



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™

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Master of Public Health Program

Applied Practice Experience

Handbook

Table of Contents

Student Checklist.....	3
Introduction	4
Applied Practice Experience Process	7
Applied Practice Experience Roles and Responsibilities	7
Forms & Products	10
Appendices	14
Public Health Program Contact Information	14
MPH Foundational Competencies	15
Resources	17
Frequently Asked Questions.....	19

APE Student Checklist:

Finding a site/topic:

- Speak with APE Director and/or any MPH faculty member about opportunities approximately 2-3 months prior to semester when you plan to begin the APE
- Speak with network contacts at local PH organizations about opportunities/needs
- Apply to desired or content-relevant internships (often well in advance of desired APE start date)

Developing an APE project:

- Let APE director know the site you want to work with as soon as possible. APE Director will start Affiliation Agreement process with that site if one does not currently exist
- Work with faculty advisor and preceptor to develop clear objectives, two final products, and at least 5 MPH competencies that will be attained in the APE process

Getting registered:

- Submit APE Learning Agreement signed by student, preceptor, faculty advisor to APE Director
- Submit APE Proposal document to APE Director
- Above documents should be submitted by first class day of the semester (In extenuating circumstances this may be done up to the last day to add classes for a semester)

Conducting your APE:

- Stay in contact with preceptor and faculty advisor about progress
- Submit midpoint evaluation on Sakai approximately midway through project
- Address problems with faculty advisor, preceptor, or APE Director as soon as possible

Finalizing your APE:

- Schedule a presentation for the Department via Patrick Lloyd
- Submit final products to preceptor and faculty advisor before requesting they fill out their respective evaluations
- Be aware of all relevant APE completion deadlines

Receiving a final grade for your APE:

- Submit all products (written products, slideshows, other relevant materials) on Sakai
- Submit student, preceptor and faculty evaluations on Sakai
- Submit e-zine article (one page summary of APE project, may include figures/pictures) for MPH program Web site

Applied Practice Experience, Master of Public Health

Introduction

General

The Applied Practice Experience (APE) is a requirement for the **Master of Public Health Degree at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center**. As in all accredited programs and schools of public health, MPH students must complete an approved, planned, and supervised APE, by engaging in hands-on training with experts in community-based, non-profit, international, or other public health settings. The APE is an integral component of professional training in public health, enabling students to observe and learn from professionals in the field and to apply theoretical learning toward the achievement of practical goals and skills under the supervision of a community preceptor and APE faculty advisor. The APE handbook describes policies, processes, and responsibilities for MPH students, preceptors, and faculty advisors to aid in the fulfillment of the APE.

Students are responsible for initiating the APE process by consulting with their academic advisor, other program faculty, or the APE Director. Ultimately, students will choose the faculty advisor, preceptor, and site. Students will develop objectives and select competencies with the aid of their preceptor and faculty advisor. Students are responsible for obtaining necessary approvals and completing all relevant forms, as detailed in the handbook below. If you have questions or concerns, or need information, please contact the APE director, by referring to *Contact Information* in **Appendix A**.

What defines an APE?

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) defines an APE as **the completion of at least two of the following products**, including “written assignments, journal entries, completed tests, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos, or other digital artifacts of learning.”

Each APE completed for the TTUHSC DPH must include at least one written product. Further, each student APE should include a presentation, often to the Department of Public Health near the conclusion of the APE, although presentations at conferences or to community stakeholders may substitute for a departmental presentation. Further detail on the presentation can be found below.

APE objectives, timeline, and products (as defined above) should be outlined in the learning agreement, and agreed upon by student, faculty advisor, and preceptor at the beginning of the APE.

