



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

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DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH

# **Master of Public Health Applied Practice Experience Handbook**

**Academic Year 2024-2025**

MPH Concentrations include:

- Community Health Education (CHE)
- Epidemiology (EPI)
- Health Policy and Management (HPM)
- Veterinary Public Health (VPH)
- Nutrition

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## Forward & Contact Information

The MPH Applied Practice Experience (APEX) is a 240-hour professional experience enabling graduate students to develop public health competencies while contributing to projects that benefit an organization. It is considered a vital component of the graduate program in Public Health at The University of Tennessee. The APEX affords MPH students a positive opportunity for the integration of theory and practical experience that requires a planned joint effort between the Public Health Program and the participating organization. Close collaboration between the academic program and the practice setting enhances the quality of the learning experience and the professional growth and development of the student as well as ensure that the student has the opportunity to contribute to the mission of the field organization. This document is intended to facilitate the development of individualized, in-depth Applied Practice Experiences.

The Applied Practice Experience serves as a major laboratory in which academic knowledge, skills, and professional experience are coordinated and expanded in a meaningful and functional manner. As a significant culminating graduate experience, the Applied Practice Experience permits the student to demonstrate communication skills, to apply knowledge independently, and to interact with other professionals in the organization. Students who have completed the Applied Practice Experience are highly enthusiastic about the many benefits of field involvement and are eager to share their experiences with others. Additionally, students have found that the inclusion of the Applied Practice Experience component in the MPH curriculum strengthens their competitive ranking for employment following graduation.

We extend our sincere appreciation in advance for the preceptor's willingness to participate in an important facet of graduate education. Without the preceptor, the Applied Practice Experience would not be possible.

### Contact Information

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# Master of Public Health Program

## ***Mission***

The Graduate Public Health Program at The University of Tennessee provides quality education and leadership to promote health in human populations through interdisciplinary instruction, research, and community service.

## ***Vision***

The MPH Program is recognized for its empowerment of students pursuing public health careers which focus on community health improvement.

## ***Goals***

The goals of the Public Health Program reflect the major functions of the program and assist in the attainment of the mission and movement toward the vision. The goal statements are linked to instruction, research, and service.

Instructional Goal: Preparation of future professionals competent in public health core content and methodological approaches.

Research Goal: Public health faculty and students engaged in research projects that address health concerns and community health improvement and add to the knowledge base.

Service Goal: Public health faculty and students engaged in community, government, and professional service to benefit populations at the local, state, and national levels.

## ***Program Values***

1. **Respect** - To engage in experiences that obligate a person to take responsibility for the public's good, to recognize human dignity, and to value the worth of individual and collective behaviors.
2. **Holistic Consideration** - To emphasize a socio-ecological systems approach for understanding and promoting optimal health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.
3. **Excellence** - To commit to the highest quality in teaching-learning and in practice.
4. **Collaboration** - To advocate for networking, partnering, consensus building and participatory approaches for improving population health.
5. **Diversity** - To recognize the benefits of diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives and prepare culturally competent public health professionals.
6. **Equity** - To promote equality of opportunity for individuals, families, and communities.

# Guidelines for MPH Applied Practice Experience

## ***Purpose***

- A. The Applied Practice Experience is an important component of the MPH program because it allows application of academic theory, concepts, and skills in a realistic setting. The experience also expands the student's understanding of the variety of organizations engaged in health-related activities.
- B. Although primarily a learning opportunity for which the public health intern earns six (6) semester hours of credit (PH 587), the Applied Practice Experience program is beneficial to a participating field organization in that a placement:
  - 1. allows the organization to contribute to professional preparation of MPH students,
  - 2. provides additional personnel resources for the completion of special projects,
  - 3. offers the organization the fresh perspective of the public health intern,
  - 4. develops a working relationship between the field organization and the University of Tennessee.

## ***Eligibility***

- A. MPH students typically complete the Applied Practice Experience during the last semester of study. MPH foundation courses and ideally, all concentration courses should be completed so that knowledge and skills learned in courses can be applied during the APEX. Exceptions are occasionally made for students with previous work experience and academic excellence. Approval for an early APEX is at the discretion of the APEX coordinator, faculty advisor, and MPH program director. Students must have earned an overall grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- B. To formally request to complete the Applied Practice Experience, students should complete the [student request form](#) via Qualtrics 4-7 months before the desired start date. The request form is reviewed by the APEX coordinator and faculty advisor who provide final approval for the student to complete the APEX in the desired semester(s).

