

2.0 Instructional Program

2.4 Practical Skills. All graduate professional public health degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to students' areas of specialization.

***Interpretation.** The program must provide opportunities for professional public health degree students at the master's and doctoral levels to apply the knowledge and skills being acquired through their courses of study. Practical knowledge and skills are essential to successful practice. A planned, supervised and evaluated practice experience is an essential component of a professional public health degree program. These opportunities can take place in a variety of agencies and organizations and should include local and state public health agencies to the extent possible and appropriate. Opportunities may also include those in appropriate local, state, national and international non-governmental agencies and organizations. An essential component of the practice experience is supervision by a preceptor qualified to evaluate the professional competence of the student. Programs must have well-defined learning objectives, procedures and criteria for evaluation of the practice experience. Individual waivers, if granted, should be based on well-defined criteria; the possession of a prior professional degree in another field or prior work experience that is not closely related to the academic objectives of the student's degree program should not be sufficient reason for waiving the practice requirement.*

While there are advantages to a practice placement conducted full-time in a concentrated block of time, this is not always possible for students. Programs should be sensitive to the constraints of students and may develop alternative modes for providing practice experiences. If the student can do a placement only in his or her regular place of employment, the assignment must extend beyond or be something other than his or her regular work duties and allow application of the knowledge and skills being learned. There should be regular assessment and evaluation of practice placement sites and preceptor qualifications.

Residents in preventive medicine, occupational medicine, aerospace medicine and public health and general preventive medicine completing their academic year in the program may count their practicum year, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, as the required practice experience for the MPH program.

Required Documentation. The self-study document should include the following:

a. Description of the program's policies and procedures regarding practice placements, including the following:

- selection of sites
- methods for approving preceptors
- opportunities for orientation and support for preceptors
- approaches for faculty supervision of students
- means of evaluating student performance
- means of evaluating practice placement sites and preceptor qualifications
- criteria for waiving, altering or reducing the experience, if applicable

b. Identification of agencies and preceptors used for practice experiences for students, by specialty area, for the last two academic years.

c. Data on the number of students receiving a waiver of the practice experience for each of the last three years.

d. Data on the number of preventive medicine, occupational medicine, aerospace medicine and general preventive medicine and public health residents completing the academic program for each of the last three years, along with information on their practicum rotations.

e. Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of the program's strengths, weaknesses and plans relating to this criterion