Objectives

The principle objectives of the APE include:

- Apply knowledge, techniques, and skills acquired during coursework;
- Provide students with practical experience in an applied public health and/or community health setting;
- Develop and apply skills in public health;
- Provide students with an opportunity to learn how one particular organization functions; and
- Allow students to test drive and explore a career choice in public health

Prerequisites

- Students may begin the APE after completing the required core courses (Introduction to Biostatistics, Introduction to Epidemiology, Basic Environmental Health Sciences, Public Health Policy, Introduction to Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Be in good academic standing, with a minimum 3.0 overall GPA
- Have an APE site, preceptor, and project approved by a chosen APE faculty advisor prior to registration and the planned APE start date.
- Students must be eligible to register for the APE the semester they begin the APE.
- Students wishing to begin the APE before completion of the 5 core courses must submit an APE Prerequisite Waiver form, approved by their faculty advisor, the APE Director, and the Dept. Chair

Students should begin APE planning 2-3 months prior to the semester in which they plan to enroll in the APE, including meeting with potential faculty advisor(s) and preceptor to discuss scope and objectives of the project, and managing logistics or approvals with the APE Director. Students must plan ahead financially for the APE and consider that they may or may not be able to work full-time while conducting the APE. Students must register and pay fees for the APE course just as for any other course.

Choosing an APE

The student has the ultimate responsibility, with guidance from faculty and staff, to secure an APE site and preceptor. Students can initiate their APE search in a number of ways. A common starting point is to set up an individual meeting with a prospective faculty advisor or the APE Director to discuss the student's interests. The Department of Public Health Web site also works keep an updated list of potential organizations on the "Applied Practice Experience Opportunities" page. Students may also become aware of opportunities through personal and/or professional contacts, involvement with professional associations such as the SOPHE (Society of Public Health Professionals), the TPHA (Texas Public Health Association) and TRHA (Texas Rural Health Association); the NRHA (National Rural Health Association); and the APHA (American Public Health Association), or through other TTUHSC contacts, such as the West Texas Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program staff.

The APE may involve governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industry, and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings. To be appropriate for APE activities, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may also be appropriate.

Opportunities may include the following:

- Partnering with the local health department or other community focused organization to carry out a predetermined project, such as performing a needs assessment, creating patient education information, creating a policy brief for a specific audience, or otherwise disseminating public health related information to an appropriate demographic.
- An APE or internship completed during a summer or academic term
- Course-based activities (e.g., performing a needed task for a public health or health care organization under the supervision of an APE-approved faculty member as an individual or group of students) within the same semester the student is registered for the APE. An APE developed in a course should have clear parameters that define the project beyond the basic course requirements, as one should not "double count" the same activity for a course and for the APE.
- Activities linked to service learning, as defined by the program, school or university co-curricular activities (e.g., service and volunteer opportunities, such as those organized by a student association)
- A blend of for-credit and/or not-for-credit activities

National Organizations as Potential APE Sites

Numerous national organizations such as the NIH (National Institutes for Health), the CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention), and the HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) offer summer internships and post graduate fellowships. Students should be aware that the application process may begin several months in advance. Students seeking potential APE opportunities should plan ahead to research deadlines for national programs. The ASPPH (Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health) Web site, www.aspph.org, provides links to several national opportunities.

APE Course Requirements

Before starting the APE:

- Placement with a designated preceptor in local, state, federal, private, or international organizations that address significant public health problems.
- Submission of a fully executed *Affiliation Agreement* prior to the start of the APE (Affiliation Agreement is handled by the APE Director, although student should coordinate contact between proposed preceptor and APE Director to facilitate the process).
- APE faculty advisor approval of the APE *Learning Agreement*. The Applied Practice Experience *Learning Agreement* should include at least 5 foundational competencies from Appendix B.
- Submission of the signed *Applied Practice Learning Experience* form to the APE Director prior to start of APE.
- Determine in advance if APE requires IRB or QIRB approval
 - Completion of IRB (Institutional Review Board) or QIRB (Quality Improvement Review Board) submission and obtain approval prior to beginning the APE if necessary.
- Submission of an approved APE *Learning Agreement* to the APE director.
- Registration for APE Course: GSPH 5319. Make sure the correct campus location is selected.

