

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Advisor and Advisee Responsibilities</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Field Experience Guidelines</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Special Project Guidelines</b>	<b>Page 3</b>

### Advisee Responsibilities in Public Health Practice

1. Be familiar with the MPH in Public Health Practice guidelines including curriculum requirements. Students need to be familiar with procedures, dates and deadlines.
2. Be aware that you must have a faculty advisor assigned to you by the time you have completed 21 credits
3. Plan your schedule so that you are able to register for at least 2 credits in the semester(s) you want to take your core comprehensive exam. All students need to be registered for at least 2 credits in order to be approved to take their comprehensive exam as posted in the USF Graduate Catalog. Students must also be registered for 2 credits in the semester they intend to graduate.
4. Communicate with faculty teaching courses about specific course issues. (Seek advisor's help if you are unable to resolve problems.)
5. Keep advisor informed if you have any significant changes/reasons that may impede your progress.
6. Communicate with advisor your interests and plans related to field experience and special project.
7. Contact the Public Health Practice Program office if you have non-academic concerns or difficulties with your course. Use your academic advisor for academic concerns or questions.
8. Contact the Public Health Practice Program office at 813-974-6606 if you need to change your advisor.

### Advisor Responsibilities in Public Health Practice

1. Be familiar with the Public Health Practice MPH guidelines for special project and field experience.
2. Encourage and guide the student as they develop and identify their field experience and special project interests and goals.
3. Read, approve and Issue grades for the field experience and special project.
4. Monitor student's academic progress.
5. Be reasonably available to answer student's questions, either by email, phone or by appointment in person.

<p><b>Advisor Responsibilities for Students in the Distance Learning Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign forms when student needs approval to register.</li> <li>• Approve any change in student's support courses (electives), if needed.</li> <li>• Approve field experience site. Refer student to field placement coordinator for assistance and appropriate paperwork.</li> <li>• Approve special project topic and format. In consultation with student, arrange for a second reader (<u>all practice students are required to have a second reader</u>).</li> <li>• Guide student through special project. Read, approve and submit final grade for special project. Submit approved/graded original or copy of special project to Academic Affairs office. The paper will be kept in student's permanent file.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advisor Responsibilities for Students in the Weekend MPH Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If student chooses not to do the group field experience, advisor will need to approve field experience site. Refer student to field placement coordinator for assistance and appropriate paperwork.</li> <li>• Approve special project topic and format. In consultation with student, arrange for a second reader (<u>all practice students are required to have a second reader</u>).</li> <li>• Guide student through special project as needed. Read, approve and submit final grade for special project. Submit approved/graded copy (or original) of special project to Academic Affairs office. The paper will be kept in student's permanent file.</li> </ul>
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## **Mission**

The mission of the field placement and the special project experience is for the MPH practice student to achieve an enhanced level of professional and educational growth. **(Please note: The field placement experience and the special project are two separate projects. Students can choose to link them via a related topic, but this is not required.)**

## **Goals**

The goal of the field experience is to provide an opportunity to experience a reality based “hands-on” approach in an area which may become the focus of their future practice.

The special project encompasses the ultimate goal of the program which is the merging of scholarship and theory with practice. A major paper is required for fulfillment of the special project credit hours.

# **Field Experience Guidelines**

The field placement is an integral part of the academic experience. Students learn the many issues and obstacles presented to the public health professional, and are allowed to experience the context within which public health practice occurs. The field placement should occur near the end of the coursework except in those cases where the advisor feels additional experience should come early in the program.

## **A. Responsibility of the Student**

1. Meet with faculty advisor via telephone, email, or in-person to develop goals for the field placement. The student should register for one credit hour of field placement for the semester in which the field placement will occur. Each credit hour will require at least 45 hours of field placement activity.
2. Meet with the prospective field placement supervisor and update faculty advisor to finalize choice.
3. Prepare a formal, written field placement plan with stated educational objectives. Field Experience packets can be obtained from the Field Placement Coordinator and on the website at <http://publichealth.usf.edu/academicaffairs/fe/>
4. Have the field placement plan approved by the Field Placement Coordinator, advisor, and field placement site supervisor.
5. Prepare a final report on the field placement including an evaluation by the site supervisor. Copies will be reviewed and approved by the field placement site supervisor, Field Placement Coordinator and faculty advisor.

## **B. Responsibility of the Faculty Advisor**

1. Meet with student via telephone, email, or in-person to confirm the number of credit hours required for the field placement based on the student’s prior experience working in a public health practice setting or related area. A minimum of 1 credit hour is required.
2. Meet with student via telephone, email, or in-person prior to field placement site selection to develop goals and outline of educational and experiential objectives.
3. Review and approve the prospective field placement, and the formal written field placement plan.
4. Consult with the student and field placement supervisor to address and resolve any issues and problems.
5. Evaluate the final report of the student.