## ***Contact Hours***

- A. The Applied Practice Experience requires that the student be involved in the work of a field organization for a minimum of 240 hours. The exact calendar dates are arranged between the public health intern and the field organization and must be communicated to the Applied Practice Experience Coordinator.
- B. The 240 contact hours are spent with the field organization. Assignments for PUBH 587 should be completed by the student intern outside of these hours.

## **Structure**

- A. The Applied Practice Experience can be completed on a full-time (summer semester only) or a part-time (more common) basis. Typically, the APEX is 16 hours per week over a 15-week semester. If mutually agreeable to the student intern and the field organization, the APEX can be completed over two semesters. Students can request to begin the APEX before the semester starts, but final start date approval is at the discretion of the APEX coordinator.
- B. The Applied Practice Experience can be completed in a variety of modalities. In-person and hybrid experiences are highly recommended, but students can complete the APEX remotely if agreeable to the field organization. Students are expected to adhere to the same level of professionalism for a remote experience as they would for an in-person or hybrid experience. Students should have access to a stable Wi-Fi connection and communicate at least weekly with their preceptor.

## **Field Organizations**

- A. The APEX coordinator maintains a spreadsheet of opportunities and field organizations for students organized by concentration, but ultimately students are responsible for securing a placement with a field organization. Students are encouraged to select a field organization and experience that aligns with their interests and career goals.
- B. The Applied Practice Experience can take place in a wide variety of settings and should align with the student's MPH concentration. Common field organizations include non-profits, hospitals, campus departments/offices, health departments, government, and clinics, among others.
- C. The field organization retains the right of final approval of each intern placement. Field organizations may use a variety of selection methods including an application or formal interview.
- D. Students who work in the field of public health may request to complete the APEX with their current employer. This may be approved by the department under the following circumstances:
  - a. APEX projects differ substantially from the student's current position duties and responsibilities.
  - b. The preceptor is qualified and is someone different from the student's current supervisor.

## **Products**

- A. Students are required to produce at least two products during the Applied Practice Experience that demonstrate five MPH competencies. This includes three foundational competencies and two competencies from the student's MPH concentration. Products should emphasize graduate-level work and the student should not solely function as an "assistant."

- B. Products should benefit the field organization and be appropriate for the student's MPH concentration.
- C. Products are unique to the student's field experience. Examples of appropriate products may include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Surveys or questionnaires
  - b. Evaluation or evaluation plan
  - c. Process or quality improvement projects
  - d. Literature review
  - e. Interview guide
  - f. Policy brief
  - g. Journal article or manuscript
  - h. Needs assessment
  - i. Data analysis
  - j. Social media campaign
  - k. Curriculum development
  - l. Training guide or manual
  - m. Fact sheet or infographic

### ***Preceptor***

- A. The Applied Practice Experience preceptor is a practicing professional who mentors the student intern and oversees the APEX and products. The preceptor is responsible for assessing and evaluating the student's progress and performance during the APEX.
- B. Preceptors will ideally have a MPH degree or higher, but this is not required. Qualified preceptors may have graduate degrees in relevant fields (child and family studies, education, social work, etc.). Years of public health work experience, ideally in a supervisory position, may substitute for a graduate degree.

### ***Learning Agreement***

- A. Once a student has identified a field organization and preceptor, they should complete the Applied Practice Experience learning agreement with their preceptor. The learning agreement is available on the department's [APEX webpage](#). The learning agreement should be completed at least two months before the desired APEX start date.
- B. The learning agreement is signed by the student intern, preceptor, and APEX coordinator. The APEX coordinator reserves the right to request revisions to the learning agreement. Students are not permitted to register for PUBH 587 or begin contact hours for the APEX until the learning agreement is signed and approved. Final approval is at the discretion of the APEX coordinator and MPH program director who reserve the right to ask a student to secure a different APEX if the field organization or preceptor is not deemed appropriate.
- C. Once the learning agreement is approved, the APEX coordinator will contact the Administrative Specialist to remove a student's hold so they can register for PUBH 587.

