Public Health Practicum Guidelines
**Practicum Overview**

**Purpose**

The practicum provides students with a structured public health practice experience whereby they can take a population based-approach to a public health problem and apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom.

**Requirement**

All MPH students will register and complete the one-credit, honors/pass/fail practicum experience. In general, fulfillment of the course requirement should begin when the student has completed between 12 and 30 credits, and the student has obtained the approval of their academic advisor. Students should have completed the following core courses:

- Health Care in the United States
- Introduction to Biostatistics
- Introduction to Epidemiology
- Behavioral and Social Factors in Public Health
- Environmental Influences on Human Health.

The practicum can be done either in one semester or spread out over three semesters but must be completed within one year of registering for the practicum. If necessary, students not registering for other courses while working on the practicum must register **maintenance of matriculation to maintain active status.** Students will keep a log of hours spent at the practicum site, and at the end of the practicum submit all the required deliverables during a “checkout appointment”, illustrating their experience to the Director of Public Health Practice.

**Types of Practicum**

The practicum experience can take many forms, all under appropriate supervision at the practicum site and by school faculty. It can be a structured project within a health agency or other relevant community-based organization, an administrative internship, or a research-oriented project. If a student fulfills the practicum requirement at his/her place of employment, the site supervisor cannot be the student’s immediate work supervisor and student needs to go “above and beyond his/her normal work duties”. The Site Supervisor should have a Master of Public Health degree or a master’s degree in a related field, or the equivalent combination of education and experience. The Site Supervisor meets with the student on a regularly scheduled basis to provide guidance and a community health perspective. The student and his/her Academic Advisor, the Site Supervisor and the Director of Public Health Practice will determine the place, scope, and duration of the practicum (**Practicum Agreement**). Students are required to submit a Practicum Application to the Director of Public Health Practice before or no later than the first 2 weeks they initiate their practicum. The Academic Advisor and the Site Supervisor will need to sign the Practicum Agreement form. In general, practicum sites will:

- Enable students to apply specific skills or competencies learned in the academic program;
- Provide logistic or virtual support to the student (e.g. desk, telephone, patient records, data, etc.);
- Provide a public health practice experience relevant to students’ MPH studies;
- Have a community-based/public health perspective;
- Enable students to meet learning objectives and criteria established by the school.
The practicum experience should be at least the equivalent of one month of full-time work (a minimum of 140 hours). Students will not be approved to graduate until all documentation for the practicum is completed and approved by the Director of Public Health Practice and the Student’s Academic Advisor.

As an alternative, students may, with permission of their Academic Advisor, enroll in a 3-credit field experience course. The Practicum Guidelines will be utilized for both the field experience course and the practicum. However, because the field experience is a 3 credit course, it requires additional hours and a more extensive report.

**Practicum Responsibilities**

**Student’s Academic Advisor**

1. Identifies students who are academically prepared to do the practicum, facilitates their registration and communicates this information to the Director of Public Health Practice.
2. Provides the Director of Public Health Practice with new practicum site referrals.
3. Communicates as needed with the student, the Director of Public Health Practice, and the Site Supervisor to develop the Practicum Application, Practicum Agreement, Practicum Report, and poster.
4. Communicates with the Director of Public Health Practice, the Site Supervisor and the student during the course of the practicum to discuss progress and to resolve any problems as needed.

**Director of Public Health Practice**

1. Communicates with students to facilitate the student development of an appropriate site where they can meet population-based educational objectives and competencies that are relevant to their area of concentration.
2. Reviews and provides feedback and instruction on the development of practicum deliverables through the course site, practicum workshop, virtual office hours and in-office or phone meeting with students.
3. Provides outreach and development of new practicum sites, and supports proven high quality sites through ongoing site visits and utilization of evaluation reports.
4. Develops the Placement Directory, a file of currently available practicum opportunities and solicits new proposals annually and maintains contacts within the public health community to encourage the submission of additional placement opportunities.
5. Maintains ongoing communication with students and faculty regarding practicum opportunities.
6. Maintains contact with students, Site Supervisors and Academic Advisors throughout the practicum to provide constructive feedback and resolve any issues that may arise.
7. Implements practicum workshops and updates the course site.