6. Participate in the final evaluation of the field placement experience.
7. Coordinate the formal process of evaluating the student's field placement experience. The student, the field placement supervisor, and the faculty advisor complete the evaluation.

### **C. Responsibilities of the Field Placement Site Supervisor**

1. Meet with the faculty advisor via telephone, email, or in-person to identify the types of work, educational activities available, and provide updated information on the field placement site.
2. Review and approve the student's field placement plan.
3. Provide direct line supervision and ongoing regular interaction to the student intern.
4. Respond to requests by the faculty advisor for updates on the status of the placement. This includes being accessible to help resolve issues or problems that might arise.
5. Coordinate the formal process of evaluating the student's field placement experience. The student, the field placement supervisor, and the faculty advisor complete the evaluation.

## **Special Project**

The special project is an opportunity for the student to utilize the academic preparation that he or she has had to study a problem, carry out a project, analyze a policy, or conduct other supervised activities, which result in a final scholarly product. The purpose of the special project is to provide an opportunity to develop research skills through the conduct of an individual effort on a specific health-related topic or issue. The special project is intended to allow the student to apply public health knowledge and critical thinking skills, in order to investigate or analyze complex public health practice issues.

MPH Practice students should register for 3 credit hours of special project as they near the end of their program. Project design should begin earlier than this registration, and with consent of their faculty advisor, the student may implement the project concurrently with the field experience. Each special project must have a contract form signed by their faculty advisor which specifies the nature of the project and designates an anticipated completion date. This contract form must be signed and submitted at the time of registration for the special project. Work may not begin on the special project before the faculty advisor has been selected (faculty advisor must be selected by the completion of 21 credits) and the form submitted to the College. In addition, students must also complete any HIPPA training and Protection of Human Subjects credentialing required by the College of Public Health. IRB applications or requests for IRB exemption must be submitted on ALL special projects. Further information regarding the IRB process can be found on the website for research compliance at <http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb.htm>.

### **A. Assignment of Project Supervisor**

Each special project will have both a faculty project supervisor (first reader) and a second reader. The student's faculty advisor will ordinarily supervise the project. In the event that the content areas of the project are more appropriate for another faculty member, alternate arrangements can be made within the College. In those cases, it is expected that the faculty advisor will serve as second reader. In cases where the advisor is the project supervisor, the second faculty reader may be selected on the basis of proposal content from within the College.

### **B. Project Topics**

The student's faculty advisor will discuss with the student the possible special project topics. It is expected to be a topic relevant to the student's area of professional interest. The topic should be one in which the student can contribute to the existing body of knowledge about an issue, program, or

policy or confirm existing data through replication of earlier work. Students may select from a wide range of project types. These include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- analysis of data which relates to the student's field experience or other research activity
- evaluation of a program chosen either through field experience or other contact
- analysis of a policy issue related to the student's area of professional interest
- formative research conducted as part of a social marketing project
- pretesting and revision of informational materials
- needs assessments
- development and/or implementation of an appropriate public health program

### C. Project Proposal

A written proposal and a one-page abstract briefly describing the idea should be submitted to the student's faculty advisor prior to approval of the project. The proposal should be written following careful discussion and planning with the project supervisor. By the time the proposal is completed, few questions should remain about its acceptability. The proposal is expected to be the final opportunity for the student and the project supervisor to decide on the scope and nature of the project. The proposal must be formally approved, in writing, by the project supervisor before the student begins the project.

The proposal will form the foundation of the special project report. The proposal should include 3 sections: (1) introduction, statement of problem and purpose of study; (2) extensive literature review; and (3) methods for conducting or proceeding with special project.

a. **Elements of a Proposal:** Proposals for research projects should include the following components. These are outlined in the order that they should appear in the proposal.

- (1). *Statement of the problem, background, purpose:* This section of the proposal delineates the issue that the student is studying. The statement should specifically identify the question that is being addressed. It should include background information on why this is an important issue or an issue of interest to a public health researcher. Included in this background information might be policies, legislation, program changes or other bodies of information that contribute to an understanding of the significance of the research. The purpose of the study should be clear. The intent of the study to contribute to the general knowledge in the literature should be specified, if appropriate. How this data might be used is of critical interest. For example, if the content of the study is to determine whether public health nurse home visits increase or decrease later attendance at child health clinics, then the purpose of the project might be to make recommendations to public health providers about the benefits of continuing or discontinuing home visits.
- (2). *Literature review:* A complete literature review should be included in the proposal. This literature review will help to focus the study and ascertain whether similar types of studies have been previously done. The review should include not only a description of the literature, but also a review of the adequacy of the literature. For example, in reviewing a topic one might find that there are a number of articles about the topic but that all of them are theoretical. No quantitative studies have been conducted to test the theories that have been presented. In other situations, it may be clear that a few studies exist in the area of interest, but most are improperly conducted. Often, one will find that the conclusions drawn from the data analysis are controversial or open to debate. All these issues should be described in the literature review. The literature review should be scientific, preferably from peer reviewed journals. Although important information about trends and policies might be found in popular literature, this should be mentioned in the introduction or conclusions, not in the literature review, unless the article is specifically evaluating the impact or trends of popular literature.
- (3). *Proposed methods:* The final section of the proposal should include the methods proposed for the project, including methods for collecting information or data and methods of analysis. Human subjects review (IRB) approval is required for any project where data is used from

human subjects (data through intervention or interaction or identifiable private information). A number of approvals are available, some of which require only submission of information, where as others require appearance before the full board. The guidelines for the human subjects review board can be found at <http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb.htm>.

