

**MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH
APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE
(INTERNSHIP)**



THE APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE (APE)

PURPOSE OF THE APE

The purpose of this experience is to provide opportunities for students to:

- Apply concepts from core and concentration courses.
- Work with agency professionals to gain practical experience in public health.
- Interact with a wide range of health professionals in a designated setting.

The APE should provide MPH students with work experience in their concentration area, important job skills, and the opportunity to explore public health organizational environments. These experiences should be valuable to both the student and the host agency.

Well-structured APEs help students build the competencies necessary for public health practice. Competencies are a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that transcend the boundaries of specific public health disciplines and help unify the profession. There are 22 core competencies identified in the MPH program, as well as 4 to 6 concentration-specific competencies. As students develop their APE Agreements, they are required to link their learning objectives to the MPH Program and concentration competencies.

ELIGIBILITY AND TIMING

The Public Health APE is a 3-credit course that integrates public health theory and practice. Students are required to work for 240 hours in public health organizations/agencies under the supervision of a preceptor to complete the course (about 15-20 hours per week, if completed within one semester), and work on a set of objectives developed with their advisor and preceptor. 160 of the 240 hours must be completed on-site. These objectives are outlined in the agreement.

In order to be eligible for the APE, a student must complete the core MPH courses, earning a B or better in each. Optimally, a student will have also completed at least some of the concentration courses before embarking on the experience. *Under special circumstances and with prior approval from the faculty advisor, a student may be authorized to register for the APE while concurrently completing the final core course requirements; please be aware that these exceptions are extremely rare.*

Students can only be authorized to register for the APE course after their agreement is drafted, approved and signed by the faculty advisor and preceptor.

FINDING AN EXPERIENCE

The APE is flexible. Students may intern in Indiana, out of state, or in an international setting. They can work full-time for several consecutive weeks or part-time for a longer period to complete the 240 hours requirement. If working full-time while enrolled in the MPH Program, the student should begin investigating how to accommodate the time needed for the experience as soon as they are admitted to the MPH Program. Students working full time might need to use vacation time, design a flexible work schedule, or make other arrangements with their employers.

It is ultimately the student's responsibility to find and secure an experience. Students can meet with FSPH Career Services to discuss search strategies, improve application materials (such as résumés), and prepare for interviews. To schedule an appointment with a career development professional, go to the [Careers](#) section of the Fairbanks School of Public Health website.

Students should begin the planning process at least three months before they would like the APE to start. If students are interested in out-of-state placements, advance-planning time should be six to 12 months. To assist students in identifying potential experiences, the MPH program publishes a list of previously conducted experiences, known as the [MPH APE: Internship Database](#), accessible via the school's website. Additionally, opportunities submitted to the school from public health organizations are posted in a weekly newsletter and to the Fairbanks School of Public Health job board, Career Link.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

MPH students may opt to do their APE in a country other than the United States. Several students have traveled to the AMPATH project in Kenya through the IU School of Medicine and to Central America with the IU School of Dentistry. These experiences are often competitive and require funding; students should begin planning a year in advance.

Special stipulations for international experiences are required by the Fairbanks School of Public Health and Indiana University:

- Individuals cannot go to areas that have a travel warning issued by the U.S. Department of State.
- Individuals must provide proof to the school that they have purchased travel insurance before they begin their experience. The travel insurance must provide temporary health care to the individual while at the international site and provide transportation back to the United States in case of illness or an accident.
- Students will not receive credit for their experiences if they do not comply with these stipulations.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN APE

Students should consider their interests, past experiences, the requirements of their MPH concentration, and what they want to glean from the experience. Specific activities or tasks that may be part of the experience include:

- Participating in the day-to-day work of the host agency.
- Attending organizational or community meetings with the preceptor.
- Researching policy implications of programs.
- Assisting in program development or evaluation.
- Participating in the ongoing research activities for studies with the preceptor.
- Working on a community health assessment.
- Working with a team responsible for several existing projects.
- Assisting with data analysis.

The APE is designed to provide the student with exposure to new experiences, topics and methods. Students are encouraged to look for an organization unfamiliar to them. **If students choose to intern where they are currently employed, their activities must be completely separate from their regular paid employment duties and conducted on their own time. They must work under the guidance of a preceptor who is not their supervisor and not within the chain of command of their department or division.** This arrangement is more readily achieved in a large organization, such as the Indiana State Department of Health or the Marion County Public Health Department. Students working in small public health organizations are encouraged to look for experiences in organizations other than where they are employed.