Completing the APE

- Completion of at least two of the following products (as per CEPH requirements), including “written assignments, journal entries, completed tests, projects, videos, multi-media presentations, spreadsheets, websites, posters, photos, or other digital artifacts of learning.” The type of products to be produced should be outlined in the learning agreement, and agreed upon by student, faculty advisor, and preceptor at the beginning of the APE.
- Complete a Midpoint evaluation approximately halfway through the APE process
- Submit preceptor, faculty, and student evaluations at the completion of the APE
- Submission of all materials associated with the two products created for the APE and a one page summary article of the APE for the TTUHSC MPH Web site
- If not otherwise part of the APE process, students must present their APE to the Dept. of Public Health either as a scheduled presentation or during a class. Students who present at a conference or to another forum (e.g., community stakeholders) may count this as their required presentation.

Registration

Students will be registered for GSPH 5319 once they have submitted their signed APE Learning Agreement with written attachment to the APE Director, and the APE Director receives the signed APE Affiliation Agreement from the organization. If all of the aforementioned paperwork is completed before the semester in which the student is enrolled in the APE, the student may start APE activities with preceptor and faculty advisor approval. Students cannot register for the course on their own.

The APE Process

Planning and Preparing for the APE

Most full-time students complete the core courses in their first two semesters, and frequently begin the APE in their third term in the program (e.g., most Fall cohorts begin APE the following summer). Students are first introduced to the APE during new student orientation. Further, students should review this APE Handbook before scheduling to speak with the APE Director or other faculty about opportunities.

The APE Handbook and Web site provide critical information regarding the APE. The Web site contains all the forms related to and required for the APE. Students are responsible for making certain the required forms are completed and submitted to the APE office by designated deadlines.

APE Site Criteria

The APE site must meet the following criteria:

- The site must be an organization, agency or community health center engaged in public health activities, allowing the student to develop skills or competencies included in the academic program (e.g. program planning, evaluation, management, interpretation and application of statistical analysis, policy development).
- The organization provides a preceptor willing and able to spend regularly scheduled time with the student to provide guidance.
- The organization exhibits willingness to gradually increase student responsibility and independence over the duration of the APE.
- The organization makes work space and resources available, as appropriate, with the possibility to do field work or conduct field visits offsite.
- The site is a good match with the needs of the student and offers a valuable learning experience for the student.

APE Roles and Responsibilities

Preceptor Roles

The preceptor is the person at the APE site who agrees to mentor the student and oversee the day-to-day activities and projects the student is involved in. The preceptor should have expertise in assigned project areas, experience and status within the organization, and the ability and desire to supervise and mentor a student.

- The MPH program expects the preceptor to designate appropriate tasks that meet the agency's needs, address the learning objectives and public health competencies, as well as provide opportunities for student growth and leadership in the field of public health.
- The preceptor must commit sufficient time for supervision and instruction. This includes time for brief meetings as needed from day to day and for weekly supervision of at least one hour.
- The preceptor may choose to establish a funding mechanism for travel and other expenses if required for the student's project.
- The preceptor is required to submit an evaluation of the students' performance at the conclusion of the Applied Practice Experience.

Student Responsibilities

During the APE, the preceptor is responsible for the student while at the organization. Professionalism should be reflected in projects and activities performed by the student and in the relationships with administrators and other staff members at the APE site. As the APE progresses, any changes to the goals, activities, or schedule should be submitted in an updated learning agreement, discussed with advisor, preceptor and submitted to the APE Director.

Throughout the APE, students should keep their preceptor, APE faculty advisor, and the APE director informed as to the progress of their APE as well as any obstacles they may encounter.

APE for Online students

All APE requirements and expectations remain the same, however, a few points are important to note:

- For students who aim to pursue a project with an organization that does not have an existing affiliation agreement with TTUHSC, please coordinate with the APE Director to initiate the affiliation agreement process at least 2 months prior to the semester when you plan to start the APE.
- Distance students may travel to Lubbock or Abilene to present APE if desired, but accommodations will be made via Zoom or Skype for students to present to the department from distance locations. These presentations will be accessible to all department faculty, staff, and students, and will count as a “product” toward the APE in the same way that an in-person presentation to the department does.