**Assistant Director of the Practicum**

1. Sends a welcome email to the practicum Site Supervisor with the Practicum Guidelines and pertinent information attached. The student and the Academic Advisor are included in the communication.
2. Develops and updates the practicum database to enable easy access for reporting purposes and quality assurance.
3. Updates the Practicum Site Resource Guide and Course Site.
4. Updates and reviews student files for completion.
5. Communicates with students on an ongoing basis regarding the development of their practicum and all required deliverables.
6. Conducts and participates in student practicum workshops and checkout appointments.
7. Communicates with the Director of Public Health Practice, Academic Advisors, and Site Supervisors on a timely basis to answer any questions and resolve problems as needed.

**Site Supervisor**

1. Provides an orientation to the public health program/setting of the practicum inclusive of organization chart, mission statement, and description of the target population served, copies of routine reports, and copies of applicable research studies.
2. Provides a list of pertinent readings/articles or resource information germane to the practicum project.
3. Completes all necessary forms regarding the practicum inclusive of the *Practicum Agreement* and *Site Supervisor Evaluation of Practicum* forms.
4. Explains work rules and procedures, provides necessary resources for the project, and assists in establishing access to the various data systems to be used by the student.
5. Communicates directly with the student and, as needed, with the Director of Public Health Practice, Assistant Director of the Practicum and the student’s Academic Advisor to discuss progress and resolve problems.

**Student**

1. Meet with his/her Academic Advisor to review their program plan, discuss timing, and obtain approval for registration for the practicum course.
2. Meet with the Director of Public Health Practice and/or Assistant Director of the Practicum after registering for the practicum course to discuss practicum placement.
3. Provide an up-to-date resume to the Director of Public Health Practice and/or Assistant Director of the Practicum.
4. Actively participates in the development of a site. Students may reach out to public health agencies, hospitals, community-based organizations for the purpose of developing a practicum. All practicum sites and projects are required to be approved by the Director of Public Health Practice and the Academic Advisor. Ultimately, it is the student’s responsibility to secure a practicum site.
5. Communicate with the Site Supervisor, the Director of Public Health Practice, Assistant Director of the Practicum, and the Academic Advisor to discuss progress and resolve problems during the practicum experience.
6. Complete and submit in the format provided in the *Practicum Guidelines* and Course Site, all required deliverables (*Practicum Application, Practicum Agreement, Interim Evaluation of Practicum, log of hours, Practicum Report, Student Evaluation of Practicum, Site Supervisor Evaluation, and poster* (electronic version). Students are responsible for obtaining the necessary signatures on all forms and submitting them to the Director of Public Health Practice or Assistant Director of the Practicum.
7. Complete all required deliverables in a timely and accurate manner as detailed in the course syllabus section VII. You must review all work for spelling, grammar, and professional formatting and citation (APA or AMA).
8. Schedule a final checkout appointment with the Director of Public Health Practice or Assistant Director of the Practicum.
9. Organize in advance and emails as per directions on the course site a final copy of all required practicum deliverables attached to one email. Students can do a checkout appointment via phone, in-office or skype.
The Practicum Application

The Practicum Application sets forth the proposed scope of the practicum experience, including the objectives to be achieved by the student, specific learning competencies that will be attained, the proposed activities, and the timeline for deliverables.

In preparing the Practicum Application, student should work with their Site Supervisor, the Director of Public Health Practice and their Academic Advisor to ensure common understanding of the objectives and proposed activities of the practicum. The Practicum Application must be approved by the Site Supervisor, the Director of Public Health Practice, and the student’s Academic Advisor no later than the end of the third week of the practicum.

