



SUNY
DOWNSTATE
Medical Center

School of Public Health

**Handbook for the Required
Field Experience**
(PUBH 6500, 1 credit)

Adopted by the faculty, June 2009

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The Field Experience Requirements

This booklet introduces you to the Field Experience requirement and provides guidance as you create and fulfill that requirement. Except in rare circumstances, every student must complete the Field Experience requirement and a culminating experience before being awarded a MPH or DrPH degree. Waiver of the Field Experience may be granted in limited circumstances. Please see p. 18 for waiver criteria.

It is ***your responsibility*** to know your options in advance and to discuss your plans thoroughly with your advisor.

Your Field Experience must be approved by your advisor before you begin it. In addition, your advisor and site preceptor must sign off on all required paperwork when you complete your Field Experience.

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE DESCRIPTION

The Field Experience is a planned and supervised practice experience with these features:

- Is coordinated and developed by the student, the preceptor, and the faculty advisor
- Has been ***pre-approved*** by the faculty advisor
- Applies measurable learning objectives to real-world public health practice and includes a minimum of 200 contact hours for master's students.
- Includes an initial student plan and placement agreement that must be completed by the student and signed by the preceptor and the advisor (see p. 8 and p. 9).
- Incorporates student activities that are coordinated and evaluated in writing by the student's preceptor and faculty advisor.
- Includes a midway progress report signed by the preceptor and the advisor (see p. 12)
- Includes a final student evaluation by the preceptor and the advisor (see p. 13)
- Includes a student self-assessment of the accomplishment of the Field Experience goals and objectives (see p. 16)
- Includes a final written report and a 500-word (or less) abstract prepared by the student assessing the activities and the attainment of the learning objectives (see p. 16)
- Includes any additional departmental requirements, such as a poster, presentation, or seminar.
- Includes a review of the student's report and preceptor's evaluation by the faculty advisor, and final review and sign-off by the advisor and the department chair.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An individualized Field Experience plan, developed for each Field Experience, is a collaborative effort among the student, faculty advisor, and preceptor. A Field Experience plan identifies joint responsibilities of the Field Experience project; the Field Experience's measurable learning objectives; and available technical and programmatic support to achieve the objectives.

Student roles and responsibilities

In collaboration with the Field Experience coordinator, the advisor, and appropriate specialty track faculty, students are responsible for the following:

1. Identify potential Field Experience topics based on area of specialization, previous experience, career interests, and career goals. Your department and faculty advisor will help you to identify opportunities, a prospective site, and preceptor.
2. Develop a Field Experience/project plan including learning objectives, a timeline, milestones, and final deliverables. It is your responsibility to secure approval of your plan by your preceptor and your faculty advisor.
3. Provide a mid-project written progress report to the preceptor and faculty advisor.
4. Participate in periodically scheduled progress review meetings with your preceptor and your faculty advisor.
5. Submit a final Field Experience report describing your project; the activities you undertook; and your results, findings, and recommendations.
6. Conduct a midterm and final self-evaluation of your Field Experience.
7. Complete any additional departmental requirements such as poster, presentation, and/or seminar. Your advisor will inform you of these requirements.

Advisor roles and responsibilities

The advisor provides general oversight of the Field Experience. He or she is responsible for the following:

1. Helping students identify prospective sites.
2. Providing advice to students about site selection and the development of the specific Field Experience plan.
3. Reviewing overall progress of the student during the Field Experience process.
4. Advising students of any additional departmental requirements for the Field Experience.

Preceptor roles and responsibilities

The preceptor's responsibility includes the following:

1. Providing technical and administrative oversight to the student throughout the Field Experience period.
2. Providing periodic feedback and guidance to the student in writing and/or through meetings.
3. Reviewing the student's progress through formal mid-term and final evaluations.
4. Collaborating with the advisor to address overall project issues as necessary.

Frequently Asked Questions

When do I begin the Field Experience?

You may register for and begin your Field Experience only after you have completed a significant portion of the core and programmatic requirements including the six core courses and some of the specialty track core courses.

Is it necessary to get my advisor's approval to begin the Field Experience?

YES.

The Field Experience must be planned and approved by your faculty advisor before you begin. Though you may use other resources in the SPH, you ***must*** actively involve your faculty advisor. He or she has final approval.

How and where do I start?

Talk with your advisor about when you will be eligible to begin the Field Experience (*e.g.*, whether you have completed appropriate coursework).

Discuss with your advisor what options are available to you.

