Biostatistics Practicum

OVERVIEW

The practicum is one of the culminating experiences in the MStat-Biostatistics program. The purpose is to allow students to obtain specialized, hands-on, real-world experience in routine statistical consulting, data management, and data analysis, comparable to that in a master’s level career biostatistics position. It also allows the student, advisor and a practicing data analysis mentor to evaluate whether the student’s statistics and consulting skills are mature enough to go out into the field as a statistics professional.

DESCRIPTION

- Students spend a minimum of 3-4 hours a week for one semester, or equivalent, in a direct work experience involving data management and statistical analysis, under the supervision of a mentor from the practicum site. This may be paid or unpaid, but it should not ordinarily be work done at a job the student held before beginning the MStat-Biostatistics program.

- A practicum is intended to assess and increase one’s experience in routine data management and statistical data analysis. It is different from an MStat-Biostatistics project in that it involves routine data management and data analysis, whereas the MStat-Biostatistics Project involves learning a new statistical method, using it to think through the analysis of a data set, and writing a report to another statistician which summarizes the statistical and clinical issues, explains one’s statistical logic and summarizes the statistical and clinical results.

- Students will generally participate in a current or ongoing data analysis project of the practicum site, or, if feasible, propose their own projects.

- A prior statement of objectives, a report by the student summarizing experiences and knowledge gained, an evaluation by the student, and an evaluation by the mentor with concurring advisor signature are required, using forms provided by the MStat-Biostatistics Program. Please see below for more information regarding these forms.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PRACTICUM SITES

- The practicum site should be closely related to the practice of biostatistics.

- The work experience available at the site must include hands-on experience with the regular biostatistical work of the site, such as direct contact with the patients, clients, or customers.

- The site mentor must be available to supervise and evaluate the student’s experience.

- A practicum is generally distinct from a research opportunity, depending on the student’s career goals.
• Experience at a practicum site might add to the student’s resume.

PLACEMENT

The student is responsible to set up a practicum, in consultation with the advisor. The advisor will help choose a suitable practicum and find a statistics/statistics-related professional to serve as the mentor. The advisor and mentor will be the student’s main sources of assistance and feedback during this time. Questions may be referred to the MStat in Biostatistics Track Representative as necessary.

PRE-PRACTICUM FORMS

1.1 PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES FORM

Once a practicum site is located, you must complete the Practicum Objectives form. This form will outline specific objectives of the practicum, how they will be addressed as well as include brief description of the experience. It should clearly specify the extent of the work, as it functions as a contract, so that the student, mentor, and advisor all recognize when the work of the practicum has been completed. This form must be signed by the practicum mentor and approved by the student’s faculty advisor. Once the form is completed with the appropriate signatures, please return the form to the academic advisor.

1.2 REGISTER FOR PRACTICUM HOURS

Once the Practicum Objectives form has been completed and returned to the academic advisor a permission code will be distributed. The permission code will allow you to register for PBHLT 6971 – Practicum. Please be mindful of registration dates to ensure adequate time to obtain all of the needed forms and permission code for registration. Students must register for a total of 1 credit hour towards the practicum before graduation. Note: It doesn’t matter when students are registered for the practicum credit, this can be during or after the student actually completes their approved practicum hours.

AT THE END OF YOUR PRACTICUM

1.3 5 PAGE PAPER

A student’s practicum is evaluated by the student and the mentor, using forms developed by the MStat-Biostatistics Program, in addition to a 5 (or more)-page report by the student on the experience. The 5 page summary paper outlining the student’s practicum experience should hit on the following points:

• Briefly describe the practicum in relation to how it increased your experience in routine data management and statistical data analysis.
• State the focus of the practicum: identify how the focus is relevant to the student’s study; and, State the objectives that address both the student’s and the mentor goals and expectations.
• Describe the key responsibilities and activities of the student as it relates to the objectives of the practicum.
• Outline the results of the practicum, such as what you learned and how this experience will benefit your career goals.
1.4 Student Evaluation Forms 1 & 2

At the completion of the practicum, submit the completed Student Evaluation Form 1 and Student Evaluation Form 2 to the student’s faculty advisor and the academic advisor. The first form will be placed in your practicum records. The second form has no identifiers, and will not be placed with your practicum records, allowing for freedom to evaluate the practicum experience anonymously.

1.5 Mentor Evaluation Form

Finally, the student will have the practicum mentor submit a completed Mentor Evaluation Form report. It is the responsibility of the student to assure that the mentor submits the form. A copy of the form must be submitted to the academic advisor. Based on this information, the student’s faculty advisor assigns a credit (CR) or no credit (NC) for the experience.

1.6 Receiving Credit for Your Practicum

Note that PBHLT 6971 –Practicum is a Credit/No Credit course. If all paperwork is completed and submitted to the Division of Public Health by the last day of class, a CR/NC grade will be assigned and submitted to the registrar’s office for that semester. If paperwork is not received until after this deadline, the student will receive a T (In Progress) grade. Therefore, if the student wishes to graduate on a given semester, they must make sure all paperwork is submitted by the last day of class for that semester.