Application Format

The Practicum Application includes the following:
- Student Name and ID Number
- Name and address of the agency or organization serving as the practicum site
- Mailing Address (if different)
- Identification of Site Supervisor and Academic Advisor
- Title of the practicum project
- Nature and Scope of proposed project (description of the practicum site and project – minimum of two paragraphs)
- Start and end date of the practicum project
- Learning objectives (minimum of three)
- Strategies to be used
- Site resources to be used
- Core and Program Competencies to be met by the practicum project (minimum of three).
- Proposed final products
- References (APA or AMA formatting)

Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are measurable concise statements of the competencies, skills, knowledge, or understanding that the student plans to achieve. They should be specific, measurable, reasonable, and obtainable within a particular timeframe (see SMART objectives document on course site). A minimum of three learning objectives for the practicum are necessary. They should be written in the present tense and use action verbs that describe how learning will be demonstrated.

The following steps should help students to formulate good learning objectives.

Step 1 Write down all the activities and duties that you will engage in throughout the practicum.
Example: data analysis

Step 2 Write down the resources needed from yourself and the organization to accomplish each of the listed activities.
Example: need data, knowledge of how data were collected, time, software, knowledge of software, computer, work space, and what is the purpose of the analysis?
Step 3 Write the outcome for each of the listed activities.
Example: The data analysis is being used to help with the quality control survey of how a program is utilized.

Step 4 Develop learning objectives considering the activities, resources needed, and outcomes written in steps 1-3 above. What is going to be learned?
Example: 1) Utilize statistical software to analyze the given data.
2) Assess how data must be “cleaned” to prepare for proper analysis
3) Apply data analysis product to develop overall evaluation of program

The following is a list of verbs, which may be helpful in the development of your learning objectives.

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**Competencies**

Each student is required to identify and meet a minimum of three NYMC School of Health Sciences and Practice competencies; this must include at least one Program competency from the program in which the student is enrolled, and at least one Core competency from a different program area. The learning objectives that students develop will facilitate their attainment of the competencies that they have identified. Core and Program Competencies are listed in the school’s catalog, and are available on the practicum course learning management site. Students will document how they attained proficiency in each competency in the Practicum Application, and will use the Student Evaluation of Practicum Site form to assess whether they have met each competency. Site supervisors will be asked to provide feedback on whether the students have met the competencies the students have identified in the Practicum Application.

**The Practicum Report**

The Practicum Report summarizes the practicum project. It is divided into two major sections; the initial section describes the practicum organization. You will be asked to provide the mission, organizational structure, services and program offered by your practicum agency. The second section describes your project. You will be asked to do a literature review, describe your objectives, methods, results and the public health implications of your work. In the second section, each student will explicitly demonstrate how each objective and competency
outlined in the practicum application was met through his or her practicum experience. Please utilize standard section headings in your methods section (as per your program’s requirements).

**Report Format**

The *Practicum Report* includes the following:

- Student Name
- Name of the agency or organization serving as the practicum site
- Identification of Site Supervisor
- Period of Practicum start and end dates

**Profile of Practicum Organization**

1. Mission/purpose/goals of the organization
2. Mission/purpose/goals of the student
3. Organizational structure
4. Services and programs offered
5. Population served (include demographic/census data)
6. Other information

**Description of student’s project**

1. Introduction and literature review
2. Learning objectives (minimum of three)
3. Methods (discuss how the learning objectives were met)
4. Presentation of results, discussion of competencies, and public health implications
5. References (minimum of ten AMA or APA style)

- Final products of project
- Did this project further your educational/career goals
- Would you recommend this practicum site to other students?

**Poster Presentation**

At the completion of the practicum, the student prepares and presents a poster that summarizes their experience, to the Director of Public Health Practice at the practicum checkout meeting. Students’ Academic Advisor and Site Supervisor are encouraged to participate.

At some time in their professional careers, MPH graduates will probably be required to prepare a poster and participate in a poster session at a professional meeting. This is a good opportunity to learn this skill and participate in a poster session attended by one’s peers and colleagues.