Student Responsibilities: Preceptor and Site

- Be professional in appearance and conduct.
- Have an initial meeting with the preceptor to discuss expectations including dress code and attendance.
- Adhere to the schedule predetermined with the preceptor.
- Be punctual, and notify the preceptor as soon as possible if the student will be late or absent.
- Practice professional courtesy when communicating with clients and other health professionals.
- Clearly identify self as a student when interacting with the public or other health professionals.
- Keep the preceptor and faculty advisor informed of progress.
- Actively seek feedback and incorporate suggestions into performance improvements
- Ask for additional responsibilities when appropriate.
- Produce quality products for organization as defined in the Learning Agreement
- Evaluate the APE at the end of the experience and review the evaluation with the preceptor.
- Send the preceptor a thank you note at the end of the APE.

APE Faculty Advisor Roles

Faculty connections with the community may lead to potential APE opportunities for students. **Students may select any member of the Department of Public Health faculty to serve as their APE faculty advisor**, ideally selecting the faculty person with expertise most appropriate for the student’s area of interest. Students should establish a relationship with an APE faculty advisor to discuss potential topics, sites, and preceptors, all with attention toward their ultimate career goals. Faculty may distribute opportunities for potential APE projects via the department student email list, or may provide targeted opportunities for students based on specific interests.

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- The APE faculty advisor works with each student to help arrange an appropriate assignment that includes the selection of a qualified preceptor and APE site
 - The APE faculty advisor, in consultation with the preceptor, assists the student in developing an appropriate project with clearly defined objectives
 - The APE faculty advisor is responsible for deciding, along with the student, if an IRB or QIRB submission is appropriate.
 - Instances where IRB is appropriate include use of data from varied research methods including surveys, interviews, and observation; or use of private information, such as medical, family, or employment information that can be readily identified with individuals. If students have questions regarding whether an IRB is appropriate, please consult with your APE faculty advisor to determine the appropriate steps.
 - When an IRB application is necessary, the APE faculty advisor serves as the principal investigator and is responsible for assisting the student in developing a protocol and meeting IRB submission requirements.

During the APE process, the APE faculty advisor serves as a resource for both the student and the preceptor.

- The APE faculty advisor helps track the student's progress and consults with the preceptor when necessary.
- The APE faculty advisor reviews the preceptor's evaluation and the final products in evaluating the student's APE.

APE Director's Role

The APE director's office is the liaison for the student, the preceptor, and the APE faculty advisor. The primary role of the APE director is to:

- Make sure **students are aware of the requirements and expectations of the APE** by providing the mandatory APE orientation prior to the beginning of the APE semester, as well as meeting with students individually with questions, issues, or concerns relating to the APE.
- **Provide resources and leads for students to locate APE opportunities.**
- Work with the preceptor to ensure they are aware of rules and expectations regarding the APE by providing them with the preceptor guidebook.
- Be available for questions or concerns regarding the APE from the student, preceptor, and the APE advisor.
- Track and collect final copies of APE paperwork from all parties.
- Send out reminders to students, preceptors, and APE advisors regarding the APE paperwork and deadlines.
- Post APE grades once all paperwork has been received at the conclusion of the APE.

Handling Difficult Situations

The APE surpasses strengthening knowledge alone; the APE should allow students to develop professionally and help to build a strong work ethic in the student. Part of the student's professional development may involve dealing with challenging situations. When difficulties arise between the student and the preceptor or others in the organization, the first step should be to address the issue with the parties involved and then try to resolve the issue. Often what seem like unsolvable problems are not hard to address with a few slight adjustments.

If the problem persists or cannot be resolved by talking with the preceptor, the student should contact the APE director or their APE faculty advisor at any time for assistance. The APE director may intervene in

situations that seem difficult and offer mediation between the student and the preceptor and/or the organization.