## ***Funding***

- A. Stipends or hourly pay, although not required for field organization participation, are welcome. Stipend amounts vary based on the type of organization, typically ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with an average of \$3,500.
- B. The Department of Public Health is not involved in arranging payment for interns. Students who require funding for the Applied Practice Experience are encouraged to begin their search early as the majority of APEX sites are unpaid.

## ***Affiliation Agreements***

- A. Some field organizations may require or request a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Public Health and the organization before a student intern can be placed for their APEX. If this is required, the student intern must notify the APEX coordinator as soon as possible as agreements or MOU's take additional time to be approved.

## ***Liability Insurance***

- A. Some field organizations may require students to have liability insurance coverage. Liability insurance covers liability and actions of students while they are engaged in a University of Tennessee directed educational activity related to their professional field. One year of liability insurance can be purchased for \$15 and will be billed directly to myUTK. More information on liability insurance can be found through the [Office of Risk Management](#).
- B. Practicing veterinarians with liability insurance do not need to purchase additional insurance. Dual DVM/MPH students may be eligible for complimentary liability insurance through a [SAVMA membership](#).

## ***Background Check and Immunization***

- A. Some field organizations may require or request a background check or proof of immunization(s) as a condition of the Applied Practice Experience. If a student wishes to pursue an organization with immunization or background check requirements, they must comply at their own personal expense or select another field organization.

## ***Research Activities***

- A. If a student is involved with research activities during the APEX that involve data related to humans, IRB review may be required. Students should discuss these activities with their preceptor and review the [Human Subjects Research Determination](#) information before proceeding.
- B. The Office of Research, Innovation, & Economic Development at UTK [offers virtual office hours](#) which students can utilize for questions about the IRB process.



- C. Research does not have to be conducted through UTK and students can be involved with research conducted through their APEX organization as long as the responsible conduct of research is followed.

## **Dual Students**

- A. Dual MS/MPH students do not complete the APEX through the Department of Public Health. The UTK Nutrition Department manages and secures internships for dual MS/MPH students.
- B. Dual DVM/MPH students complete the APEX through the Department of Public Health. Dual DVM/MPH students are highly encouraged to consult with VPH faculty for placement recommendations.

## **Termination of Applied Practice Experience**

- A. The APEX Coordinator will communicate and work closely with student interns and preceptors to ensure that the APEX is appropriate and meets the needs of both the student and field organization.
- B. The Department of Public Health may remove a student from a field organization at the request of the organization or the student under limited circumstances which may include the following: violation of organization or university policies, threatening or abusive behavior, failure to meet expectations with an impact to an organization's operations, intern responsibilities and activities do not meet or align with APEX requirements, or preceptor cannot adequately fulfill supervision duties and an alternative preceptor cannot be identified. *This list is not exhaustive.*
- C. If an organization is no longer able to host a student intern, the APEX coordinator will work closely with the student to identify alternative options for the APEX.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Applied Practice Experience Coordinator**

- A. Orient all MPH students to the APEX by hosting an annual information session at the beginning of fall semester. Specific dates and content are provided for distance education and on-campus MPH students.
- B. Provide students with a list of possible field organizations and provide the following resources to help students identify an appropriate APEX:
  - a. APEX guidelines for students
  - b. MPH competencies
  - c. Learning agreement
  - d. Instructions for setting up an appointment with the Center for Career Development and Academic Exploration to review resumes or cover letters.
  - e. Finding an APEX
- C. Develop field organization partnerships on campus, in the community, and through faculty referrals for internships in various locations, modalities, and concentrations.

- D. Review and approve completed student request forms in consultation with the faculty advisor.
- E. Support students to engage in meaningful and appropriate internships by:
  - a. Providing suggestions on field organizations based on the student's interests and responses in the student request form.
  - b. Providing guidance on MPH competencies and appropriate products.
  - c. Providing feedback on and approving the learning agreement.
  - d. Meeting with the student's preceptor as needed to provide guidance and resolve any issues.
  - e. Meeting with the student and/or communicating regularly via email as needed to answer questions, discuss APEX progress, and resolve any issues.
  - f. Providing timely and useful feedback on assignments for PUBH 587.
- F. Work with the Administrative Specialist to override holds for students to register for PUBH 587 once the learning agreement has been signed and approved.
- G. Attend, facilitate, and grade all of the APEX oral presentations at the end of the semester, and provide emailed feedback on the presentation to the student.