**Guidelines for Posters**

Practicum students should begin to think about the nature, focus, and content of the poster right at the beginning of the practicum. Thinking about the end product in advance can help students focus his/her practicum learning objectives and activities. Students should also discuss the development of the poster with the Director of Public Health Practice throughout the practicum experience. Students are encouraged to sign up for “Poster Making” classes at the NYMC Health Sciences Library and to use course resources.

The following guidelines are offered to help create an excellent poster that will enhance the learning experience.

**Poster Materials**
• PowerPoint can be used to create the images for the poster. However, it is advisable to not simply tack up a series of PowerPoint slides, with bulleted text. Charts, photographs and/or other graphics should be included to make the poster visually appealing and interesting.

Poster Content

The poster should contain the following information:

• Title
• Student Name and Academic Department
• Background:
  1. Name, location and brief description of organization serving as a practicum site
  2. Description of project, what motivated the project and what historical work has lead up to this project. This section should include appropriate reference citations
  3. This section also sets the stage for the results and conclusions that follow
  4. Description of population served or program participants
• Purpose and Learning Objectives:
  1. Purpose of the project
  2. Learning Objectives proposed in the practicum application and report
• Materials and Methods:
  1. Strategies employed to complete work; depending on the nature of the practicum, the activities may include a description of how the student’s activities fit into a larger project.
• Results:
  1. Key findings and lessons learned
• Conclusions:
  1. Meaning and Context of Findings
  2. Recommendations and Insights about how the work could be advanced or what should be done with the findings to improve the health of the public
• References:
  1. AMA or APA Format

Poster Style

No matter how wonderful the practicum experience and how brilliant the poster content, people will only learn from it if the material is presented effectively. A poster is a visual medium. The design should get the main points across easily, attract colleagues and engage them in conversation. There are several excellent sets of detailed guidelines available on the web: http://www.nymc.edu (Click on library, then Click Services, then Poster Printing.)

The overarching themes of all of these (and other sets of guidelines) are:

• Organization: Use headings to help readers find what they are looking for (practicum setting, objective, result, conclusions, etc.). Most suggest a columnar format: top to bottom, left to right. You may want to include arrows to direct the reader. Use pleasing and balanced arrangement of graphics, text, colors.
• Less is more: Keep the verbiage to a minimum. Do not simply tack up pages of text. Some suggest a maximum of 50-75 words of text on a page. All text should be in fonts large enough to be read from 3-6 feet away. Title should be in larger font sizes to be read from far away. Use simple fonts (e.g. Arial, Helvetica); do not use more than 2 types of fonts. Note: double-check the spelling in the text.
• Colors: Dark colors on a light background are easiest to read. Use a theme of 2-3 colors; avoid overly bright (neon) colors.
• **Graphics**: Use graphics (simple charts, tables, graphs) and photos as appropriate. Remember: a picture can be worth a thousand words. Not only do they help tell a story, they also help attract the audience.

**Exemption from Practicum Requirement**

Practicum experience is considered a core requirement for the MPH and a waiver is rarely granted. However, students who believe their previous work experiences fulfill the practicum requirement must submit the Practicum Waiver Application to their Academic Advisor at least 18 months prior to graduation. In general, students requesting exemption from the practicum requirement must document at least ten years of work experience encompassing broad-based and diverse areas of public health practice. The documentation accompanying a waiver application is expected to fully demonstrate that the student will have nothing to gain from a practicum experience with respect to developing a deep understanding within the discipline of public health and a broad understanding of the scope of public health practice. The student must document that he/she has met all of the criteria required for granting a waiver.