Many students are accustomed to selecting courses from a roster and waiting to be told the contents and specific requirements. The Field Experience differs substantially, because you are responsible for identifying and securing an appropriate project. You must develop your own goals and objectives for the Field Experience in consultation with your advisor and preceptor. However, as you explore possibilities make sure that you do not make or imply any commitment to a site until your advisor is in full agreement with your plan.

You are responsible for initiating and following through with the entire Field Experience process.

How do I find a Field Experience placement?

Finding a placement is much like finding a job. You are responsible for working with your advisor to identify a Field Experience placement. However, many people can help you. Talk with your faculty advisor, other faculty, the fieldwork coordinator, and students who have completed their Field Experience requirement.

In collaboration with your advisor, identify agencies that are working on health issues that interest you. You do not have to limit yourself to the New York City area. Explore options throughout the state, region, country, and even the world. Call agencies and find out if they have student internship positions available or if they may be open to exploring such a possibility. *Be careful not to make or imply a commitment before you have the approval of your advisor!* Remember to keep your faculty advisor informed throughout the process. Your preceptor must be an appropriate/qualified supervisor.

May I do the Field Experience at my place of employment?

It is preferable for students to gain experience at a site that is new to them and that broadens their exposure to public health. Weekend opportunities are available through the Field Work Coordinator. Students who work full-time and do not have the flexibility to work elsewhere may develop a Field Experience at their place of employment if the following conditions are met: (1) the activities of the field placement are distinct in nature and timing from those carried out as paid employment, (2) the student has articulated clear public health learning objectives, (3) a preceptor is available who has training or experience in public health, and (4) the faculty advisor agrees to the plan and site.

Do I register for the Field Experience?

Yes, once you have an approved plan you may register for **PUBH 6500** for the semester during which you begin the Field Experience.

Can I still graduate if my Field Experience isn't completed?

NO. You cannot graduate or earn your degree until all documents are completed and approved, and all requirements are met.

Is the Field Experience requirement ever waived?

In rare circumstances, the Field Experience requirement may be waived for those with documented actual practice experience in a field of public health. See p. 18 for the waiver criteria and process.

Field Experience Resources

YOUR FACULTY ADVISOR

Remember: your faculty advisor has the last word on your Field Experience so establish communication early on.

Your advisor is usually the person most familiar with your particular academic program, individual learning needs, and future career opportunities. Involve him or her at the beginning of your search and throughout the process.

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

Dr. Karen Benker (Room 4-322) maintains an active network of community groups and agencies that have worked successfully with our students or have expressed interest in hosting students. She is available to work with you as you explore possible sites, develop your learning plan, and to prepare the necessary paperwork for written approvals.

Miss Arlene Mbonu (Room BSB5-95) will help guide you through the process of completing the Field Experience itself.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene offers highly structured Field Experiences on a part-time basis during the fall and spring semesters and on a full- or part-time basis during the summer through the Health Research Training Program. This program is highly competitive, but welcomes applications from our students. Please consult with Dr. Benker for tips on submitting a winning application.

For more information, visit the website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hrtp/hrtp.shtml>. Note that the deadlines for application are several months before each semester begins.

The New York City Department for the Aging has many innovative projects that welcome volunteers and interns.

The NYC Mayor's Office of Adult Education offers a competitive unpaid summer Health Literacy Fellowship for medical students. Read more about the program at its website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/adulted/html/health/fellowship.shtml>.

The New York State Department of Health Task Force on Life and the Law develops policy on emerging issues such as the withholding and withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, assisted suicide and euthanasia, assisted reproductive technologies, and organ and tissue transplantation. The program actively encourages inquiries about internships. Read more about their work at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/taskfce/>.

The US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, Region II, in New York City welcomes inquiries about student placements. Speak to Dr. Benker to learn more.

LOCAL SITES CONCERNED WITH GLOBAL HEALTH

The United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan welcomes student interns. Current opportunities are available at this website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/htm/internship.htm>. The UN also offers placements in other countries, including Thailand, the Republic of Korea, and Indonesia. Check the available listings on-line: http://www.unescap.org/jobs/internships/intern_divisions.asp.

Doctors Without Borders offers paid office internships at their NYC site. For more information, consult the website: <http://doctorswithoutborders.org/work/office/internships.cfm>.

The Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture offers training opportunities for selected health professionals and volunteer opportunities for English teachers and client chaperones. <http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/who-we-are>.

