

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
School of Public Health



MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Internship Guidebook

MPH Internship Overview

The MPH Internship provides an opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in a public health practice setting. It is a 3-credit hour course that all MPH students are required to complete as part of their degree curriculum.

The MPH Internship is designed to be flexible, allowing the student to tailor the experience to their area of specialization and interests. To be acceptable as an MPH internship, the experience must take place within a public health practice setting and allow the student to practice MPH competencies. Students are eligible to register for the MPH Internship after completion of all of their core public health courses and the Professional Passport Interprofessional (IP) Practice Modules (Modules 1 through 4) and IP Activities.

The MPH Internship should be planned and approved by both the preceptor and faculty advisor before the student begins their internship. Students must work a minimum of 180 hours with or on behalf of their host organization. All hours must be completed in a single semester. The final grade is awarded by the faculty advisor (pass/no pass).

Upon completion of the internship, the student must submit at least two work products they developed during their internship. The work products should benefit the host organization and demonstrate growth and attainment of 5 MPH competencies. All forms and documents are submitted online through the Applied Practice Experience (APEX) Portal.

WHO?

All MPH students must complete an internship. **No waivers.**

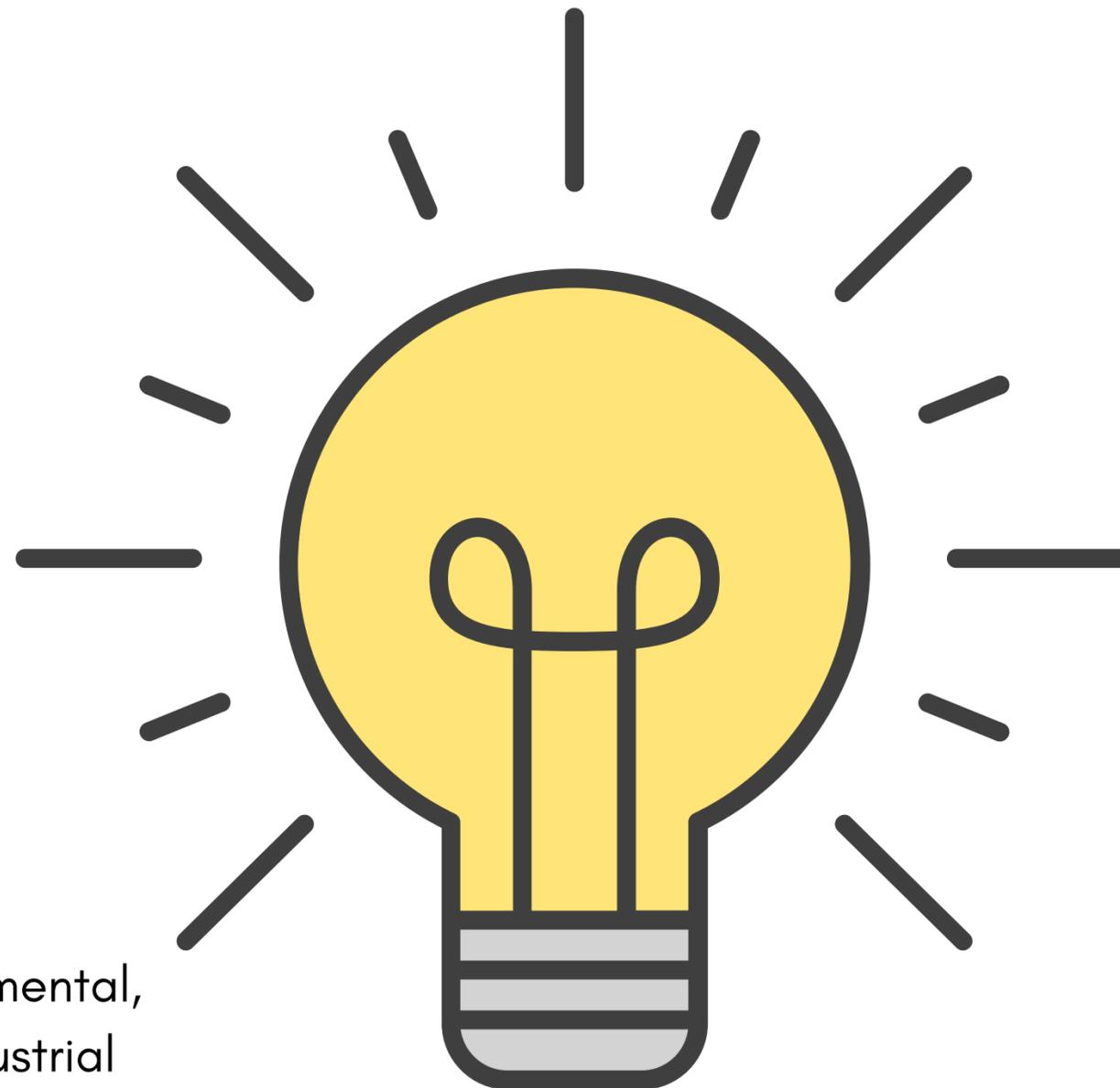
WHAT?