## ***Student***

- A. Attend one of the fall semester Applied Practice Experience information sessions.
- B. Complete the [student request form](#) to identify desired semester(s) for APEX and articulate public health interests, career goals, and potential field organizations.
- C. Research potential field organizations and discuss with the APEX coordinator as needed.
- D. Apply and interview with field organization(s), and communicate any organization requirements (i.e., MOU, liability insurance) to the APEX coordinator at least 4 months prior to the desired start date.
- E. Attend an APEX planning session on Zoom at the end of the semester before starting the APEX.
- F. Complete learning agreement with preceptor and communicate any agreement changes during the APEX to the APEX coordinator.
- G. Complete and turn in assignments for PUBH 587 throughout the semester and make revisions in a timely manner if requested by the APEX coordinator. This includes the following:
  - a. APEX products
  - b. Weekly time log
  - c. APEX journals
  - d. Midpoint and final evaluation
  - e. Final report
  - f. Oral presentation slides
  - g. APEX in action
  - h. Evaluation of the APEX

- i. MPH exit survey
  - j. Self-assessment of competencies
- H. Work with preceptor and the APEX coordinator as needed to resolve any issues or barriers to achieving the competencies and objectives for the APEX.
- I. Send a thank you note or email to preceptor at the end of the APEX to thank them for their time and effort.
- J. Deliver oral presentation to Department of Public Health faculty, staff, students, and preceptor (if available) at the end of the semester.

### ***Faculty Advisor***

- A. Meet with student advisees to discuss class schedule and timing of the Applied Practice Experience.
- B. Review and approve completed student request forms in consultation with the APEX coordinator.
- C. Work with the student and APEX coordinator as needed to identify appropriate field organizations based on a student's schedule, abilities, and interests.
- D. Attend and grade APEX oral presentations for student advisees.

### ***Preceptor***

- A. Work closely with the student intern to develop products and competencies for the APEX and complete the learning agreement.
- B. Communicate any organization requirements to the student prior to beginning the internship. This may include a MOU, background check, or training (e.g., CITI, onboarding training for new employees).
- C. If the APEX is in-person, secure an appropriate and safe workspace for the student as well as any resources the student may need.
- D. Provide the student with an orientation to the field site which may include the following:
  - a. Introduction to staff
  - b. Overview of organization and population served
  - c. Tour of the office
- E. Meet regularly with the student intern (at least once a week) to check-in on APEX progress and provide feedback.
- F. Communicate with the APEX Coordinator regarding any issues that arise during the APEX including student performance or barriers to completing preceptor responsibilities.
- G. Complete a midpoint and final evaluation of the student intern via Qualtrics and discuss performance with the student intern.

# Applied Practice Experience Timeline

\*The timeline below is for a spring internship. The timeline and dates should be adjusted for fall and summer semesters.

## T PUBLIC HEALTH Timeline for MPH Applied Practice Experience (APEX)

### First-Year Planning and Preparation



### Second-Year Planning and Preparation



## PUBH 587

### Course Requirements

- APEX products.** A document to identify at least two products and which competencies they demonstrate. This should be the same information that is included in the learning agreement unless products and/or competencies change.
- Weekly time log.** Designed as a brief check-in to track hours activities.
- APEX journals.** A reflection at 60, 120, and 180 hours about the APEX and connection to skills for public health professionals.
- Midpoint evaluation and products.** Designed to be a mid-way (120 hours) check-in for students on their APEX progress and a brief evaluation of the experience.
- Preceptor midpoint evaluation.** An opportunity for preceptor feedback on student progress and performance mid-way (120 hours) through the APEX.