OTHER RESOURCES

The SPH has strong contacts with local community-based organizations dealing with immigrant health, maternal and child health, domestic violence, seniors, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and

other important issues. The program also has ongoing collaborations with the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health <http://www.arthurasheininstitute.org/> for service and research projects.

A list of possible sites for students interested in occupational health and safety is available from Dr. Paul Landsbergis.

The Field Experience, Step-by-Step

- 1. Answer the question: Where do I want to be in five or ten years?** The Field Experience continues the process of your assuming responsibility for your own professional development. Use this opportunity to fulfill your dreams for the future.
- 2. Meet with your advisor and decide what you need to learn to reach that goal.** Draft a set of learning objectives for a Field Experience that will advance your progress towards your goal. Review the core competencies for public health (<http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851>). The program expects you to have mastered in your core courses the discipline specific competencies. Go through the interdisciplinary/cross-cutting competencies to identify a few appropriate areas for your professional development.
- 3. Take the on-line course in professionalism during the Field Experience.**
- 4. Search for a site placement that fits your learning objectives.** Identify an agency and a qualified preceptor at that agency in collaboration with faculty. Placements may be paid or non-paid. However, make sure you are setting up your Field Experience in such a way that you are creating an opportunity to integrate the knowledge you have gained in the classroom and apply this to a “real life” setting. **Fill out Form A: Learning Objectives** (see p. 8).
- 5. Prepare placement activities.** Students must outline their learning objectives, their responsibilities, and their activities during the Field Experience. The faculty advisor and site preceptor must approve these selections and sign the placement agreement. **Attach your goals and objectives to Form B: Placement Agreement** (see p. 9).
- 6. Register for the Field Experience.** Register for the Field Experience in the semester that you will be carrying it out. The registration code is PUBH 6500.
- 7. Keep a regular activity log.** Once you start your Field Experience, keep a regular activity log of all activities on the PRIME web site. You can record your activities in journal or log format. Record and track the number of hours of the internship and activities/events of the internship. Your advisor will review your log from time to time. In your final report, you will attach a copy of your log as an appendix (see p. 16).
- 8. Complete Form C: Field Experience Progress Report.** Midway through your experience (after you have completed about 100 hours), **have your preceptor sign Form C and then submit the signed form to your faculty advisor** (see p. 12).
- 9. Prepare your final Field Experience report.** You must complete a formal written report, in which you do the following:
 - Describe fully your Field Experience;

- Include background information of the agency with which you worked; and
 - Address how you accomplished your goals and objectives were accomplished.
- The report should be a professional document, thorough and complete, including a draft outline. (See p. 16 for a complete description of the report outline.)

Attach as an appendix to your final written report your feedback on the site preceptor and the placement.

The final report is due by the last day of classes in the semester that you are registered for the Field Experience.

10. Give your preceptor Form D: “Preceptor’s Evaluation of Student Performance.”

At the end of your Field Experience, give your preceptor Form D: Preceptor’s Evaluation of Student Performance and a stamped envelope addressed to your advisor. To receive your grade, the preceptor’s evaluation must arrive by the last day of classes (see p. 13.)

11. Complete Form E: Field Experience Completion Form.

Form E (see p. 15) requires signatures of the student advisor, the preceptor, and the department chair.

SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
FIELD EXPERIENCE FORM A: Learning Objectives

Students must complete this form and secure the preceptor's signature and the advisor's approval *before the student begins the Field Experience.*

Student name _____

Student degree program & department _____

Expected semester of graduation _____

Field Experience learning objectives and crosscutting competencies:

Description of planned Field Experience:

Agency/Program name _____ Phone number _____

Address _____

SIGNATURES

Student _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Date _____

Preceptor _____ Date _____

**SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
FIELD EXPERIENCE FORM B**

LINKAGE AGREEMENT

This linkage agreement is an administrative agreement of our inter-agency community service program. Through a fieldwork placement of a graduate student the Master of Public Health Program will provide health information, workshops, presentations, data collection, data analysis, or other related services agreed upon for your staff and/or clients during one semester of the 2009-2010 academic year.

AGENCY NAME

SITE PRECEPTOR

PHONE NUMBER AT SITE

FAX NUMBER

E-MAIL ADDRESS

Karen Benker, MD, MPH
Associate Dean for
Community Public Health Affairs
Phone 718 221-6194
Fax 718 270-2533
kbenker@downstate.edu

Agency Representative
Date

Student name _____

Address _____

Phone & email _____

Agency _____

Address _____

SPH advisor _____

Phone & email _____

The specific roles, responsibilities and activities of the student, preceptor, and advisor are attached on a separate sheet.