The MPH internship is an applied practice experience that is planned, supervised, and graded.

WHERE?

Internship sites may include governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings or appropriate university-affiliated settings.*

The 5 Ws (and H) of the MPH Internship



WHY?

The internship allows students to work closely with experienced professionals and apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-world public health issues.

WHEN?

Students are eligible for the internship after the completion of all of their core public health courses and IP Modules/Activities. The internship must be completed in a single semester.

HOW?

Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to secure an internship. Students can use a variety of resources to identify an internship.

* To be appropriate for the MPH internship, university-affiliated settings must be primarily focused on community engagement, typically with external partners. University health promotion or wellness centers may be appropriate.

MPH Internship Requirements

Public Health Practice Focus

The focus of the internship MUST be public health practice. Research, shadowing, clinical, and administrative internships are not appropriate.

Examples of appropriate projects include: providing public health education, implementing a quality improvement project, or conducting disease surveillance.

Develop MPH Competencies

The internship must allow the student to demonstrate the attainment of 5 MPH Foundational competencies. Students can align their internship to additional departmental competencies.

Two Work Products

The student must be able to submit a minimum of 2 work products demonstrating competency attainment in all 5 competencies selected. The final products must be approved by the preceptor prior to the start of the internship, developed by the student, and be beneficial to the host organization.

180 Hours Minimum

The student must complete a minimum of 180 contact hours with the organization during the academic semester they are registered for the internship. Internship sites can require students to complete additional hours.

MPH Internship Roles and Responsibilities

OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE (OPHP)

The OPHP directs students to internship postings. Internship coordinators meet with students to provide an overview of the MPH Internship requirements and registration process. They manage the APEX Portal, preceptor registration, and ensure all information needed is provided. During the internship, the OPHP reviews student progress and alerts faculty of any potential issues.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The program coordinator meets with students to determine the optimal time for completing your internship. Once the internship proposal form has been approved by both the preceptor and faculty advisor, the program coordinator lifts the registration hold in Blazernet for the student to register for the appropriate internship course.

FACULTY ADVISOR

The faculty advisor discusses career interests and appropriate projects. They review and approve the student's internship plan for content and ensures it meets competency requirements for the School and department. Faculty advisors discuss the student's progress at least once during the internship and assists whenever a potential problem arises. They evaluate and assign the final grade for the internship.

PRECEPTOR (SITE SUPERVISOR)

The preceptor works with the student to develop a job description and identify work products before the internship begins. Preceptors review and approve this plan. Preceptors provide direct guidance and supervision of the student during planned internship activities. They evaluate student performance at midpoint and upon completion of the internship. Preceptors verify the number of hours the student completes during their internship.

Phases of the Internship



Planning

Create an internship search plan. Planning for your internship should take place at least **4-6 months prior** to the semester in which you intend to complete your internship.

Action

Once you have determined the types of organizations where you would like to complete your internship, it's time to start applying and contacting potential sites and preceptors. This should be done **2-3 months prior** to the start of the internship.

Proposal

As soon as possible after securing an internship, work with your preceptor at your internship site to gather the information needed to complete your Internship Proposal form in the APEX Portal.

Do & Document

By the last day of classes during the semester of your internship, submit your final work products, hours, reflections, poster, and poster presentation.

The Planning Phase

Action Items

It's never too early to start thinking about where you would want to complete your internship. Start planning at least one full semester before the start of your internship.



Meet with your departmental program coordinator to determine the optimal time for completing your internship



Review internship requirements with your internship coordinator



Research internship sites and search for opportunities



Discuss career interest and ideas with your faculty advisor

Considerations in Planning your Internship

Identify Your Interests and Career Goals

Research organizations and/or industries that excite you and align with your interests in public health. Look for opportunities that will build on your strengths and allow you to develop new skills to achieve your career goals.

Federal and Large Program Deadlines

If you are interested in completing your internship with a federal program, such as the CDC, or with larger corporations, many organizations have deadlines 4-6 months before the internship starts (i.e. deadline in the Fall for Summer internships).