Students are at their APE sites at the invitation of the organization and the preceptor. Both parties reserve the right to terminate the Applied Practice Experience at any time. Of course, if after working with the APE director, the situation remains untenable; the student may leave the APE. This is a last resort and still requires follow-up with the preceptor in order to leave on a good note. Sometimes lack of awareness can lead to unmet expectations.

Forms and Final Products

Learning Agreement

The effectiveness of the Applied Practice Experience is greatly enhanced when the student, preceptor, and advisor seek to clearly define the learning objectives, competencies, and final products for the Applied Practice Experience. The student has the responsibility to ensure all information is complete on the learning agreement. If the learning agreement is not completed thoroughly, the learning agreement will be returned to the student and the Applied Practice Experience start date may be delayed.

Students should communicate with the preceptor and the Applied Practice Experience advisor via email, a conference call, or in a meeting to complete the learning agreement. Once determined, the learning agreement must be signed by all parties including APE faculty advisor, preceptor, and student. **A copy of the agreement should be retained by all parties** for future reference and monitoring.

Instructions on the Learning Agreement form detail how to write the APE Proposal that will be submitted with the Learning Agreement prior to registration for the APE. The proposal includes a summary of the APE organization, objectives, activities, and competencies to be attained during the APE. An APE must include at least 5 competencies from the list of 22 foundational MPH competencies. Students may select additional competencies from the list of 22 foundational competencies or 5 TTUHSC program specific competencies. A clear proposal should ideally list the competencies to be attained with description of expected activities that student will carry out to fulfill each competency.

The learning agreement and proposal will be submitted to the APE Director in order to enroll in the APE course, and will subsequently be uploaded in Sakai when the semester starts. The learning agreement acts as a contract, protecting the student and building on concepts set forth in the original position description. A student may not start the Applied Practice Experience until the completed and signed learning agreement is submitted and approved by the APE Director.

APE Deadlines

If you are completing the APE in the semester in which you plan to graduate, please follow these deadlines.

- APE completion must adhere to the current SPPH calendar. Please note that for graduating students, the deadline for APE completion is often at least one month before the end of the semester.
- Presentations should be scheduled at least 1 week in advance. Failure to schedule at least one week in advance may jeopardize your ability to graduate on time.
- Schedule a presentation at least 2 weeks before the last official class day of the semester, with presentation to be held no later than 1 week before the last official class day of the semester.
- Submit all completed materials to preceptor and faculty advisor no later than one week before the APE deadline stated on the SPPH calendar.
- Submit all final materials on Sakai no later than 5 PM on the last official class day of the semester, including student evaluation and Summary/E-zine article
- Ensure that faculty advisor and preceptor submit evaluations are submitted no later than 5 PM on the last official class day of the semester

If you are completing the APE in a semester in which you do not plan to graduate:

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- Schedule a presentation at least 2 weeks before the last official class day of the semester, with presentation to be held no later than 1 week before the last official class day of the semester.
 - Submit all completed materials to preceptor and faculty advisor no later than one week before the APE presentation.
 - Submit all final materials on Sakai no later than 5 PM on the last official class day of the semester, including student evaluation and Summary/E-zine article
 - Ensure that faculty advisor and preceptor submit evaluations are submitted no later than 5 PM on the last official class day of the semester

Evaluations

There are four evaluations required to be completed and submitted at the conclusion of the APE. All evaluations must be completed for the following (examples can be found on the Web site):

- 1. Midpoint Student Evaluation**
- 2. Final Student Evaluation**
- 3. Preceptor Evaluation**
- 4. APE Faculty Advisor Evaluation and Products & Competencies report**

Students should request an evaluation from their preceptor and faculty advisor only after all APE activities are completed and all final products have been submitted to the preceptor and faculty advisor.

One Page Summary/Abstract

All students are required to complete and submit for online publication on the DPH Web site, a written article describing their APE project. Students should discuss the expectations of the article with their APE advisor. Students should summarize the project, including aims and outcomes. Pictures, tables, and/or figures are strongly encouraged and should be integrated into the summary so that it can be published as a single page PDF on the Web site.