I. The student agrees to:

- A. Acquire as much information about the agency as possible before beginning the placement.
- B. Determine, with the agreement of the agency preceptor and university faculty advisor, the objectives of the Field Experience and attach them to this form).
- C. Be responsible for knowing all provisions of the Field Experience expectations and agreements.
- D. Provide the agency with a personal resume.
- E. Consider him- or herself an integral part of the mentoring agency and to follow the rules and regulations of the agency.
- F. Maintain complete client confidentiality.
- G. Prepare thoroughly for each task related to the placement.
- H. Exhibit professionalism in all aspects of the internship including attendance, appointments, meetings, and discussions with supervisors and others.
- I. Consult with the agency preceptor when unsure of appropriate measures needed.
- J. Complete about 200 hours of contact time in the agency and to keep a log of activities.
In some cases, the minimum 200-hour contact time may be completed in more than one agency if an integrated Field Experience plan is approved by the faculty advisor.
- K. Complete and forward to university faculty advisor all documentation by deadlines.

II. The university faculty advisor agrees to:

- A. Assist the student in arranging the Field Experience.
- B. Prepare the student for the Field Experience.
- C. Provide advice and guidance to the student through visits, telephone contact, or e-mail, and in response to reports.
- D. Call the student in for a conference whenever a potential problem appears to have arisen.
- E. Provide academic resources as needed.
- F. Remove the student if the faculty advisor deems that either the student or the setting is inappropriate.

III. The agency preceptor and the agency agree to:

- A. Aid the student in outlining the Field Experience objectives before beginning. (The statement of objectives is attached to this form.)
- B. Explain the structure and function of the agency.
- C. Help the student plan a specific program.
- D. Invite the student to agency, interagency, and community meetings.
- E. Supervise the student.
- F. Provide a model of professional work habits and attitudes.
- G. Evaluate student performance on forms provided.

Along with the learning objectives, the student must outline the responsibilities and activities of this Field Experience in the space or on a separate sheet attached to this form.

Responsibilities and activities

By signing this agreement, all parties agree to the roles and responsibilities outlined above and a coordinated plan that outlines the duties and activities of this Field Experience.

SIGNATURES

<i>Student</i>	_____	Date _____
<i>Advisor</i>	_____	Date _____
<i>Preceptor</i>	_____	Date _____

SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
FIELD EXPERIENCE FORM C:
Field Experience Progress Report

Students must complete this form *midway through the Field Experience* (after about 100 contact hours) and secure the preceptor's signature and the advisor's signature.

Student name _____

Student degree program & department _____

Expected semester of graduation _____

Briefly describe your progress to date: If your objectives have changed, attached a copy of your revised objectives.

SIGNATURES

The student is currently making successful progress on the agreed upon Field Experience.

Student _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Date _____

Preceptor _____ Date _____

SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
FIELD EXPERIENCE FORM D:
Preceptor's Evaluation of Student Performance

Student name _____

Instructions to the student:

Complete the mailing information for your departmental advisor below, and submit this evaluation form to your preceptor at the end of your Field Experience.

Your preceptor will mail this completed form to:

Faculty advisor name _____

SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
Box 43
450 Clarkson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11203

Instructions to the preceptor:

Please complete this multi-page evaluation form and discuss the results with the student. Mail the signed original to the student's advisor at the address above.

(see next page)

Date _____

Student _____

Preceptor (rater/grader) _____

Agency _____

Unit or Department _____

Phone & email _____

Please rate the student according to the following numerical scale:

5=Excellent 4=Above Average 3=Satisfactory 2=Needs Improvement 1=Unsatisfactory

<i>Performance Standards and Criteria:</i>	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Initiative:</i> Degree to which the student can be relied upon to do the job without close supervision.					
Comments:					
<i>Quality of work:</i> Freedom from errors and mistakes; accuracy; consistency with the Field Experience objectives and the job description.					
Comments:					
<i>Quantity of work:</i> Work output relative to staff in comparable jobs.					
Comments:					
<i>Job knowledge:</i> Appropriate background knowledge of job-related behaviors, techniques, skills, and procedures to perform effectively.					
Comments:					

<i>Performance Standards and Criteria (con't)</i>	5	4	3	2	1
Application: Application of formal educational preparation to the practice setting.					
Comments:					
Cooperation: Willingness to work harmoniously with others in getting jobs done. Readiness to observe and conform to the policies of the agency.					
Comments:					
Dependability: Compliance with deadlines and standards of performance.					
Comments:					
Attendance: Punctuality, including daily arrival and departure at scheduled times; absent only for a good cause.					
Comments:					

Additional preceptor comments: _____

SIGNATURE

Preceptor _____ **Date** _____

SUNY Downstate School of Public Health
FIELD EXPERIENCE FORM E:
Field Experience Completion Form

To be completed by the student *as soon as he or she has completed the Field Experience*, signed by the preceptor, and delivered to the advisor for departmental signatures.