Working Full-time while Completing the MPH Internship

If you are working full-time while completing the MPH program, it is possible to complete your internship at your current job site as long as your internship is still focused on public health practice and is NOT part of your normal job duties. It must be a separate project or additional activity.



The Action Phase

Action Items

Once you have a clear understanding of the MPH Internship requirements and an idea about what you would like to do for your internship, it's time to start applying for positions.



Meet with your Career Consultant to ensure your resume and cover letter highlight your strengths; participate in mock interviews



Contact potential host sites and preceptors; apply for internship opportunities



Accept and solidify your internship opportunity

Resources for Identifying Internship Opportunities

- Look in the "Get a Handle" newsletter for information on employer information sessions, networking opportunities, new internships opportunities, and to access the internship database
- Search in Handshake, UAB Career Center's online job search platform
- Attend a seminar or other networking opportunity
- Review selected "past internship sites" on the Applied Practice Experience website
- Talk with your student peers
- Ask your faculty advisor or other faculty members for advice
- Meet with your internship coordinator to brainstorm ideas
- Contact organizations that interest you



Keep in Mind

Affiliation Agreements

Some organizations (most often health departments, health systems, and hospitals) require a legal contract between UAB and their organization. This is called an affiliation agreement. This agreement requires legal review from both the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama for the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the organization. Agreements must be in place BEFORE you can begin your internship. Agreements can take anywhere from 1 to 3 months to process. Additionally, some sites may require drug testing, background checks, or verification of immunizations. Be sure to ask the organization about any additional requirements.

University-affiliated Internships

If you are considering completing your internship within a university setting (ex. UAB), the internship must involve working with a community partner or external organization.

Professionalism

WHEN APPLYING TO INTERNSHIP SITES

APPLY TO MORE THAN ONE INTERNSHIP

Keep your options open and apply to a broad range of opportunities. Use a spreadsheet to track the details of your applications such as company name, internship title, date you applied, and job post URL. This will make it easier to follow up with hiring managers after you submit your applications.

TAILOR YOUR COVER LETTER AND RESUME

Each time you apply for a position, your cover letter and resume should be tailored to the specific position. Keep your resume updated and PROOF your cover letter and resume for grammar and spelling mistakes.

APPLY EARLY

Try to apply within the first three days a new internship is posted. Many organizations interview and hire candidates on a rolling basis. Apply early to give yourself the best chance of success. Know the application deadlines.

The Action Phase



Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels



Professionalism

WHEN APPLYING TO INTERNSHIP SITES

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Research and prepare for commonly asked questions like "Tell me about yourself" and "What do you know about the company?". Practice answering these questions out loud or schedule a mock interview with the UAB Career Center.

SELECTING AN INTERNSHIP

If you have been offered an internship and need time to make a decision, you can ask for a day or two at most to discuss this opportunity with your faculty advisor, internship coordinator, or your family.

AFTER ACCEPTING AN OFFER

Once you have accepted an internship, it is customary to withdrawal other applications and turn down interview requests. DO NOT accept an internship and then later withdrawal for a different opportunity. This reflects poorly on your professional reputation and makes it difficult for future students applying to the organization.

The Action Phase



The Proposal Phase

Action Items

You have received and accepted an internship offer. Now what?



Notify your faculty advisor and internship coordinator that you have received an offer; ensure it meets the MPH internship requirements



Finalize the details of the internship with your preceptor including anticipated final work products; inform them of their responsibilities; request that they complete the preceptor registration form



Complete your Internship Proposal form and ensure both your faculty advisor and preceptor approve the proposal form



Wait 24-48 business hours for your program coordinator to remove your hold and send you information on registration



Register for the appropriate 3-credit hour course specific to your department (HCO, ENH, EPI, HB, PUH 697) in BlazerNet under your faculty advisor

APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE (APEX) PORTAL

The APEX portal is the UAB School of Public Health's online system for managing MPH internships. All forms and submissions related to your internship are tracked in APEX. *During your internship, you will receive reminders from the OPHP to complete each item.*

**YOU SHOULD ACCESS APEX AFTER YOU
HAVE BEEN OFFERED AND ACCEPTED AN
INTERNSHIP.**

Internship Proposal Form

Complete at least 2 weeks prior to the first day of classes

Facilitate preceptor registration

Obtain preceptor approval

Obtain faculty advisor approval

REGISTER FOR *697: INTERNSHIP ONCE HOLD IS REMOVED

Student Midpoint Reflection Form

Complete halfway through your internship

Request preceptor complete
midpoint evaluation

Schedule a meeting with faculty
advisor; confirm meeting

Final Deliverables Submission

Completed by the last day of classe for the semester

- Student reflection of the internship experience
- Final work products
- Hour log
- Poster and poster presentation

Request preceptor complete
final evaluation

The Proposal Phase

Preceptor Responsibilities & Access to APEX

PRECEPTOR RESPONSIBILITIES IN APEX

- Electronically approve your Internship Proposal form
- Complete a midpoint evaluation of student performance
- Complete a final evaluation of student performance

Remember: It is your responsibility to communicate with your preceptor and ensure completion of the tasks above.