The student’s Academic Advisor will review the application. Only applications approved by the Academic Advisor will be reviewed by the Director of Public Health Practice. If the Director of Public Health Practice agrees that a waiver should be granted, he/she will present the request to a waiver committee for confirmation. The student will be notified by the Director of Public Health Practice of the waiver committee’s decision. If the waiver committee has denied the waiver request than the student will be informed by the Director of Public Health Practice which criteria were not fully met. All waiver decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

**Waiver Criteria**

1. Documentation of previous public health practice where public health concepts have been applied. Public health concepts include knowledge of the core functions of assessment, and policy development; the assurance of a population-based approach to health problems and their prevention; experience working with community partners.
2. Documentation that specialty knowledge in the student’s area of concentration has been applied previously using a population approach to health problems.
3. Documentation that the student’s previous public health experience was broad based, diverse, of sufficient time (minimum of ten years work experience) and involved the application of many skills that complement his/her main area of academic training.
4. Documentation that previous public health experience was planned and had well defined learning objectives, outcomes, evaluation criteria which results in a formal presentation or publication and was supervised by a preceptor qualified to evaluate the public health practice of the student.
5. Documentation of the student’s prior experience must be applicable to future goals.
6. A few examples of areas which might be considered for a waiver could include:
   - Developing policies and intervention strategies to meet public health needs;
   - Conducting relevant research on population-based health problems;
   - Establishing health objectives, priorities, and needs assessments;
   - Assessing, monitoring or conducting surveillance of health problems/services in a designated population.
*Please note that previous clinical experience (as a physician or other health practitioner), but with no supervised and evaluated experience in an agency taking a population-based approach to a community, does not justify a waiver.

**Practicum Waiver Application**

I request a waiver of the MPH Practicum requirement. I have acquired skill and experience in the application of public health principles to solve community health problems through prior field-based experience/employment. My prior experiences have been appropriately supervised, planned, implemented and evaluated.

Attached to this application is a resume of my relevant employment/experience and other required documentation.

Student

Name

Signature

Date

Program


Academic Advisor

Name

Signature

Date

Director of Public Health Practice

Name

Signature

Date

Reviewed by waiver committee

☐ Approved  ☐ Not Approved

Director of Public Health Practice

Name

Signature

Date

Dean’s Office

Name

Signature

Date
Practicum Application

Student Name: ID number:

Agency/Organization:

Agency Physical Address:

Mailing address if different:

Site Supervisor Name, Degree(s) & Title:
   Phone number:
   Fax number:
   Email address:

Academic Advisor Name, Degree(s) & Title:
   Phone number:
   Fax number:
   Email address:

Practicum Proposal (Title of Project):
   Start date: End date:

   Nature & scope of proposed project:

   Objectives (please list a minimum of three):

   Strategies to be used:

Site resources to be used (if special permission is needed to gain access to data, records, etc. how it will be arranged):

Identify which competencies you will be developing during the course of your practicum (please identify a minimum of three):

Final products:

References: (AMA or APA formatting)
Practicum Agreement

I have participated in the development of the practicum proposal and agree to the conditions specified above. If it is necessary to change any of the specified conditions, I agree to make the changes known to each of the persons whose signatures appear below.

Student______________________________________ Date__________

Site Supervisor____________________________________ Date__________

Academic Advisor____________________________________ Date__________

Director of Public Health Practice_________________________ Date__________
Site Supervisor Interim Evaluation of Practicum Student

Student Name:  

ID number:  

Agency/Organization:  

Agency Physical Address:  

Site Supervisor Name, Degrees & Title:  

Phone number:  

Fax number:  

DIRECTIONS: This evaluation should be completed by the site supervisor mid-way through the practicum. Using the following rating scale, the site supervisor will evaluate the student for the qualities listed below marking the box corresponding to the appropriate rating. Please attempt to respond to all of the listed qualities. You may add any comments that are helpful in describing the student's performance in the space provided in section III.