- F. **Final evaluation.** Designed to be a check-in at the end of the APEX (240 hours) for students to discuss achievement of APEX objectives.
- G. **Final preceptor evaluation.** An opportunity for preceptor feedback on student performance and the APEX program at the end (240 hours) of the APEX.
- H. **APEX in action.** A one-page summary of the APEX which includes photos, major products, and personal quotes.
- I. **Final report.** A detailed reflection of the APEX including relation of the experience to future career goals, MPH classes, competencies, and health equity.
- J. **Oral presentation.** A 15-minute presentation on Zoom about the APEX given to Department of Public Health faculty, staff, and students.
- K. **Evaluation of the APEX.** An opportunity for students to share feedback about their field organization, preceptor, and the APEX program which is used to improve future internships and department processes.
- L. **MPH exit survey.** An opportunity for graduating MPH students to share current job offers/placements, certifications, and publications.
- M. **Self-assessment of competencies.** A post-test for graduating MPH students to rate their level of skill and confidence in MPH foundational competencies.

## **Grading**

- A. PUBH 587 is graded as satisfactory/not satisfactory. Students must meet the minimum requirements for contact hours (240), complete all assignments for PUBH 587, adequately demonstrate five MPH competencies through at least two high-quality products, and deliver a final oral presentation and receive at least an 80% average score on the presentation.
- B. If a student scores below an 80% on the oral presentation, students will be required to redo the oral presentation for the APEX coordinator, MPH program director, and faculty advisor. If students do not pass their second attempt of the oral presentation or do not complete any of the other requirements in Point A will receive an unsatisfactory grade for the APEX. Students who receive an unsatisfactory grade will be required to re-register for PUBH 587 and complete 240 contact hours with a new field organization.
- C. According to [Graduate School policies](#), a grade of incomplete may be awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed a substantial portion of the course requirement but cannot complete the course for reasons beyond their control. It is the responsibility of the student receiving an “I” to arrange with the course instructor whatever action is needed to remove the grade at the earliest possible date, and in any event, within one calendar year of the assignment of incomplete. If the “I” grade is not removed within one calendar year or upon graduation, it shall be changed to an F and count as a failure in the computation of the grade point average. An incomplete will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

- D. If a student receives an incomplete for the APEX, they will work with the Department of Public Health to determine a remediation plan and timeline of how they will complete the unsatisfactory portion(s) of the APEX to receive a passing grade. The APEX coordinator maintains a Qualtrics form for students to complete if they are requesting an incomplete for PUBH 587.

### **Oral Presentation**

- A. All MPH students complete a 15-minute oral presentation via Zoom at the end of the APEX to describe their experience, products, relation of the APEX to MPH courses, and demonstration of competencies.
- B. The oral presentation is graded by the APEX coordinator, MPH program director, and faculty advisor. All three graders use a standardized rubric out of 30 points assessing student's presentation skills, ability to adequately answer questions, demonstration of competencies, explanation of APEX products, and how the APEX used knowledge and skills from MPH courses. Students must score at least an 80% average score to pass the presentation.
- C. Faculty advisors are expected to attend and grade the oral presentations of the student's they advise. If a student's primary faculty advisor cannot be present for the live oral presentation or be available to watch a recording of the student's presentation within 48 hours of the presentation date, the advisor will appoint a proxy (another department faculty member, preferably in the same concentration) to attend or view the presentation and submit a score on their behalf.
- D. In the rare case that a proxy cannot be found, a student may only have two independent graders for their oral presentation.

### **Appendix A: Examples of Applied Practice Experience Projects**

- A. Develop lectures for a 'Foundations of Modern Healthcare' medical school course in the areas of epidemiology, rural healthcare, disease prevention, health disparities, and trauma-informed care.
- B. Develop a report that integrates the legal perspective to public policies that impact the health of Tennesseans during the COVID-19 pandemic with steps for improved health outcomes for the next pandemic.
- C. Write an evaluation report on the results of a process evaluation, providing recommendations for creating and disseminating COVID-19 materials to people experiencing homelessness.
- D. Develop a resource guide for a health department highlighting historical context of slavery and reproductive rights, benefits of birth work and workers, and factors that influence positive birthing and postpartum experiences for black women.
- E. Complete a data analysis and report of foodborne illness surveillance data from FoodNet from 2010-2019 for a state health department.
- F. Complete a literature review on the pathology of a human and animal bacterial disease including prevalence, diagnostics, treatment, risk factors, and burden of disease.