NON-UAB EMPLOYEES

Once you have entered your preceptor's information into the Internship Proposal form in APEX, the OPHP will receive notification to verify your preceptor and will send additional details to your preceptor regarding how to register for access to APEX. Once your preceptor is registered, you will receive an email letting you know that you can submit your Internship Proposal. The time registration normally takes 1 to 3 days. ***We recommend preceptors use their business email address when registering for an account.***

UAB EMPLOYEES

Preceptors with a **UABMC account** must use their UAB account (BlazerID/Password) to access the APEX portal. Please ensure that you use the email address associated with your BlazerID (i.e. @uab.edu) and not their MC email address.

Preceptors with a **UAB account** (and do not have a UABMC account) do not need to request Microsoft Team Access. They may log in directly to the APEX portal once the OPHP has verified your preceptor.

The Internship Proposal Form

The Internship Proposal Form is a formal agreement between you, your preceptor and faculty advisor regarding your internship and internship activities. The Internship Proposal Form includes:

- Description of the internship project
- Your contributions and role in the internship project
- Description of how the internship project is focused on population health
- Anticipated work products
- Description of how work products will demonstrate MPH competencies
- Organizational and preceptor contact information
- If IRB is needed, expected start/end date, expected number of hours spent on-site, and payment

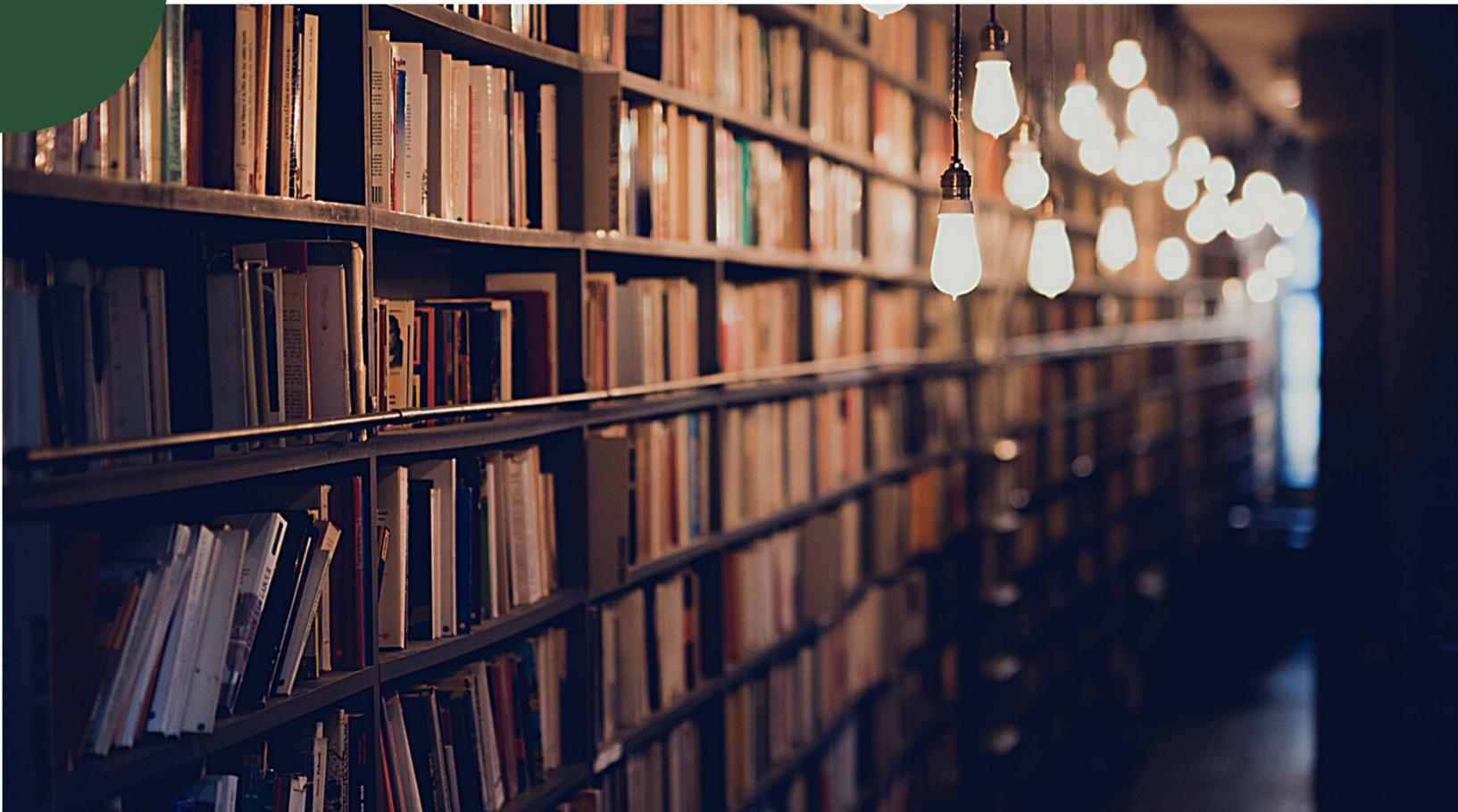
Once your Internship Proposal Form has been approved by your faculty advisor and preceptor, your program coordinator will receive an email to lift your hold and will send instructions on how to register for the internship in BlazerNet.



