MPH APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCES (APE)

The 2016 Criteria require MPH students to demonstrate competency attainment through applied practice experiences. While this may be achieved through a traditional practicum or internship, the criteria allow for more innovative approaches as well. The APE may also take the form of course-based activities, activities linked to service learning, co-curricular activities, or a blend of for-credit and/or not-for-credit activities, for example.

To demonstrate compliance, students link the work that they do in applied settings to the foundational and concentration competencies. Each student must compile a portfolio of at least two work products that link to five foundational and concentration competencies (at least three of which must be MPH foundational competencies).

SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO THE APE

ALIGNING COMPETENCIES WITH THE REAL WORLD

HARVARD UNIVERSITY (SPH)

Challenge: Students have difficulty connecting academic competencies to real-world workplace expectations

Solution: Bring real-world examples into the classroom

APPROACH Engage students in a variety of exercises mapping defined competencies to real-world settings

ACTION Before the internship, students write a short paper detailing the skills they want to build. After the internship, the Career Office brings current job postings & position descriptions to class and maps the requirements back to the competencies.

RESULT By focusing on skills, students develop a clearer idea of what they actually hope to achieve from their internship. This often differs from their ideas before writing the paper. The mapping exercise helps students clearly identify their skills related to the jobs for which they will actually apply.

Work setting with public health professionals

Final portfolio of ≥ 2 work products tied to 5 competencies

Mutually beneficial

At least 3 must be MPH foundational competencies
FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO COMPLETING THE APE

CONSORTIUM OF EASTERN OHIO (PHP)
Challenge: Accommodating students who are employed full-time
Solution: Consultancy approach

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<tr>
<th>APPOACH</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on project management skills, allowing students to complete their APE off site as consultants to their placement organization.</td>
<td>Students work remotely with their internship preceptor, using various communication technologies to complete their projects.</td>
<td>Provides flexibility to students who are employed full-time or have other responsibilities outside the classroom. This approach also provides experience in sought-after professional project management skills. The consultancy approach resulted in minimal disruption from COVID-19 closures.</td>
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA (SPH)
Challenge: One-size-fits-all standardized internship program is not desired and/or feasible
Solution: Course-based approach

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<td>Maximize flexibility in completing the APE by integrating a variety of experiences throughout the curriculum. • Interprofessional education • Field experience • Study abroad • USF Health Service Corps • Community-based service learning</td>
<td>Students complete practice experiences throughout the curriculum and document these activities in their e-portfolio. During the APE course at the end of the program, students work with faculty to submit two products and map them to competencies.</td>
<td>Students experience a wide variety of practice settings. With faculty advisors, students select practice experiences best suited to their professional goals and experiences. This approach allows flexibility for students with professional public health experience.</td>
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TRENDS 2020 | MPH Applied Practice Experiences
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA (PHP)

**Challenge:** Limited number of nearby appropriate agencies and heavy agency workloads may make it challenging to take on student supervision

**Solution:** Connect with community organizations to learn about their needs and establish a partnership with preceptors invested in the program; make it easier and more beneficial to host public health students

**APPROACH**
- Connect with community organizations early & consistently

**ACTION**
- Include community preceptors in the pre-internship prep course as guest lecturers and course instructors

**RESULT**
- Preceptors oriented to the program, faculty & students. Students familiar with preceptor expectations before experience begins

EASTERN VIRGINIA MEDICAL SCHOOL (PHP)

**Challenge:** Desire for more meaningful experiences for students and preceptors

**Solution:** Students develop professional goals and plans starting on day one

**APPROACH**
- Faculty advisors meet with students in their first semester to begin developing professional goals & plans to reach those goals

**ACTION**
- With goals & plans in place, faculty assist students in identifying APE placements & encourage them to begin working with the organizations on projects before internship begins

**RESULT**
- Established relationships between students and preceptors derive more meaningful projects for both parties
MANAGING A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS

EMORY UNIVERSITY (SPH)

Challenge: Managing a large cohort of students each semester
Solution: Combining staff, faculty, and technological resources

**APPROACH**
Distribute responsibilities among professional staff and faculty advisors & tracking student progress with an online platform

**ACTION**
Each department includes 1-2 associate directors of academic programs. These professional staff members help prepare students in the APE requirements and provide oversight of the student experience.

Faculty advisors approve internship sites, preceptors, products, and competencies.

All activities are logged in an online portal

**RESULT**
Students have "localized" resources who know them & their curricula well.

Online portal allows consistent management of students throughout the different stages of the experience & provides one-stop access for students, faculty & staff.
MAPPING THE APE TO FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES

As described above, the APE must result in two work products that align with five competencies. Of these five competencies, three must be foundational competencies defined in Criterion D2. The following examples highlight ways in which various experiences can be mapped to foundational competencies. These examples do not include the mapped concentration competencies, as these competencies vary by unit and degree offering.

**Drug diversion initiative for the Baltimore public defender’s office**

*Students worked to develop, implement, and evaluate a community-based drug diversion policy.*

- **FC 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 level
- **FC 9:** Design a population-based policy, program, budget, or initiative
- **FC 15:** Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity
- **FC 20:** Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content

*Example APE courtesy of University of Maryland, Baltimore (PHP)*

**Strategic plan for oral health non-profit organization**

*Students engage with organizational leaders and stakeholders to develop and present a strategic plan.*

- **FC 13:** Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes
- **FC 16:** Apply principles of leadership, governance, and management, which include creating a vision, empowering others, fostering collaboration, and guiding decision making
- **FC 18:** Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors

*Example APE courtesy of the Consortium of Eastern Ohio (PHP)*

**Employee wellness/occupational health program at a big box store**

*Students design and implement a wellness program for employees at various levels within a large corporation.*

- **FC 7:** Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities’ health
- **FC 8:** Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs
- **FC 19:** Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation

*Example APE courtesy of Walden University (PHP)*