Presentation

All students are required to complete a presentation for the APE. In order to deliver a high-quality APE presentation, please be sure to include the following guidelines:

- At least 20-25 minutes long. Longer presentations are acceptable, but will be stopped by a moderator at 45 minutes to leave time for questions.
- A brief overview of your project, what you did and who you worked with and why you chose both
- A brief overview of your products
- A list of the competencies you chose and how you attained them
- Any positives, negatives and obstacles regarding your project and how you overcame them
- The results of your project and whether or not your work can be continued by a future student
- Any MPH courses that benefitted you during your project

No show policy for scheduled APE presentations: For virtual presentations, students will be sent a zoom invite to their TTUHSC email in the week preceding the presentation. Students who have not received the invite by the day before their presentation should contact the APE Director for guidance on where to

find the virtual meeting. Students are encouraged to log in to the zoom meeting 3-5 minutes prior to the start of the presentation. A 10-minute grace period will be given in the event that a student does not show up to the virtual meeting on time. After 10 minutes, a present faculty member will announce that the meeting is being canceled due to lack of a presenter and the virtual meeting will be ended. Outside of extenuating circumstances, failure to present is considered a major deficiency in meeting the expectations of the APE and will result in a grade of "F." Failure to show up for a scheduled in-person presentation will follow the same policies.

Activity Log

CEPH guidelines no longer require a minimum number of hours for the APE. Rather, the APE is project based, meaning that students propose a reasonable set of objectives and end products that will be completed in the course of the APE. When the student believes that these products are finished and objectives have been met, he or she should consult with the preceptor and faculty advisor to ensure that all parties are in agreement that the APE is finished. The previous minimum of 180 hours is a good guidepost in regard to the scope of a project, once one considers planning meetings, site hours, writing and project development, and presentation(s). Students are advised to keep track of their general timeline of activities, but the department no longer requires a formal hour log to be submitted.

Grading

The APE is graded Pass/Fail based on the preceptor, student, and faculty advisor evaluations, the submission of all materials relating to the APE products by the appropriate deadline. The APE director submits the course grade upon receipt of all materials and evaluations from the student and other parties. Student must complete a one-page project summary (pictures, table, or figures are encouraged), which will be published on the TTUHSC MPH Web site.

Student may receive a grade of *PR* if all work is not completed within a single semester. The APE Director will grant the *PR* as long as the student is making reasonable progress on the APE. The preceptor and faculty advisor must agree that the student should continue APE work beyond the current semester. Failure to complete the APE in the subsequent semester from date of registration in the course will result in a grade of "F" for the APE. As per TTUHSC registrar policies, a grade of *PR* can only be continued for one additional semester, meaning that an APE should be completed within two semester's time, barring substantial unforeseen circumstances. Once all materials are submitted and requirements are met by the deadline, the grade of *PR* will be replaced with a Pass/Fail grade as determined by the APE Director.

Two (or more) Products

As detailed above, each APE requires a minimum of two products. These products may vary in nature, and should be clearly defined at the beginning of the APE and agreed upon by the student, preceptor, and faculty advisor. At the completion of the APE, students should submit all products relevant to the project to the APE Director. These may include reports, spreadsheets, informational materials, presentation slides, or other digital artifacts.

Appendix A

Department of Public Health APE Contacts

Applied Practice Experience Director

Jeff Dennis, PhD

3601 4th St., Stop 9430, Room 2B248

Lubbock, TX 79430

T: (806) 743-6812

Jeff.Dennis@ttuhsc.edu

Associate Director of Student Services

Patrick Lloyd, M.Ed.

1718 Pine St.

Abilene, TX 79601-3044

T: 325-696-0413

Patrick.lloyd@ttuhsc.edu

Appendix B

MPH Competencies

All APE projects should pick at least 5 of the competencies below to fulfill in the course of the APE.