The Proposal Phase



Important: Start early! You must complete the proposal form electronically and have it approved by your faculty advisor and preceptor before you can register for the internship. Remember, you must be registered BEFORE you can begin the internship.



WORK PRODUCTS

Work products are tangible work items you develop during your internship that benefit both you and the organization. Examples include: a data analysis report, data set, grant proposal, health education material, infographic, needs assessment, policy analyses, and program evaluation. More examples can be found on the SOPH Applied Practice Experience website.

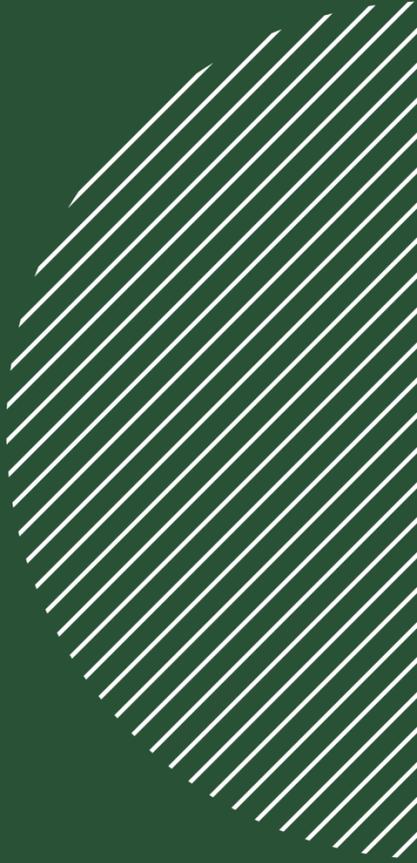
COMPETENCY ATTAINMENT

The internship must allow you to demonstrate 5 MPH Foundational competencies. Competency attainment is assessed through the submission of work products you develop during your internship that represent the competencies selected. You must ensure all five competencies are represented in the work products you submit. While the minimum number of work products is two, it is common for students to submit more than two work products.

The Proposal Phase



Final Work Products



DETERMINING YOUR WORK PRODUCTS

You should work with your preceptor to identify the anticipated final products prior to completing the Internship Proposal form. We understand it may be difficult to determine final products prior to starting your internship. **It's fine if work products change during the internship. Just be sure to keep your faculty advisor and internship coordinator apprised of these changes as they occur.**

WORKING WITH CONFIDENTIAL DATA

If you will be working with confidential data during the internship, you should discuss how you will submit the final products with your preceptor, faculty advisor, and internship coordinator prior to submitting the Internship Proposal Form. Solutions may include redacting sensitive information before submitting. Final products will not be made public.

COMPETENCIES AND WORK PRODUCTS

MATCHING YOUR COMPETENCIES AND WORK PRODUCTS

When you complete your Internship Proposal Form, you will be asked to select five MPH competencies. For each competency, you will identify the anticipated work products related to the competency and describe how the work product relates to the competency. It's okay if products repeat, but the association between the product and the competency must be different for each product proposed. Be sure to provide as much detail as possible (3-4 sentences each). If you don't know about your final products, make your best guess and note this in the description. Remember, it's fine if your products change as long as you inform your faculty advisor and internship coordinator.

EXAMPLE 1:

Competency: MPH Foundational #18- Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.

Final Product: PowerPoint Presentation on Women's Health

Description: The women in the shelter come from varied social, cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds. The greatest challenge will be communicating risk factors and health issues in an efficient manner. I will design the PowerPoint using appropriate terminology and be available after the presentation to answer questions from the audience.

