

# PhD Research Practicum Procedures

## OVERVIEW

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The purpose of the PhD Research Practicum is two-fold. First to have the student form a working relationship with a member of the full time Public Health Program faculty who will serve as the chair of his/her dissertation committee, Second to identify, with the assistance of the same faculty member, a suitable topic about which to write his/her Ph.D. dissertation.

All PhD students must complete 3 credit hour research practicum (135 hours fieldwork) prior to graduation. The practicum experience is meant to give students direct, hands-on research experience comparable to a career position suitable for someone with a PhD in Public Health. This will not only supplement the student's coursework and enrich their academic experience, but also prepare the student for employment after completion of their degree.

## PREPARATION

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Students must pass the General Examination before starting the research practicum. **NOTE: Students cannot be paid for doing their teaching or research practicum.**

- Students should consult with their faculty advisor or committee chair with potential practicum ideas and opportunities. Practicum opportunities can be found on the Division of Public Health website, and through email announcements. Practicum opportunities should be researched several weeks prior to registering for practicum hours.

## PRE-PRACTICUM FORMS

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### 1.1 PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES FORM

Once a Public Health faculty member is identified to serve as the advisor over the research practicum the student 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. This form must be signed by the practicum coordinator, the identified advisor of the practicum and the student's initial 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 the student to register for **PBHLT 7960 –Research 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 3 credit hour towards the practicum before graduation. If necessary, a practicum can exceed one semester; if this is the case, please contact the practicum coordinator so that an “in progress” grade (“T”) can be posted. The student’s practicum grade **MUST** be changed from a “T” to a credit/no credit grade in order to complete the doctoral degree.

## AT THE END OF YOUR PRACTICUM

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### 1.3 5 PAGE PAPER CONCEPT PROPOSAL

By the end of the research practicum the student should have identified a suitable topic for his/her PhD dissertation and have prepared a detailed proposal which should be submitted to the Division of Public Health faculty for their approval as a dissertation topic.

The 5-page concept proposal must be approved by the student’s supervisory committee before submitting the dissertation topic to all other faculty members within the Division of Public Health.

It is the responsibility of the student and their committee to coordinate a time to present their concept proposal during faculty meeting. For submission, at least ten business days prior to the scheduled faculty meeting, the Committee Chair will submit an electronic copy of the concept proposal to the Academic Advisor who will forward it to the Division of Public Health faculty. Faculty meetings are held once a month.

During the faculty meeting the student will present the proposal to the Division of Public Health faculty members; the student’s chair must be present at the meeting. The student should coordinate with their Supervisory Committee chair as to which faculty meeting is appropriate for the presentation. The review of the concept proposal serves to inform all faculty of the proposed project, and provides the opportunity for faculty members to comment on the student's project. It also gives faculty members the opportunity to offer constructive suggestions and apprise the student of resources of which they may not be aware. The concept proposal must be approved by Division of Public Health faculty prior to the student taking the qualifying examination.

### 1.4 PHD DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The topic of the dissertation should stem from the Research Practicum. The development of a satisfactory dissertation project is often very time-consuming, and students are encouraged to

begin their search for a research topic during their Research Practicum. The overall goals of the dissertation project are:

1. To assure that the student has experience in the full range of skills needed by practicing public health researchers and practitioners; and
2. To contribute to knowledge in the field of public health.

Generally a satisfactory investigation for a doctoral dissertation should include the following elements:

1. Formulation of a hypothesis or the specific aims of the project,
2. Development of the design of the project,
3. Planning the conduct of the project,
4. Collection of data,
5. Analysis of data,
6. Interpretation of results, and
7. Writing a report of the investigation.

The dissertation committee may approve a dissertation project without some of the above elements if the overall goals of the dissertation project (above) are met.

## 1.5 CONCEPT PAPER FORMAT GUIDELINES

Target length: 5 single-spaced pages (not including title page, references, and figures or tables)

Title Page: include project title, student's name, chair of committee, and committee members and date. Put a line next to each committee member for signature of approval.

- A. Specific aims – List the project's immediate goals in terms of hypotheses to be tested or research questions to be answered. If desired, the overall purpose of this line of investigation may be mentioned, in order to indicate the long-term importance of the specific information being sought through this study. This section should not exceed ½ page in length and may be much shorter.
- B. Background and significance – Describe the scientific context for the study, summarizing previous related research. An extensive literature review need not be included, but citing a few key references is helpful. This section should identify the gaps in knowledge which the proposed project will help to fill. It should not exceed 1 page in length.
- C. Methods – The format of this section may be tailored to meet the needs of the specific study being proposed. However, the following sub-headings usually apply, and their use is encouraged. This should be the longest section of the proposal, usually 3-5 pages in length.
  1. Study setting – Describe the location, organizational context, clinical site(s), or other setting in which the research would take place.

2. Study subjects – Indicate the source(s) of study subjects, criteria for eligibility, and the anticipated number to be studied.
3. Intervention if any – If an intervention is to be implemented or evaluated, describe it.
4. Data collection – Describe the sources of key data items on each subject. When applicable, the sequence of data collection activities for a typical subject should be given. A diagram can be helpful when data will come from several sources or when multiple observations over time are to be obtained. If there are plans to monitor and assure data quality (such as duplicate data for some or all subjects, cross-checks of one data source against another, or other techniques), describe them briefly. Also specify what role the doctoral candidate will play in data collection.
5. Data analysis – Describe how the data will be organized to address each of the specific aims mentioned in section A, indicating the statistical techniques to be used. Dummy tables or figures may be helpful. Summarize the results of statistical power or sample-size calculations.

D. References cited – Provide citations to key literature references used in the proposal.

## STUDENT EVALUATION FORMS 1 & 2

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At the completion of the practicum, and after the presentation of the students 5 page concept paper they must submit the completed [Student Evaluation Form 1](#) and [Student Evaluation Form 2](#) to the practicum coordinator 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.

## MENTOR EVALUATION FORM

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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 to the practicum coordinator. A copy of the form must be submitted to the academic advisor. Based on this information, the practicum coordinator assigns a credit (CR) or no credit (NC) for the experience.

## RECEIVING CREDIT FOR YOUR PRACTICUM

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Note that **PBHLT 7960 – Research Practicum** is a Credit/No Credit course. If all paperwork and the presentation of the students concept proposal 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.