in community and professional service activities, in addition to those used to satisfy the APE requirements, is mandatory. As part of the APE planning process, students must discuss their service activities with the APE team. Service experiences should enhance the student's understanding of (1) the context in which public health work is performed outside an academic setting and (2) the importance of learning and contributing to professional advancement of the field. In addition to the APE requirement, at least one service, community engagement, or professional development activity must be completed while the student is enrolled in the MPH program.

If the student has not already participated in professional service activities while enrolled in the MPH program, the APE team will assist the student in selecting one or more community or professional service activities to complete. Alternatively, the student may document community and professional service activities they participated in while enrolled in the MPH program.

### V. Required Steps of the APE Process

Students must have completed 12 credits of core courses prior to enrolling for the APE. To satisfy the APE requirements the student will:

1. In collaboration with the student's primary advisor from the MPH or MPH-CHPS program:
  - a. Work with the APE Academic Advisor and obtain their consent to supervise the APE experience.
  - b. Meet with the APE Academic Advisor to discuss the selection of the site and site mentor, development of the APE Proposal, and project timelines.
2. In collaboration with the APE Academic Advisor and Site Mentor:
  - a. Schedule a meeting that includes the APE Academic Advisor, Site Mentor, and Student to finalize the details of the APE plan and review the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team. Meetings can occur in person, over the phone, or using any other real-time communication support system.
  - b. Negotiate and complete the APE Proposal Form. **The proposal must be approved by the Site Mentor and APE Academic Advisor before beginning the APE Project.**
  - c. Obtain all required signatures.
  - d. Complete prior to enrollment in the course.
3. Enroll in the APE Course.

If you do not register the following semester after APE proposal approval, the proposal will need to be resubmitted. You may begin work on the project before registration if the Proposal is approved. Registration requires an override; contact the Public Health Program Manager or the APE Academic Advisor.

4. Complete the APE and required products. *Complete at least three weeks prior to the oral presentation.*
5. Compile a portfolio that includes: (1) cover page (available on the public health website), (2) the APE Proposal Form, and (3) all associated products. The APE Academic Advisor will review initial draft(s) of the portfolio, which you will submit to your APE Team prior to the oral presentation. *Complete at least two weeks prior to the oral presentation.*
6. In collaboration with the APE Academic Advisor, schedule to present an oral presentation with all members of the APE team as part of the designated seminar. All members of the APE Team must attend the oral presentation or review a recorded version. *Submit a copy of your powerpoint presentation to APE Academic Advisor at least two weeks prior to your presentation date.*
7. Present a 10 minute oral presentation of the APE project and products to your APE Team at the designated seminar. *The presentation must be completed by the end of finals week to receive credit for that semester.* Fill in the Grading Rubric with your competencies and products as proposed for your APE. Attach this grading rubric to your portfolio report.
8. Submit Portfolio and Site Assessment prior to the last day of classes for the semester. Files are not complete until grading rubrics, portfolio, and site assessment has been completed.

## **VI. Presentation Guidelines**

The oral presentation demonstrates the student's ability to prepare and give a professional report of his/her APE experience to an informed audience. Students should use a method of displaying their work (such as PowerPoint) to facilitate the presentation. One slide must summarize the student's involvement in community or professional service. The presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes in length.

- A. Your APE Team will use the Grading Rubric as a guide to evaluate your APE portfolio and oral presentation.
- B. The presentation is open to all interested faculty, students, staff, and the public. The APE Site Mentor is required to attend. All presentations are done virtually via Zoom. Dates for the presentation will be posted at the start of the semester. Work with your site mentor to choose the best date for your presentation.

## **VI. Additional Information**

### **A. Forms Required Prior to Enrollment**

- The *APE Proposal Form* must be completed, signed and submitted to the APE Academic Advisor prior to enrollment and the start of the on-site APE experience.

## **B. Forms Required Upon Completion**

1. The purpose of the Student APE Site Assessment is to provide students with an opportunity to relay important information about the challenges, strengths, and concerns of the APE site and site mentor to the program. This is a confidential document that will be used internally by the program only. Return it before the APE oral presentation to the Program Manager with the SPCHS office.
2. The purpose of the Site Mentor's Evaluation of Student Performance in the APE is for the student and the SPCHS to hear the site mentor's perspective on the value of the APE. This will be made available to the student, who will have the opportunity to respond to the assessment in one page or less. Both the site mentor evaluation and the student's response (if conducted) should be attached to the final APE Report.
3. The purpose of the Grading Rubric is to ensure that the required elements of the APE portfolio and oral presentation are clear to the APE Team and that a formal system for evaluating the student's APE is followed.

## **C. APE Team Descriptions**

1. **APE Academic Advisor:** The APE academic advisor must be a SPCHS faculty member in the students' MPH program. The APE academic advisor may be but does not need to be the students' primary advisor. The APE academic advisor ensures that the APE project meets the academic requirements of the program, approves the proposal, monitors and evaluates the APE experience, reviews initial drafts of the portfolio and audiovisual materials for use at the oral presentation, attends the oral presentation, and approves/disapproves the student's successful completion of the APE.
2. **APE site mentor:** The site mentor supervises the student on site and provides guidance during regularly scheduled meeting times. The APE site member reviews the portfolio, attends the oral presentation, provides an evaluation of the student's performance, and approves/disapproves the student's successful completion of the APE.