EXAMPLE 2:

Competency: MPH Foundational #19 - Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.

Final Product: PowerPoint Presentation on Women's Health

Description: I will create and deliver a PowerPoint presentation on Women's Health issues to homeless women in Pathway's Day Center.

The Do and Document Phase Action Items

After your internship proposal form has been approved (and you are registered), you are ready to complete your internship.



Complete the hours required for your internship (180 hours minimum). *Your start and end date must be within the academic semester you are registered. You must be registered before you can begin.*



Halfway through the internship (approximately 90 hours), complete the midpoint documents



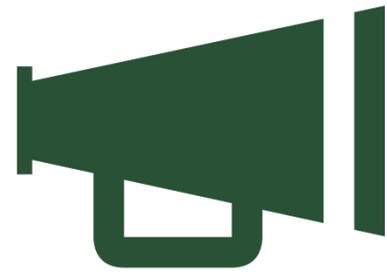
Keep your faculty advisor and internship coordinator notified of any changes to your internship



Submit all final deliverables (work products, evaluations, poster, poster presentation, and hour log) through APEX Portal.

Professionalism

WHILE AT YOUR INTERNSHIP SITE



Communicate Professionally

Speak to all staff members with respect. Write emails with proper grammar, correct spelling and a high level of formality. Keep your preceptor updated regularly on the progress of your internship throughout the semester.



Ask Questions

It's OK not to know. Figure out what you can do, then ask questions about what you don't know. Don't be afraid to ask questions - you are there to learn. Make sure you understand your preceptor's expectations.



Volunteer to Help

Take initiative, but don't over-step your boundaries. Be willing to take on new (and sometimes dull) responsibilities, even if those "aren't your job". Ask if there is anything else you can do after completing an assignment.



Arrive on time

Always be on time. If there is an emergency, call your preceptor to let them know when they can expect you.



Dress to Impress

How you dress can leave an impression on your preceptor and coworkers. Dress professionally. Ask your preceptor about the dress code if you are uncertain.

Important: It is very important to stay in contact with the OPHP (ophp@uab.edu) during your entire internship. If you are having issues at your site, trouble with the APEX Portal, or if your internship changes and you are unsure how to proceed, please contact us!

The Do and Document Phase

Hour Log

You must complete a minimum of 180 contact hours with the organization during the semester in which you are registered for the internship. However, if your internship site requires that you complete additional hours above the minimum 180 hours required, you must complete the number of hours requested by your internship site.

Students should enter their hours at a minimum in biweekly intervals (at the end of every 2-weeks) to allow for faculty advisors, the internship coordinators, and preceptors to keep up with their progress in the APEX Portal.

Students must submit their final Internship Hour Log by the last day of their internship. Your preceptor will be asked to review the hour log and verify the number of hours worked during the internship when completing the Final Evaluation of Student Performance.

Midpoint Forms

Student Midpoint Reflection

When you have reached midpoint of your internship, complete the midpoint reflection in the APEX Portal. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your progress in your internship, describe any changes to the internship activities, identify gaps in training, address challenges, and evaluate what needs to be done to gain the most out of the experience.