MPH Foundational Competencies
<i>Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health</i>
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
<i>Public Health and Health Care Systems</i>
5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care and public health 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
<i>Planning and Management to Promote Health</i>
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 programs
9. Design a population-based project, program or intervention
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs and policies
<i>Policy in Public Health</i>
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 or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity
<i>Leadership</i>
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
<i>Communication</i>
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

<i>Inter-professional Practice</i>
21. Perform effectively on inter-professional teams
<i>Systems Thinking</i>
22. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue

Appendix C

Guide to Writing Quality Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are statements describing the work that will be performed and what the student expects to gain from the experience. They are written with guidance from the preceptor and the APE faculty advisor. Throughout the APE, the learning objectives will guide the student's progress and allow the preceptor and APE faculty advisor to evaluate the student's performance.

Each objective should be a brief, clear statement that explains the tasks that will be performed and what the student will be evaluated on. Objectives should be SMART:

- SPECIFIC – Include details that define the goal
- MEASURABLE – An objective that can be quantified and can easily be evaluated
- ACCEPTABLE – all parties (preceptor, advisor and student) should agree on what will be accomplished at the APE site.
- REALISTIC – each objective must be practical and attainable
- TIME-BOUND – some objectives will have to be completed before others, and all need to be completed by the end of the APE

Sample Statements

- *Develop a survey for the pregnant teens and administer the survey to 200 teens in rural communities statewide during 10 weeks.*
- *Analyze data using SPSS on the level of anaerobic bacteria in wastewater treatment systems by (date).*
- *Gain experience in collecting data on the incidence of leukemia in 50 Native American children during the first ten weeks of the Applied Practice Experience.*

Work plan and Timelines

There are examples of a work plan and timeline template that are useful in developing the Learning Agreement available on the Applied Practice Experience Web site.

Writing a Final Report

Students often complete a final written report as one of their two products, although different APEs may dictate different final products. The below information is from a previous version of the handbook, but is being retained in the Appendix for student reference.

The final report should summarize the student's APE with details of specific experiences and how the APE is important to the field of public health. Students should follow the guidelines below in structuring their report. The student should discuss the expectations of their report carefully with their APE faculty advisor. The report length should be sufficient to cover the expected content carefully. Be sure to include appropriate references and appendices.

INTRODUCTION

- Describe the nature of your Applied Practice Experience (e.g., whether it is a descriptive project, experimental project, research project, or survey).

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- Very briefly, describe the site and organizational unit where the APE took place, its primary mission, and its relationship to the overall organizational structure of the agency. Describe services provided, programs and public health objectives, and specific population groups targeted.
 - Describe the duties specifically related to the APE in the context of the entire organization.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- State the purpose of the APE (e.g., proving a hypothesis, analyzing a problem, completing an evaluation, etc.). What was the significance of the issue worked on? Why did this need to be addressed?
- Discuss the objectives and activities completed to meet each one.
- Outline the problem and the methods used to define and address the problem.

RESULTS

- Describe the outcomes and products of the APE
- Discuss how the activities of the APE led to the fulfillment of the selected competencies
- What were the most important or surprising findings?
- How does this work impact the future of this public health issue?
- Summarize recommendations

EVALUATION & CONCLUSION

- Provide a careful evaluation of your APE.
- Was it a valuable learning experience? Why or why not?
- How did it compare with your expectations?
- What types of classroom skills were you able to employ in the field?
- What did the experience teach you about the world of public health practice?

In addition to the final report, include relevant materials developed during the APE, (e.g., draft or final reports, surveys, questionnaires, etc.) as appendices. If you worked primarily on a research project, a literature review relevant to the topic should be included.

Your title page should consist of your name, division, cohort year (year you entered the College), project title (as stated in your learning agreement), preceptor's name and organization, advisor's name and date of submission.

APPENDICES

- Instruments developed and utilized during the APE (such as surveys, focus group questions, etc.)
- Graphs or data analysis results
- Pictures
- Organization description
- Other supplemental information referred to in the final report

For advice on fulfilling the above requirements, students should consult with their APE faculty advisor.

