

# MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## GENERAL PUBLIC HEALTH

### Practicum Paper Guidelines

One of the practicum requirements is the practicum (or capstone) paper. This paper is **due two months prior to the month of graduation** (August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for October graduation). Students who are not able to meet this deadline will have to get written (email) approval to send the paper in at a later date. If the extension is not approved, the practicum paper will not be accepted after the due date. No practicum papers will be accepted in the month prior to graduation. Students may fulfill the practicum paper requirement in one of two ways:

1. Students may complete the practicum paper as outlined below (including background, methodology, findings and deliverables, reflections on how their public health classes and skills were utilized and/or strengthened in the practicum, and conclusions).
2. Students may submit a deliverable (executive summary or journal publication) prepared during the course of their practicum experience. However, the deliverable **MUST** start with the basic background (site, project, broader public health significance) and end with a reflection on how their public health classes and skills were utilized and/or strengthened in the practicum. In other words, the deliverable may only substitute for Sections 2 and 3 of the practicum paper outlined below. Students must still submit Sections 1 and 4 of the practicum paper outlined below.

Below are guidelines for the practicum paper (option 1).

#### **Section 1: Background (REQUIRED for both practicum papers and any other deliverable/executive summary that is submitted)**

(Approximately 2 pages)

This section should contain background information regarding both the practicum site (organization/agency), and the particular project you were working on. The background should include a literature review of the topic area of your project.

A. Practicum site: (a) location, population, demographics, and mission.

B. Practicum project: (a) goals of your specific project (e.g. developing/analyzing policy; answering a research question through data collection/analysis; developing educational materials; implementing a program); (b) your role and activities on the project

C. On the “macro” level: the goal here is to *discuss your project within a broader social context. Current literature should be briefly reviewed.* Areas of focus for this section include a brief history of the agency/project; social, demographic, political and/or cultural issues that have shaped your project historically and in the present; and how the project reflects (or contributes to) broad public health objectives and challenges.

## **Section 2: Methodology**

(Approximately 2 pages)

A. Research projects: Describe in detail the methodologies or processes you used to conduct your work. Be specific about all relevant project design components, (sample, instrument construction, data collection, program planning/implementation and/or data analysis procedures.) All papers should include a section evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your methods, including any methodological problems encountered and the strategies you used to minimize them. Also discuss how you would change or improve the methodology.

B. Program or Policy Projects: Describe the processes utilized to develop, implement, monitor, assess or analyze the program or policy/management issues relevant to your practicum. Include data sources, how you used them, and strategies for problem solving at the organizational level. If your project involved program or education components, discuss the methods utilized to develop, implement and assess the activities or materials. Any theoretical contributions from the health education or health policy/management literature that informed your methodology should also be discussed.

C. Clinical Projects: Describe the clinical protocol involved and how it was implemented and monitored. If the protocol or regimen varied from standard practice, or included any new components, describe and explain.

## **Section 3: Findings and Deliverables**

(Approximately 3-5 pages)

A. If you collected primary data or analyzed secondary data, this section should describe your analysis plan and main findings. If you developed research instruments, refer to them here, describe how they were developed, and how they were (or will be) used. If other components of the research process constituted your deliverables, describe them, the methodology you applied, and the contributions they will make to the overall project.

B. If your practicum involved planning/implementing a program or policy, or involved a clinical program or protocol, describe and include as an attachment of the deliverables you completed. Was there (or could there be) an effect or outcome among the population you were attempting to serve? Was there (or will there be) organizational or other changes in procedure/practice as a result of your work?

- C. Make sure to discuss the public health implications of work both at the individual/agency level, and within a broader social context.
- D. To whom were the results of your efforts reported and what will be done with them? Are there unanswered questions raised by your study findings that should be follow-up with further research?
- E. For all projects: What are the next steps that can and should be taken in this particular area of public health practice? Comment on those steps that should be taken at various levels of social organization (individual; institutional: and policy).

**Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions (REQUIRED for both practicum papers and any other deliverable/executive summary that is submitted)**

(Approximately 1-2 pages)

In this final section, the student is required to place the practicum experience within the context of classroom learning. Please reflect upon at least one theme from each of the following areas:

- A. What *specific* theoretical approaches, skills, or other class-based information, from specific courses, were relevant to your practicum. Give specific examples.
- B. What were areas of convergence and divergence in class versus field “material,” and how can the two combine (or not) to offer a holistic view of the public health issue/problem/challenge addressed by your practicum?
- C. How has the practicum experience influenced your professional development?

**Submit Practicum Paper using the Assignments tool in the General Public Health CourseWorks site by August 1<sup>st</sup> for October graduation, December 1<sup>st</sup> for February graduation, and March 1<sup>st</sup> for May graduation. Early submissions are welcome. Late submissions will not be accepted unless the student has received written (email) permission from their GPH faculty advisor. No papers will be accepted in the month prior to graduation.**