- G. Develop a manuscript analyzing the influence of breast cancer patient's social support, family functioning, and relationship support on prior adherence to mammogram screening in rural Appalachia.
- H. Create a lobbying and advocacy toolkit for a reproductive health nonprofit to share on their website.
- I. Conduct a systematic review of the literature on structural racism in primary healthcare settings.
- J. Write a policy brief proposing the expansion of lung cancer screening insurance for a nonprofit.
- K. Update building emergency action plans to be disseminated to university residence halls.
- L. Assist in the creation and implementation of a neighborhood needs assessment.
- M. Create a map and an epidemic curve describing the live poultry season for a state health department.
- N. Conduct a comprehensive walkability and built environment assessment for a university.
- O. Develop a learning module on healthy eating around the world for a program that teaches and promotes healthy eating behavior among youth.
- P. Develop a questionnaire to assess knowledge and acceptability of HPV and cervical cancer among women in Nepal.
- Q. Create informational handouts for pet parents regarding the risks of raw food diets.
- R. Develop a survey to assess the awareness of zoonotic diseases and perceived risks and challenges of human-wildlife interactions among Great Smoky Mountain park staff and volunteers.
- S. Designed a retrospective cohort study to assess the associations between student absences due to a death in the family and academic outcomes.
- T. Designed a comprehensive emergency preparedness resource guidebook tailored to farmers in East Tennessee.
- U. Developed a public-facing ArcGIS Story Map to communicate local heat mapping data to stakeholders.
- V. Developed newsletters to equip parents, guardians, and school staff with knowledge on how to engage in conversations with youth about sex and relationships.
- W. Conducted focus groups to assess clientele perspectives on a program and compiled the results into a report and oral presentation.
- X. Developed and organized a new six-hour online prevention ethics course for folks working in the field of substance use prevention.



Y. Conducted a needs assessment using patient records and county health rankings to determine patient disparities and resources needed to combat the disparities.

Z. Conducted a reproducible impact analysis of Mental Health First Aid participant classes.

\*Additional examples of APEx projects can be found on the [APEx in Action webpage](#).

## Appendix B: Oral Presentation Rubric

Criteria	Feedback	Score
<p><b>APEx Products</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explained with adequate detail to understand purpose of products</li> <li>▪ Clear benefit of products to public health and the organization</li> <li>▪ Product examples included when appropriate</li> </ul>		/5
<p><b>Competency Demonstration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At least five MPH competencies (3 foundational, 2 concentration) addressed</li> <li>▪ Reflection shows understanding of concentration (CHE, EPI, HPM, Nutrition, VPH) concepts</li> <li>▪ Competencies appropriately and adequately demonstrated through APEx products</li> <li>▪ Competencies mapped to products with a visual table</li> </ul>		/10
<p><b>MPH Courses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At least two MPH courses addressed</li> <li>▪ Clear linkage between course knowledge/skill and APEx</li> </ul>		/5
<p><b>Presentation Skills and Style</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time limit observed</li> <li>▪ Well-prepared and organized</li> <li>▪ Remarks are clear and concise</li> <li>▪ Slides complement presentation</li> <li>▪ Appropriate and useful visuals included</li> </ul>		/5



<b>Questions</b>		/5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Answer concise and specific to question</li> <li>▪ Answer adds new insight or examples</li> </ul>		

*Must score at least an 80% (24/30) to pass the oral presentation.*

## **Appendix C: Public Health Competencies**

### ***MPH Foundational Competencies***

#### **Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health**

1. Apply epidemiological methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice.
2. Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context.
3. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate.
4. Interpret results of data analysis for public health research, policy or practice.

#### **Public Health & Health Care Systems**

5. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
6. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.

#### **Planning & Management to Promote Health**

7. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health.
8. Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design, implementation, or critique of public health policies or programs.
9. Design a population-based policy, program, project or intervention.
10. Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.
11. Select methods to evaluate public health programs.

#### **Policy in Public Health**

12. Discuss the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.

13. Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.
14. Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations.
15. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity.

### **Leadership**

16. Apply leadership and/or management principles to address a relevant issue.
17. Apply negotiation and mediation skills to address organizational or community challenges.