RATINGS:  

EXCELLENT 5  
ABOVE AVERAGE 4  
AVERAGE 3  
BELOW AVERAGE 2  
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT 1  
UNSATISFACTORY 0

I. PERSONAL QUALITIES

A. Congenial, poised.  
B. Approachable, courteous.  
C. Well-grounded, wears suitable clothing for worksite.  
D. General personality for public health or community service  
E. Use effective communication skills

II. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

A. General attitude toward assigned work.  
B. Attitude toward suggestions for improvement.  
C. Attitude toward being supervised.  
D. Industrious, willing to work, conscientious.  
E. Interested in the work of the agency, association, or organization.  
F. Initiative sees what needs to be done, resourceful.
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<td>G. Takes responsibility, trustworthy.</td>
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<td>H. Cooperative, dependable.</td>
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<td>I. Handles routine matters effectively.</td>
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<td>J. Makes good use of time and gets things done.</td>
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<td>K. Overall ability to handle general problems.</td>
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<td>L. Has ability to make constructive plans in order to solve problems.</td>
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<td>M. Has a caring, empathetic attitude toward the agency's clientele.</td>
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<td>N. Prompt, reported to the agency for work on time.</td>
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<td>O. Probable future success as a public health professional.</td>
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III. COMMENTS:


Site Supervisor ____________________________________ Date _____________

Signature

Student ______________________________________________ Date _____________

Signature
Practicum Report

Student name:

Site of Practicum:

Practicum Site Supervisor:

Period of Practicum Start date: End date:

1. Profile of Practicum Organization:
   a) Mission/purpose/goals of the organization
   b) Mission/purpose/goals of the student
   c) Organizational structure
   d) Services and programs offered
   e) Population served (include demographic/census data)
   f) Other information

2. Description of student’s project:
   a) Introduction (include description of project, literature search and literature review, why is this project important)
   b) Objectives
   c) Methods (list and discuss how each learning objective was met)
   d) i. Presentation of results
      ii. Discussion of competencies (list and discuss how each competency was met)
      iii. Public health implications
   e) References (minimum of ten AMA or APA style)

3. Final products of project:

4. Did this project further your educational/career goals? (Yes/No) Please explain

5. Would you recommend this practicum site to other students? (Yes/No) Please explain
Practicum Log of Hours

Student Name: ___________________________ ID number: ___________________________

Agency/Organization: ___________________________

Agency Physical Address: ___________________________

Site Supervisor Name, Degrees & Title: ___________________________

Phone number: ___________________________

Fax number: ___________________________

Email address: ___________________________

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Grand Total: __________________________________________

Site Supervisor ___________________________ Date___________

Signature

Student ___________________________ Date___________

Signature
Site Supervisor Evaluation of Practicum

Student Name: ________________________________  ID number: ________________________________

Agency/Organization: ________________________________

Agency Physical Address: ________________________________

Site Supervisor Name, Degrees & Title: ________________________________

   Phone number: ________________________________

   Fax number: ________________________________

Practicum Period  Start date: ________________________________  End date: ________________________________

Was the student well matched to the site? Please explain ________________________________

Did the student meet your expectations? Please explain ________________________________

Did the School reach out to you and provide the practicum guidelines? ________________________________

What suggestions do you have for future MPH placements in your organization? ________________________________

Did the student meet the competencies and objectives identified on the practicum application? Please explain ________________________________

Is there additional knowledge, and or skills that you recommend students be taught in their required coursework? ________________________________

Site Supervisor______________________________________________________________________________  Date____________________

   Signature

Student__________________________________________________________________________________________  Date____________________

   Signature

***********************************************************************************************************************************************
**Student Evaluation of Practicum Site**

**ID number:** ________________________________  **Date:** ________________________________

**Last Name:** __________________________________________

**First Name:** __________________________________________

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Please circle the criteria which best describes your experience in each of the following domains:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to Site Supervisor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of guidance and supervision from Site Supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to agency resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Academic Advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to the Director and Assistant Director of the Practicum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the competencies and objectives you identified on the practicum application</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same criteria, rate your overall experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Would you recommend this agency/organization to other students? Why or why not?**

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**Is there additional knowledge, and or skills that you think should be taught in your required coursework to prepare you for the practicum?**