

Preceptor Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Applied Practice Experience at the School of Public Health?

An Applied Practice (AP) Experience is required of all MPH students. The purpose is for students to acquire experience and develop practical skills in the application of public health competencies and concepts. In prior years, the AP Experience has been referred to as an internship, field experience, and practicum.

What public health competencies must a student attain during their AP Experience?

A student must identify at least five public health competencies, three of which must be foundational and one for their division and/or concentration. A [list of competencies](#) by division is located on the APE Forms and Documents page of the AP Experience website. Once internship activities are identified, students work with their preceptor and applied practice experience advisor to select the public health competencies most relevant to the work they'll be completing.

Are there examples of AP Experience activities or deliverables suitable for MPH students?

Activities range depending on site needs and student interest. However, an [example of deliverables](#) can be found on the applied practice experience website.

Can students complete the AP Experience remotely?

Yes, students can complete the AP Experience in person, remotely, or a hybrid model of onsite and remote work. A [tip sheet for Remote AP Experiences](#) can be found on the Preceptor Resources page of the SPH website.

How many hours must students complete on site to get credit for the AP Experience?

MPH students are required to complete 192-320 hours working on the AP Experience. These hours can be done in person or remotely. The schedule and timeframe in which the student completes work is determined between the preceptor and student.

Are there sample student work schedules of how best to complete the required hours?

A student's weekly schedule is agreed upon between the student and preceptor depending on the site's needs and student's availability. It is suggested that position descriptions include the number of hours a student is expected to work weekly so students can determine if the needs of the site match their availability before applying for the position. Weekly hours may range anywhere from 8 hours/week to 40 hours/week. Although many students plan to complete their hours within one semester (approximately 16 weeks or less), there are some students and sites that choose to extend the AP Experience over two or more semesters.

What are the qualifications of a preceptor?

Preceptors should have an advanced degree in public health, be at a mid-management level or higher and have at least three years of experience in the field. Although it is highly desirable that preceptors possess all these qualifications, the reality is that some experienced public health agency leaders may not meet one or more of these qualifications. **Individuals who have**

a related degree and/or the equivalent in terms of public health experience may also be appropriate preceptors. The preceptor must be approved by the appropriate School of Public Health division prior to the placement of a student. A resume/CV may also be requested to help determine preceptor qualifications.

What are the responsibilities of a preceptor?

The preceptor is the primary supervisor of the student at the applied practice experience site. The preceptor

- assists the student in completing the Learning Agreement that outlines student learning objectives, tasks, and products.
- orients the student to the agency by providing, or arranging for, orientation regarding agency mission, policies, programs, procedures, and personnel.
- ensures the student has the resources to be successful in the placement setting, including access to a desk, telephone, and computer as well as other resources necessary for the completion of assigned tasks.
- provides the student with the opportunity to gain a broad perspective on the public health work of the agency as well as exposure to and more in-depth involvement with a specific project.
- meets with the student on a regular basis to provide feedback and supervision.
(Responsibility for specific task supervision may be delegated to another professional staff member as long as the preceptor maintains oversight and continues to meet with the student regularly.)
- communicates with the AP Experience Advisor or Assistant Director of Internship Programs, particularly if problems or issues arise with student performance or if the agency is unable to meet the needs of the student.
- completes “Preceptor’s Evaluation of Student Performance.”
- meets with the student to review “Preceptor’s Evaluation of Student Performance” at the conclusion of the AP Experience.

What are the responsibilities of the student during the AP Experience?

- Complete the AP Experience Registration Form/Learning Agreement, with input from the Applied Practice Experience Advisor and preceptor on appropriate activities and competencies.
- Adhere to agency standards, policies, and procedures including dress, personal conduct, and attendance for a work schedule agreed upon with the preceptor.
- Regularly meet with the preceptor for supervision and feedback.
- Submit reflective journaling assignments via Blackboard (one per each 40 hours of work in the placement).
- Provide “Preceptor’s Evaluation of Student Performance” form to preceptor for completion.
- Complete “Student Evaluation of Field Practicum,” as well as a summary report regarding the applied practice experience.

What are the responsibilities of the AP Advisor during the AP Experience?

- Work with students on planning applied practice experiences to meet their professional goals.
- Review AP Experience Registration Form/Learning Agreement forms and assists students in refining learning activities, deliverables, and competencies.
- Review and sign learning agreement and registration forms.
- Assist student with IRB proposals and forms, where required.
- Serve as instructor for IPHS 650 applied practice experience class.
- Act as academic and administrative liaison for students and preceptors to enhance student learning and resolve problems.
- Review reflective journals and provides feedback.
- Review student Summary Reports.
- Assess student's performance with input from the preceptor, and determine/submit the final grade (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory).

Does an organization need to sign a formal agreement with UIC to bring on a student for their AP Experience?

The level of formality of an agreement is determined on a case-by-case basis. Please follow up with the Asst. Dir. of Internship Programs to determine next steps.

What needs to be included in an AP Experience position description?

Much like the information included in a job posting, the following information can be helpful to include in a position description for the AP Experience:

- Organizational Information/About Us/website info
- Position description
- Expected start/end date
- Number of minimum weekly hours required
- In-person, remote, or hybrid requirements
- Required and desired qualifications
- Compensation Details (if applicable)
- Application process- next steps if interested in the position
- Contact information

Are students placed at sites or do organizations get to select the student?

The School of Public Health does not place students at sites. Finding an AP Experience is much like the job search process. Organizations can provide a position description to the Asst. Dir. of Internship Programs which are then shared with students on the AP Experience website. It is then up to the student to identify and reach out to sites that are of interest to them. How sites select students is up to the individual organization.

How does an organization work with HR to onboard a student?

Some AP Experience sites have students go through their HR department for screening and interviews. Other sites may not need to involve HR. It is up to the individual organization as to what process needs to be followed to select and onboard students.

Are students paid while completing their AP Experience?

The AP Experience is not required to be a paid experience, but it is allowed. If there is payment involved (either hourly or provided as a stipend) the preceptor and student must agree to the arrangements/disbursement of the payment on their own.

How much experience do students have in public health prior to the applied practice experience?

MPH students come with a variety of skills and experience. Some begin the MPH program having worked in the field of public health for many years. Others may be transitioning from other professions or just beginning their careers.

To help prepare them for the AP Experience, it is required that all students understand key public health concepts and analytical skills. Before enrolling in the AP Experience, all students must complete the MPH core curriculum (including IPHS 401- Determinants of Population Health, IPHS 402- Analytic and Research Methods in Public Health, and IPHS 403- Public Health Systems, Policy, and Management). Only students in good academic standing are allowed to begin their AP Experience.

If I have general questions about the AP Experience or becoming a site for students, who do I contact?

Any questions regarding the AP Experience or how to become a preceptor can be directed to the Asst. Dir. of Internship Programs- Michele Rodriguez Taylor who can be reached at mrtaylor@uic.edu.

If I have questions or concerns about the student's work while completing the AP Experience, whom should I contact?

If after speaking with the student directly, their behavior or quality of work remains a concern, please reach out to the AP Advisor assigned to the student. Concerns can also be addressed with the Asst. Dir. of Internship Programs.