The original copy remains in the files of the Fieldwork Coordinator. A copy of this form with the abstract attached should remain with the faculty advisor.

Student name _____

Student degree program & department _____

Expected semester of graduation _____

A *final Field Experience report* has been submitted to the advisor. Yes _____ No _____

An abstract (500 words or less) of the completed Field Experience report must be attached.

An *abstract* is attached. Yes _____ No _____

An *evaluation from the preceptor* has been received. Yes _____ No _____

Field Experience completed Yes _____ No _____

SIGNATURES

Student _____ Date _____

Preceptor _____ Date _____

Agency _____ Phone _____

Advisor _____ Date _____

Department chair _____ Date _____

Outline for the Field Experience Report

REPORT OUTLINE

The Field Experience report is a formal, professional written document about five pages long. The report should accurately describe your Field Experience. Submit the final report to your faculty advisor by the appropriate deadline.

Your final report should include the following content:

- ***Title and author***
- ***Abstract:*** In 500 words or less, describe the goals of the project, activities, and results
- ***Environment:*** Briefly describe the host organization. Background information for the agency should include the agency's or unit's public health mission and goals, major activities, number of staff, etc. Indicate the dates of your Field Experience and number of hours per day/week. Describe financial assistance you received, if any.
- ***Field Experience rationale:*** Briefly outline the public health need that the Field Experience addressed.
- ***Goals and objectives:*** State your objectives for your Field Experience.
- ***Activities and outcomes:*** Describe the activities/tasks you performed. Address how you accomplished your objectives. Identify any barriers or limitations you encountered. Include a summary of activities. List/describe any written documents or products that were produced as a result of your Field Experience.
- ***Discussion:*** Provide a discussion based on the work accomplished. What were the positive and negative aspects of the experience? What lessons did you learn about public health practice from your experience? Would you recommend this agency as a placement site for future students? Why or why not?
- ***Recommendations:*** Provide recommendations based on the project. How can/will the agency benefit from your project?
- ***Self-assessment:*** Evaluate the level of success you achieved in realizing your objectives.
- ***Appendix:*** An appendix includes work accomplished during the Field Experience: copy of reports or documents written, materials produced, agenda of training held, your regular activity log, your assessment of the preceptor, and other items as deemed appropriate.

POSTER OUTLINE

Verify with your departmental advisor whether a poster is required for your Field Experience. The poster is a professional, visual description of your project. It should approximate a poster presentation at a national conference. The required elements of the presentation are:

- Title and author
- Agency/program description
- Learning objectives
- Description of activities
- Outcomes
- Lessons learned

Field Experience Waiver Criteria

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

The purpose of the Field Experience in the master's degree programs is to provide practical training to supplement classroom study in the development of public health professionals. The experience is a valuable and essential component of training for students with little or no previous work in a public health field. Students with documented actual practice experience, typically mid-career professionals in a field of public health, may be eligible for a waiver of the Field Experience requirement.

CRITERIA FOR GRANTING A WAIVER OF THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

*The Field Experience requirement may be waived for students who meet **all four of the criteria** below:*

1. At least 3 years of documented prior work experience in a field that is closely related to the academic objectives of the student's degree program
2. Employment that results in possessing the set of skills commensurate with those intended to be achieved through the Field Experience
3. Documentation that the student possesses those skills
4. Approval of the waiver request by the faculty advisor and department chair

For those entering students with in-depth public health experience of at least 2 years (for example, returning Peace Corps volunteers), the required number of hours in the Field Experience will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

DOCUMENTATION OF PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

The following are required:

1. Resume or documentation of 3 years' full time work experience in the field of study directly related to the degree program being pursued, with a description for each position, the relevant public health activities, and degree of responsibility.

OR

2. A job description that covers practice experience related to the field of study and describes the areas of practice and type and length of experience.

AND

3. One of the applicant's letters of recommendation must be from a supervisor describing and documenting the applicant's relevant practice experience.