

Concept Note

Master of Public Health (MPH) Practicum Placements

In 2013, Western University (Canada) launched a new Interfaculty MPH Program that is one year long and makes extensive use of case-based and experiential learning. With real public health issues as a foundation, our students are immersed in learning about and analyzing some of the most significant and complex public health challenges that our country and globe have experienced. Students thus gain knowledge and skills in leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking. A large focus of the Program is team-based learning, with students working extensively with an assigned group of classmates throughout the eight months of coursework.

Practicum: After completing their didactic courses in the fall and winter semesters, students are required to complete a minimum 12-week practicum placement in the summer (May to July). The aim of the practicum is to provide students with not only a real life experience of working with a public health organization, but also to give them an opportunity to integrate and consolidate their classroom learning and experiences. Ideally, students will be working on a problem that your organization wants to address.

Hosting a Practicum Student: Our MPH students are selected from a highly competitive group of applicants. Through their coursework they gain knowledge and learning skills necessary to address current public health issues and problems with a focus on leadership, policy, and sustainability.

In reaching out to you, our goal is to establish a mutually beneficial long-term relationship between your organization and Western, such that it is a win-win situation for both of us. Your organization benefits from a highly trained MPH student working on a pressing issue and our Program benefits from a practicum placement.

Practicum Project: The practicum is project-focused. During the 12-week placement, the student's work focuses primarily on a project your organization has identified as a priority and provides the student a valuable learning opportunity. Examples of past projects include:

- a) Creating a formulative evaluation of a PrePregnancy Planner (including conducting focus groups, compiling results, and making key recommendations).
- b) Conducting and synthesizing research on informed choice, patient decision aids, and prenatal genetic screening in order to create an informed choice resource tool for midwives.
- c) Researching effective systems and tools for the measurement of public health outcomes linked to the Community-Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) program in Irish prisons in order to develop program evaluation recommendations.
- d) Conducting a Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) for the Universal Influenza Immunization Program, summarizing results and outlining evidence-based recommendations to reduce barriers for vulnerable populations.

Students are expected to complete any reports, presentations, social media projects, etc., that you request of them.

Capstone Project: Students are required to submit to the MPH Program a high-quality written product that is appropriate for the student's educational and professional objectives. These products may include items such as a program evaluation report, training manual, or policy statement. Ideally, the written product is developed and delivered in a manner that is useful to external stakeholders.

Supervisor: If interested, we request that you identify one or more willing individuals who are in leadership roles in your organization, have the education and/or experience to supervise a Master's level student, and can act as on-site supervisors. This person will liaise closely with the student and his/her faculty advisor at Western to ensure that the student derives maximum learning from the practicum experience.

We ask that the supervisor be available for the student to facilitate the introduction to the project, provide information and resources necessary for completion of the project, and to answer questions and assist with resolving issues that may arise as the student works on the project. The supervisor will be asked to collaborate on the student's Learning Contract and complete an Interim and Final Evaluation of the student's success at the placement.

Please note that if in a particular year your organization does not have the capacity or project to take on a practicum student, or we do not have a suitably qualified student, we will not proceed with sending a student for a practicum that year.

Questions: Please feel free to contact our Career and Engagement Officer, Courtney Hambides, at chambide@uwo.ca.

Thank you!