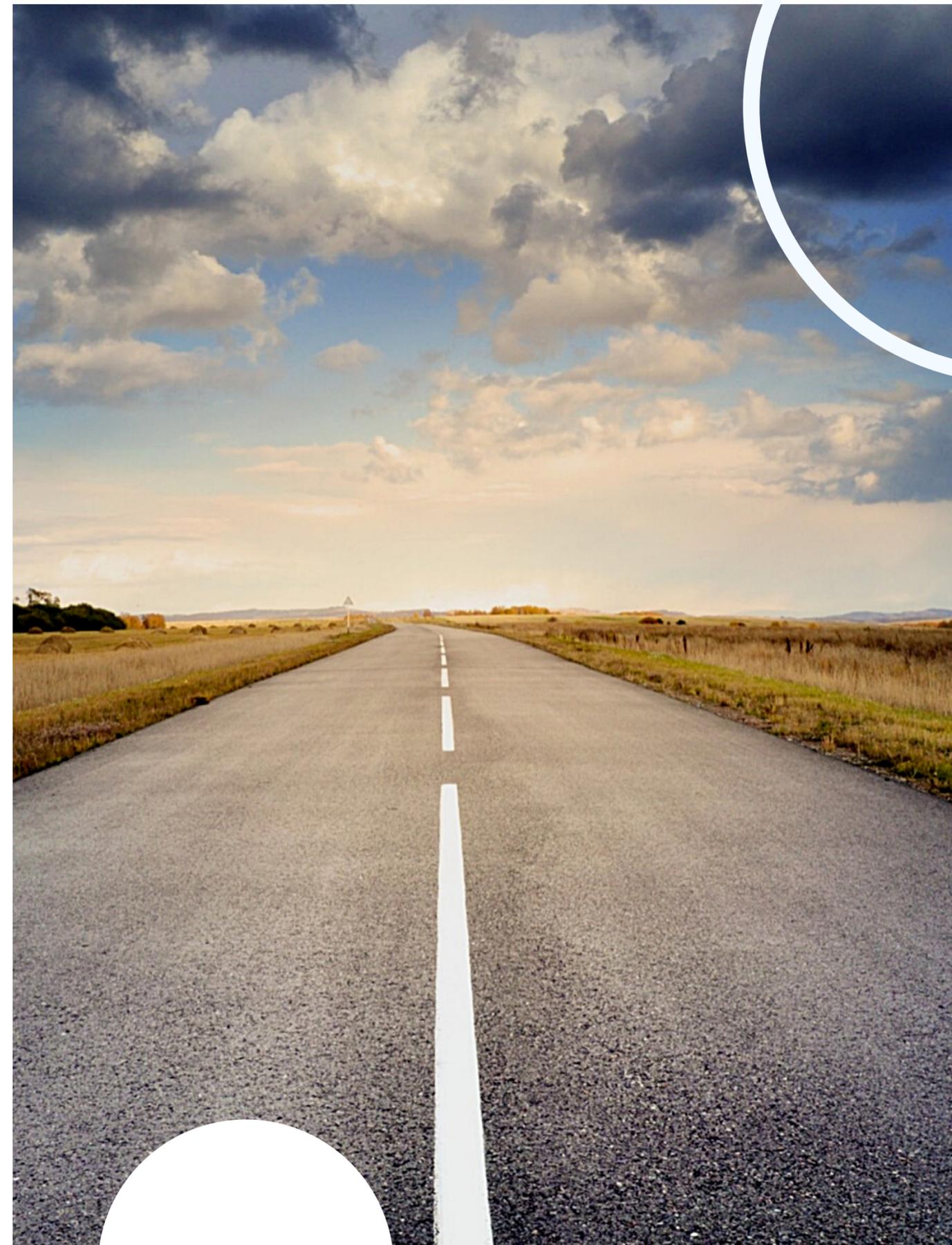
Preceptor Midpoint Evaluation of Student Performance

After completing the midpoint check-in, request that your preceptor logs into the APEX Portal using their account information and complete the Preceptor Midpoint Evaluation of Student Performance. Your preceptor will use this form to evaluate your progress up to that point in the internship, work habits, and professionalism at the organization.

Faculty Advisor Midpoint Meeting Confirmation

After completing the midpoint check-in, schedule a meeting (phone, email, or in-person) to review midpoint reflection with your faculty advisor. Your faculty advisor will need to confirm the meeting took place by completing the Faculty Midpoint Meeting Confirmation form in the APEX Portal.

The Do and Document Phase



Final Internship Deliverables

- **STUDENT FINAL REFLECTION OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**
- **PRECEPTOR FINAL EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE**
- **SUBMISSION OF HOUR LOG**
- **FINAL PRODUCTS DEMONSTRATING ALL 5 COMPETENCIES**
- **POSTER AND POSTER PRESENTATION**