Appendix D

Frequently asked questions

Q: Who is my APE faculty advisor?

A: The faculty advisor for your APE should be selected by the student. The faculty advisor may be a member of the department of public health primary or secondary faculty. Ideally, the faculty advisor should be a person who is best qualified to advise a project on the topic you are working on.

Q: Are my MPH academic advisor and my APE faculty advisor the same person?

A: Students are assigned an academic advisor and faculty mentor before starting the program. This person helps students register for classes, update the degree plan, and set a graduation timeline. Alternatively, the APE faculty advisor is selected by the student based on area of expertise relating to the APE. Your faculty mentor may also be your APE advisor, but there is no requirement that they be the same.

Q: Can I complete the APE and the ILE in the same semester?

A: Yes, these may be done concurrently, but please be aware of the time demands of completing both in the same semester.

Q: Can I do an APE at my current place of work?

A: Yes, the APE can be completed at your place of work, although the project should be clearly defined as something outside of your normal job duties. That is, one should not select an APE with objectives that merely require carrying out one's typical daily job duties. Students in this position should be cognizant of the fact that carrying out an APE at his/her place of work will require a preceptor, who may or may not already be that person's superior. An APE that meets this criterion should clearly lay out how your project differs from your job duties.

Q: Is the APE a research project?

A: No, the APE is not intended to be a research project. Certain APEs may require the implementation of different types of research or assessment tools, but the ultimate aim of the project is to produce a set of products toward the goal of community engagement. Although it is feasible to publish some component of an APE in an academic journal, this is not the ultimate aim of the project.

Q: Can a faculty member be my preceptor?

A: No, the preceptor should be someone who is not a member of the primary or secondary faculty of the Department of Public Health.

Q: Does my preceptor need to hold an MPH degree?

A: No, the preceptor should be someone actively involved in some type of public health practice in the community, whose experience in their position provides a resource beyond the expertise found on the Public Health faculty.

Q: How do I find an APE site?

A: This process can start many places. Students may have a clear idea of the organization and preceptor they want to work with, including existing contacts that facilitate this process. In this case, the student should consult with their desired faculty advisor or the APE director to begin the process of developing a formal agreement.

Students who do not have an idea of their APE topic should arrange to meet with a potential faculty advisor and/or the APE Director. This meeting should explore the student's interests and goals for the APE, and the faculty member can begin to suggest potential contacts for the student to talk with to explore potential preceptors and sites. Students should talk to potential preceptors about the needs of their organization before finalizing an APE project, as the intent of the experience is for students to develop a practice project that addresses the needs of the community in some form. The exploratory process can be time consuming, especially when a site or APE topic does not become immediately clear. Students should plan their APE planning accordingly based on their goals for completion of the APE.

Potential APE projects may occasionally be advertised to students during classes or over the student email listserv, but these opportunities are distributed on a case by case basis, and a student should not wait for these announcements to start searching for an APE site.

Q: Can I start the APE before the semester in which I plan to enroll in it?

A: Students may begin the APE as soon as the APE Director receives the completed Learning Agreement, signed by all relevant parties, and once the community organization has formally agreed to the Affiliation Agreement (this is handled largely by the APE Director). As such, yes, a student may start the APE before he or she is technically enrolled in GSPH 5319, but not before the aforementioned paperwork is completed and submitted.

Q: Can an APE be done as a group project?

A: Yes, two or more students may propose a group APE. The details on workload and expectations should be clarified with the faculty advisor and preceptor. The end products may include joint projects, but the faculty and preceptor must assess individual student attainment of competencies on final evaluations.

Q: Can an APE be an extension of a class project?

A: Yes, a student may take a course project and develop it to become an APE. Please be mindful of the fact that the APE should be clearly defined to extend beyond the coursework. That is, coursework cannot be “double counted” for both the course hours and as one’s APE, but a separate, but related project may serve as an APE that is an extension of prior coursework.