Students should look for a preceptor who is excited about working with them. The preceptor's role is to help the student develop the experience and supervise its implementation, so the preceptor needs to be committed to devoting time to the student. The preceptor should also be professionally and academically qualified. If a student identifies a preceptor who has never hosted an MPH intern, the student should contact the FSPH Career Services office, who will verify the preceptor's qualifications.

Students should use the APE Agreement as a guideline for planning. Students should talk with their preceptor about the activities to be conducted during the experience, the learning objectives, the time commitment, expected work hours, and deadlines for completing the required work.

OBTAINING APE APPROVAL

Students should consult with their faculty advisor as soon as they have identified a site and have a general idea of what the experience will entail. If the advisor agrees that the proposed experience meets the requirements of the student's concentration, the student and preceptor can proceed with defining the student's responsibilities, tasks, and schedule. Based on this discussion, the student will draft a plan utilizing the **APE Proposal Template** and share it with the advisor and preceptor. When the advisor and preceptor are satisfied with the agreement, the student will electronically submit the online agreement form and it will automatically route to the preceptor and faculty advisor for signatures. The FSPH Career Services office will then give the student authorization to enroll in the internship course. The student must formally enroll in the course. From there, they can log internship hours.

The APE Checklist

SEARCHING FOR AN APE

- List the priorities for the APE. Is it most important to work with a new agency? Learn a new skill set? Work on a particular kind of project? Work hours other than 8am-5pm? Work on a specific topic (maternal and child health, tuberculosis, child abuse, etc.)? Are there other considerations that are more important? Once defined, discuss with the faculty advisor and begin searching for appropriate opportunities.
- Updated résumé. Preceptors frequently request it, along with a cover letter, before granting an interview. Contact sites to talk with potential preceptors. If a student would like assistance in developing a résumé or cover letter, schedule an appointment with FSPH Career Services.
- Prepare for interviews with potential sites. Interviews should be conducted in the organization/agency's office or a similar professional space. FSPH Career Services can help with interview preparation. Be sure to discuss the preceptor qualifications and responsibilities during any interviews.
 - For questions about the process, please schedule an appointment with the FSPH Career Services office.

OBTAINING APPROVAL

- Once a student has identified a potential APE, the plan should be reviewed with the faculty advisor. Send an e-mail with the proposal to faculty advisor for informal approval to proceed. A meeting may be required for further discussion.
- Complete the online APE Agreement. The agreement form will automatically route to the faculty advisor and the preceptor for signatures. This step **MUST** be completed before a student can begin logging hours for the internship.
- The FSPH Career Services office will review the form and grant permission to enroll in the MPH internship course. **It is the student's responsibility to register for the internship course.**

DOCUMENTING THE APE

- Maintain a weekly log of hours and activities via the online MPH APE Hours Log
 - Be sure to document each week's date range, hours completed, and a summary of projects and work done during that week. Be sure to keep up with this log throughout the experience.
- Halfway through the experience (120 hours), the hours log will route to the faculty advisor for review. Students are required to schedule a mid-point review meeting with their faculty advisor within two weeks of submitting this form.
- The student and the preceptor will complete an Online Mid-Point Evaluation.
 - The student and preceptor will be sent a link for the evaluation after 120 hours is reached.
- When a student accumulates 200 internship hours, the online 200 Hours Completed Form must be submitted.
 - **MPH students must submit their 200 Hours Completed Form before they will be given authorization to enroll in the Integrated Learning Experience (Capstone/Applied Epidemiology/Research Project).**
- Complete 240 hours of work and the tasks and projects outlined in the APE Agreement.
- Create two (2) digital student work products for the agency/organization.
 - These required products are flexible in format and should be something meaningful to the experience and the internship site. Given agency priorities, it is possible that the two final work products will differ from those originally submitted on the proposal form.

COMPLETING THE APE

- Submit the 240 APE hours log and it will route to the preceptor for their review and electronic signature verifying the hours and work completed. Once they have signed the log it will be recorded. Students must schedule a review meeting with their faculty advisor once the 240 hours have been completed and submitted.
- Complete the online APE Final Course Evaluation. This will be sent upon completing the 240 hours log.
 - Student's will be required to upload and submit (2) digital work products through this form
- Remind the preceptor to complete the online final evaluation of the work. They will be sent a link after the 240 hours log is submitted. If they need to have the link resent, have them email the FSPH Career Services office.

Quick Reference:

[MPH APE: Internship Proposal Template](#)

[MPH APE: Internship Agreement Form](#)

[MPH APE: Internship Hours Log](#)

[MPH APE: Internship 200 Hours Form](#)

[MPH APE: Student Final Course Evaluation](#)

Questions?

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