

Roles and Responsibilities within a Practicum

The agency, program, project or individual that ultimately agrees to accept a student for a practicum experience also assumes an educational role. One person, a *Practicum Supervisor*, must agree to help arrange the student's experience and define activities that will help meet the objectives of both the student and of the agency/project. The practicum, however, is not meant to burden the supervisor with extensive supervisory demands. The roles and responsibilities for students and supervisors are outlined below:

Supervisor

- Define scope of the practicum with student;
- Assist the student in developing a Planning Framework for the practicum that will seek to meet Practicum objectives, the student's objectives and the organizational objectives. The Planning Framework will include specifics for the placement as well, including start/ end dates, work station availability and financial compensation. This should be completed within 2 weeks of starting the practicum for MPH Health Promotion students and within 1 week for MPH Epidemiology students.
- Discuss and develop a schedule or work plan with the student;
- Provide an orientation to the organization for the student;
- Enable the student to participate, as much as possible, in day-to-day operations;
- Include student in meetings or seminars related to the practicum area;
- Provide on-going supervision, resources and guidance necessary for the student to complete assigned projects and tasks;
- Clarify to whom student should report if supervisor is not available;
- Meet bi-weekly to provide guidance and mentorship, and to chart development and progress;
- Submit a mid-term evaluation halfway through the placement to the Practicum Placement Officer
- Complete a final evaluation form at the end of the practicum and discuss it with the student;
- Ensure that the student's work can be evaluated by the academic program. Specific arrangements may be required for confidential review of embargoed materials.

Student

- Discuss the scope of the practicum with supervisor;
- Develop and submit a Planning Framework in consultation with the supervisor;
- Ask for specific background reading or other information as required;
- Clarify with supervisor whether work will be independent or in collaboration with others;
- Clarify to whom she/he should report if supervisor is not available;
- Discuss with supervisor how time should be allocated and hours recorded, and comply with time commitments whether or not supervisor is on site;

- Discuss her/his work schedule and progress with supervisor on a regular basis;
- Document her/his involvement in the project(s) (e.g. project activities, report writing, etc.);
- Perform in a manner appropriate to the expectations of the supervisor, adhering to policies and regulations of the organization (including dress code) and to ethical and professional standards;
- Ensure supervisor has a copy of the supervisor mid-term and final evaluations to complete at the appropriate times.

Once a student commences his/her practicum, the supervisor coordinates and supervises the student's work and takes responsibility for seeing that the specific objectives and activities agreed upon in the Planning Framework are being carried out according to schedule. The supervisor agrees to orient the student to the agency and project and to meet with the student on a weekly basis to monitor progress. During the practicum, the student is responsible for performing according to the finalized, approved Planning Framework and for fulfilling the usual responsibilities of punctuality, accountability, and appropriate department and initiative expected of all public health professionals.

The first couple of weeks of the student's practicum should be considered a probationary period. Halfway through the placement, the supervisor and the student are required to complete a mid-term evaluation separately and return each to the Practicum Placement Officer. If there are any problems or concerns the Practicum Placement Officer is available to meet with the student and/or the student's Supervisor at any time during the practicum. If for any reason the student or the Supervisor is unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities according to the Planning Framework, plans and activities for the practicum may be changed or modified with the approval of the supervisor and the Practicum Officer.

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