INTERNSHIP GRADING SCALE

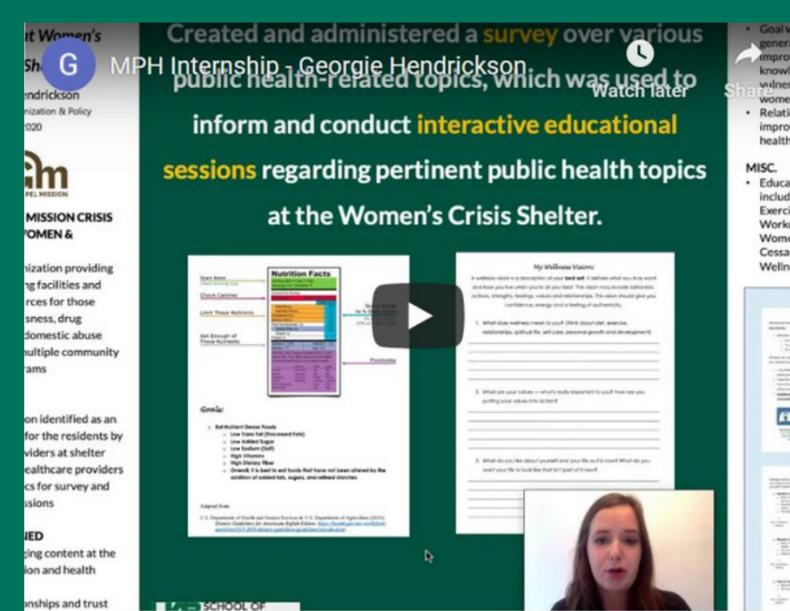
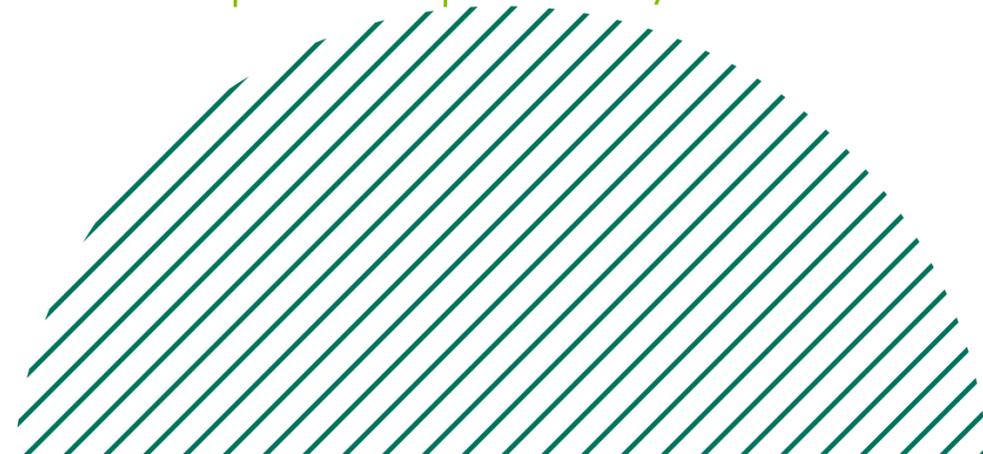
Your faculty advisor will assign you a grade of pass/no pass based on the completion of your final products, attainment of five competencies, preceptor midpoint and final evaluation, poster, poster presentation, and completion of hours.

Final products should represent graduate-level work. Final products with typos or mistakes, plagiarized, haphazardly designed, or poorly organized or presented do NOT reflect graduate-level work.

The Poster & Poster Presentation

Every student must complete a poster that reflects on their internship experience in addition to recording a virtual poster presentation. This is your opportunity to share what you did and learned during the internship. A template for the poster and more information on the specific details of the poster presentation can be found on the UAB SOPH Applied Practice Experience Website:

<https://sites.uab.edu/apex/for-mph-students/mph-poster-requirements/>



Name of Internship or Project

Your Name
 Department [i.e. Epi, HCOP, HB, EHS]
 Internship Semester and Year

Organization Logo, if desired

ORGANIZATION

- Mission and purpose (services offered)
- 1-2 bullets

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE OF PROJECT

- Who cares? Explain why your internship project matters in the fastest, most brutal way possible (feel free to add graphics!).
- Relate it back to public health
- 2-3 bullets

OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS INVOLVED

- If you completed your internship at UAB, who were your external community partners?

LESSONS LEARNED

- What did you learn from this experience? What challenges did you overcome?
- 1-2 bullets

1. Keep font size as high above 28+ as possible.
 2. Keep your background short.
 3. The more content you add here, the more cognitive load you add, and the more you'll turn people off engaging.
 4. Less content = more readers.
 5. Now delete this text box. ☺

Acknowledgements (if desired)

What did you do? Translated into **plain English. Emphasize** the important words.
 (written in 1-2 sentences)



Use the QR code to view the final products

- COMMUNITY IMPACT**
- So what? What is the ultimate goal of your project and how will it improve public health/population health?
- MISC.**
- Extra Graphs
 - Extra Pictures
 - Extra Figures
 - Extra nuance that you're worried about leaving out!

Traveling Abroad

If you are completing your internship abroad or traveling abroad for your internship, you must register with UAB Education Abroad before you start your internship.

Registering your travel with UAB Education Abroad is required and allows you to obtain the necessary education abroad insurance and any other preparations for the trip.





INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students may have additional documents they must complete and submit to International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) before they can begin their internship.

International students are only permitted to work full-time (21-37.5 hours) during the summer and part-time (20 hours or less) during the spring or fall semester.

While the Office of Public Health Practice can help answer basic questions, any specific questions about visas, CPT, OPT, employment or deadlines should be directed to ISSS.

The Office of Public Health Practice

Internship Questions?

Email: ophp@uab.edu

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