b. **Policy Analysis Special Project Proposal:** Proposal for policy analysis projects should include the following components. These are outlined in the order that they should appear in the proposal.

- (1). *Statement (restatement) of the problem.* When analyzing a policy the first step is a restatement of the problem that the policy was designed to address. It should include background on the question at the time the policy was developed, and should include statements about why this is an important issue for a public health researcher. Issues, which might be discussed, may include legislative intent, political perceptions, data supporting the existence of various problems, etc.
- (2). *Statement of analysis criteria to be used in the analysis.* These criteria are the values that will be utilized to analyze the policy. They will cover both the values of the researcher and the values of the policy developer. Examples include values such as equity, liberty, fraternity, efficiency, justice; rights, such as privacy, self-determination, etc.
- (3). *Synthesis of information:* this section will include the literature review and available data on the topic, including historical data.
- (4). *Alternative strategies:* the alternative strategies are the most realistic possibilities for policy implementation. The analyst should select those strategies that seem to have been most successful or which should have been tried. Two or three strategies (no more) should be selected for analysis.
- (5). *Criteria for strategy choice:* the student will select the means for analyzing the different criteria, identifying the factors, which they will utilize to assess the strategies. Examples include: cost, effectiveness, and political feasibility.

c. **Proposal for Developing and Implementing Public Health Programs:** Proposals for developing and implementing health education programs should include the following components. These are outlined in the order that they should appear in the proposal.

- (1). *Statement of the problem, background and purpose:* The student needs to clearly delineate the need for this program, the target population, and the appropriate setting(s). Students should ask themselves what gap this program fills in public health.
- (2). *Literature review:* The student should have a complete literature review in the proposal. This should include information pertaining not only to the program but also prior successful and unsuccessful programs.
- (3). *Proposed methods:* The methods for developing the program should be thoroughly described. This description will be the major part of the proposal. Plans should also be described as to how the project will be implemented and methods of process, impact, and outcome evaluations.

#### **D. Length and Format of the Special Project Report:**

There is no specific length requirement of the special project report. The length will be dependent upon the nature of the study. The paper should be prepared in American Psychological Association (APA) style.

Students are encouraged to design their report in a manner which will enable them to easily convert the report to a paper suitable for publication. The student's project supervisor shall assist the student in manuscript development in cases where immediate publication is indicated. Recommended outlines for various types of special projects are given below.

**a. Policy Analyses**

- (1) Policy Statement
- (2) Statement of the Problem that the Policy Addresses
- (3) Analysis Criteria (values)
- (4) Synthesis of Information, including literature and data review
- (5) Criteria for Strategy Choice, Strategy Choice, and Strategy Analysis
- (6) Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations
- (7) References
- (8) Addendum including Institutional Review Board Reviews where needed

Policy analyses do not always require primary data collection. The strategy analysis may take place using existing data and literature, which focus on existing strategies for implementation of the policy. Of primary importance will be discussion of whether the policy responded to the problem that it was intended to meet.

**b. Research, Pretesting and Public Health Program Development Projects**

- (1) Statement of the Problem, Background, Purpose
- (2) Literature Review
- (3) Methods
- (4) Implementation and Evaluation results
- (5) Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations
- (6) References
- (7) Addendum including Institutional Review Board (IRB) review where needed

**E. Grading of Special Projects**

The faculty project supervisor, with consultation from the second faculty reader, will read, approve and grade the final project as represented in the written document. Specific letter grades will not be assigned.

**F. A Summary of How to Do Your Special Project**

- Step 1: Discuss the project with your faculty advisor. With your advisor, decide on a topic and on the persons who will be your first and second readers. Your advisor usually will serve as either first or second reader.
- Step 2: Begin working with your advisor/reader to develop your project's overall design; register for credit for special project work and sign a contract with your faculty advisor.
- Step 3: Conduct your literature review. Finalize your project purpose and method of data collection. Prepare a final proposal for presentation to your first and second reader. This proposal should include the statement of the problem with background and purpose, the review of the literature and your anticipated method of analysis.
- Step 4: Submit your study to IRB for approval or exemption as indicated.
- Step 5: Conduct your project.
- Step 6: Write the final sections of your report including the data, their analysis, your summary, conclusions, and recommendations and submit the report to your readers for approval and grading.
- Step 7: Submit the report for publication if appropriate.