### **Communication**

18. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors.
19. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation.
20. Describe the importance of cultural competence in communicating public health content.

### **Interprofessional Practice**

21. Integrate perspectives from other sectors and/or professions to promote and advance population health.

### **Systems Thinking**

22. Apply a systems thinking tool to visually represent a public health issue in a format other than the standard narrative.

\*These competencies are informed by the traditional public health core knowledge areas, (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration and environmental health sciences), as well as cross-cutting and emerging public health areas. They are in compliance with the most recent criteria established by The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

## ***MPH Concentration Competencies***

### **Community Health Education**

1. Demonstrate how fundamental social causes of health and disease produce differences in health and health inequity in specific health outcomes.
2. Identify strategies designed to reduce structural bias and social inequities that produce health disparities.
3. Designs health education communications for specific public health issues and target audiences using appropriate channels and technologies.

4. Applies ethical principles to public health program planning, research, or implementation.
5. Prepare a high-quality program grant proposal.

### **Epidemiology**

1. Selects appropriate study design(s) to investigate a public health concern given the strengths, limitations, and feasibility of the design(s).
2. Critiques epidemiologic scientific literature.
3. Applies epidemiologic methods to develop models predicting disease or exposure.
4. Demonstrates proficiency in intermediate epidemiologic methods and principles.
5. Conducts a reproducible data analysis project.

### **Health Policy and Management**

1. Apply the policy-making process to improve population health.
2. Apply the principles of evidence-based public health in practice or policy formulation.
3. Apply appropriate strategic management approaches to improve the performance of healthcare organizations.
4. Apply quality improvement or performance management concepts to organizational planning and management.
5. Assess the value of existing or proposed programs, services or policies using financial management measures.

### **Nutrition**

1. Conducts a community nutrition needs assessment.
2. Plans, implements, and evaluates a service, intervention, or outreach activity.
3. Uses principles of behavioral health to design culturally appropriate services, interventions, or activities to improve the nutrition-related health of communities.
4. Demonstrates proficiency in detailing the link between human nutrition and health.
5. Designs and disseminates a policy brief on a current nutrition-related topic.

### **Veterinary Public Health**

1. Assess health related benefits and/or risks to individuals and communities associated with zoonotic or emerging diseases, the human-animal bond, foodborne illness and/or injuries associated with animals.
2. Communicate health benefits and/or risks to individuals and communities associated with zoonotic or emerging diseases, the human-animal bond, foodborne illness, and/or injuries associated with animals.
3. Apply techniques of surveillance, recognition, prevention, control, and/or management of infectious diseases, including zoonotic or emerging diseases, foodborne illnesses, and/or potential bio or agroterrorism agents.
4. Evaluate programs and/or policy that aim to improve human health by fostering the human-animal bond or by reducing foodborne illness, zoonotic or emerging diseases, or hazards associated with animals.
5. Describe the role of the federal government in ensuring the safety of foods of animal origin.

## Appendix D: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the student deadline to confirm a field site? (Confirm is defined as having a completed Preceptor Form)**
  - Spring internships should be confirmed by November 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - Summer internships should be confirmed by April 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Fall internships (less common) should be confirmed by July 15<sup>th</sup>.
2. **Who is responsible for finding the field site?**
  - The student is ultimately responsible. The APEX coordinator and faculty advisors will support the intern by providing a list of past field sites and sharing contacts of prospective sites. However, it is the student's responsibility to contact the field site and secure a placement.
3. **How does a student find a field site?**
  - Students can request a list of past field sites and current partnerships from the APEX coordinator. Students are encouraged to seek out a variety of opportunities as there are multiple agencies that could be appropriate field sites including clinics, hospitals, non-profits, schools, government contractors, consulting firms, etc.
4. **When can students complete their Applied Practice Experience?**
  - Students complete their APEX in the final or second to final semester prior to graduation. Foundational and concentration courses should be completed so that students can use the knowledge and skills from those courses during the APEX. Final decisions on when a student can complete their APEX are made by the faculty advisor and APEX coordinator.
5. **When should students start planning for their Applied Practice Experience?**
  - It's never too early! Begin thinking about your interests and career goals early. This may shift as you take new classes and progress through the MPH program and that's okay! Network, research organizations in your desired concentration/location, and contact your faculty advisor and/or the Career Center for guidance on creating a quality resume and cover letter. The earlier you begin researching and connecting with potential field sites, the greater chance of success during your Applied Practice Experience.
6. **How is the Applied Practice Experience graded?**

- Satisfactory/No Credit. The APEX coordinator and faculty advisor determines if a student has met requirements for a Satisfactory grade.
7. **Does the Applied Practice Experience have to be completed in one semester?**
    - No. Depending on the student's schedule and availability, the Applied Practice Experience can be completed over the course of two semesters. The student should work with the APEX coordinator, their faculty advisor, and preceptor to confirm this. This will result in less hours per week (typically 8-10) to spread out the 240 required hours.
  8. **What type of schedule can students expect during the Applied Practice Experience?**
    - Work schedules are determined by the student and their preceptor. Some field sites may require interns to work within a typical work schedule (e.g., Monday – Friday between 8 and 5) while others may have the flexibility for an intern to work during the evenings or weekends.
  9. **Can the Applied Practice Experience be completed remotely?**
    - Yes, but this is ultimately the decision of the field site and preceptor. Some field sites may require interns to be in-person, some may prefer a hybrid schedule of in-person and remote, and others may be fully remote. Students should discuss these options when contacting field sites.
  10. **The Applied Practice Experience Course (PUBH 587) automatically registers students for three credits. How do students earn six credits for the course?**
    - Students should change the number of credits manually in myUTK. Once registered for the course, under 'Register for Classes' click on the tab 'Schedule and Options.' Next to PUBH 587, click on the course credit number (3). This will change to a text box, and six can be manually entered.
  11. **Can the Applied Practice Experience be completed at a student's workplace?**
    - It is not recommended for students to complete their APEX at their workplace since the APEX should be a unique, new experience that applies knowledge and skills learned from the MPH program. However, students may complete the APEX at their workplace if the experience differs substantially from the student's current role and responsibilities at work. The student's preceptor must be someone other than their current supervisor.
  12. **Can a faculty member in the department serve as a preceptor for the Applied Practice Experience?**
    - Yes, as long as the project(s) are beneficial to the student intern and the purpose of the experience is not to advance a faculty member's research. The Applied Practice Experience is a unique experience, and student interns should not function solely as a research assistant.
  13. **Is the Applied Practice Experience paid?**
    - The APEX may be compensated or uncompensated. This varies and is determined by the field site. The Department of Public Health is not involved in arranging payment for students but can assist students with finding past experiences that have been paid.
  14. **What are examples of appropriate products for an Applied Practice Experience?**
    - Appropriate products must demonstrate at least five MPH competencies (3 foundational, 2 concentration). Products may include, but are not limited to the following:
      - Grant proposal
      - Evaluation or evaluation plan
      - Process or quality improvement project
      - Literature review
      - Surveys or questionnaires
      - Interview guide

- Policy brief
- Journal article or manuscript
- Needs assessment
- Data analysis
- Lecture or presentation
- Social media campaign or plan
- Curriculum development or implementation
- Training guide or manual
- Fact sheet or infographic
- Logic model

**15. Do the two products identified for the APEX need to demonstrate all five competencies?**

- Two products is the minimum requirement. It may take more products for a student to demonstrate five competencies (3 foundational, 2 concentration). For example, one product may demonstrate three competencies while the other demonstrates two. A student may also complete five products with each product demonstrating one competency. This is determined by the student and their preceptor.

**16. Are there examples of past student Applied Practice Experiences?**

- Yes. There are examples of past student experiences on the [APEX in Action webpage](#). For additional examples, please contact the APEX coordinator.

**17. How can students learn more about the Applied Practice Experience?**

- The APEX coordinator hosts APEX information sessions annually each fall. Additionally, students can meet with the APEX coordinator 1:1 at any time during the year.

**18. What qualifications does an individual need to serve as a preceptor?**

- It is the 'gold standard' for preceptors to have a MPH degree or higher, but this is not required. Qualified preceptors may have graduate degrees in related fields (child and family studies, education, social work, etc.). Years of public health experience, ideally in a supervisory position, may substitute for a graduate degree.