

Fieldwork Handbook

CUNY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

A Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy

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1. Introduction

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) is the accrediting body for public health programs and schools in the United States. The CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (GSPHHP) is CEPH-accredited as of June 2011.

CEPH requires that all students in its accredited programs *demonstrate the application of basic public health concepts through a practice experience* that is relevant to the students' areas of specialization.

In the GSPHHP, fieldwork experience provides MPH and MS students with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use the knowledge gained during their graduate coursework.



Each MPH and MS-EOHS student completes a supervised practice experience while signed up for a fieldwork course. The goal is for students to find field organizations appropriate to their concentration and on the basis of their individual interests, professional goals and needs.

The goal of the fieldwork experience is to give students the opportunity to develop, manage, or lead evidence-based public health practices in real-world settings. Students strengthen the core competencies they have learned in the classroom by testing them in organizations that have unique constraints, opportunities and challenges. They develop professionally while helping an organization to advance its own public health agenda in a culturally competent manner. The supervised practice experience strives to improve students' professional self-confidence through involvement in developing, planning, organizing, executing and evaluating public health activities. Fieldwork placements may involve program planning, implementation or operation, applied public health research, community health education and outreach, health advocacy, or other appropriate public health-related work.

During the fieldwork period, students are required to follow the policies, rules, and regulations of the field organization, as well as seek and accept the field preceptor's guidance and appraisal of performance throughout the placement. Students should share with the field preceptor any questions and concerns regarding the progress of the fieldwork and secure approval of the field preceptor for plans how to best use, disseminate or publish information gleaned from the project.

Fieldwork faculty are responsible for developing and implementing policies regarding the approval of preceptors and placement sites and for supervising students in the selection and evaluation of their field placements. They also advise students on the relationship between fieldwork and capstone projects so that the students will be adequately prepared for capstone at the completion of their fieldwork.

This packet presents the policies and procedures for selection, approval, execution, completion, and evaluation of the fieldwork experience and provides the forms that must be submitted as part of the fieldwork course.

For additional information, please refer to the fieldwork syllabus.

Prerequisite: Completion of at least **18 credits** toward the master's degree, including biostatistics, epidemiology, and two courses in the student's area of concentration.

2. Fieldwork Site

Options

A wide range of organizations and agencies can provide a valuable field practicum experience for the student. Any organization that researches, provides, plans for, coordinates, organizes, pays for, or regulates public health services is usually a valid training site. Depending on opportunities available and scheduling demands, however, students generally work with either:

- 1) Government or private organizations: the student works with a fieldwork preceptor at that organization to define a field project that will be appropriate for a capstone project, or
- 2) CUNY or other academic institutions: the student works with a faculty member on a public health-related research project which may then become a master's essay.

Examples of site types:

- Federal agencies, such as the USDHHS, Veterans Administration, CDC, USDA, OSHA
- State, county, or city health departments
- Health and social service organizations
- Managed care organizations
- Neighborhood health centers, community clinics, and community mental health centers
- Hospitals (public, nonprofit, for-profit) and multi-specialty medical practices
- Environmental health consulting companies
- Industrial settings
- Early childhood programs, public schools, and private schools
- Academic or other non-governmental research institutes

Site selection

Students can identify a fieldwork opportunity in a variety of ways: through their own networks and outreach efforts, with assistance from fieldwork or other faculty, or via a position they see posted. Most important to selection, the student must conduct public health work with sufficient responsibility to apply some of the skills and knowledge acquired through the master's degree program. To that end, the placement is expected to meet one or more Core MPH Competencies (see Appendix). The fieldwork faculty advisor is responsible for approving the fieldwork site via the fieldwork contract (see Appendix for a template model).

Criteria for site selection:

- The site is able to provide appropriate public health experience related to the student's career goals and area of concentration.
- The site is able to provide support and space for the student appropriate for the student's experience.
- The environment of the site is safe for the student's field practicum experience.
- The site has a preceptor who is qualified and able to spend time with and provide guidance to the student.
- The preceptor has an understanding of the educational needs of public health students, including the need to increase responsibility and independence gradually.
- If fieldwork is to be performed in the student's current job setting, the student must identify a different supervisor and engage in a substantially different assignment from the scope of their usual activities.

Expectations of the site

Participating agencies and organizations agree to provide the student with a suitable field experience for a designated period of time and agree to assist in the professional development of that student by identifying an appropriate preceptor at the agency or organization. The agency agrees to provide the student with all materials, equipment, and space needed to conduct the work in a safe and professional environment. The agency works with the student to prepare and submit a written and signed contract that identifies the student, the agreed upon scope of the fieldwork project, learning objectives, and expected deliverables from the student. (*see Appendix for contract template*)

3. Major Players

Close cooperation is essential between the following players:

- Student (the master's degree student)
- Faculty Academic Advisor -- the faculty member to whom the student has been assigned for academic advising through the duration of the MPH program
- Faculty Fieldwork Director – the faculty member who guides and manages the fieldwork process for students, and facilitates relationships with the Fieldwork Preceptor and their host agency
- Fieldwork Preceptor (also known as 'fieldwork supervisor' or 'preceptor')

Student

Students are primarily responsible for developing a scope of work and learning objectives for the fieldwork, in consultation with their preceptor, the faculty academic advisor, and the faculty fieldwork director, and for carrying out that scope of work. Students are also responsible for submitting appropriate paperwork at the beginning, during, and at the end of the enrolled fieldwork semester, or when they complete their fieldwork placement (*see Checklist of fieldwork Submissions*).

Students are expected to attend required fieldwork information sessions before and during the enrolled fieldwork semester, and to submit periodic assignments during their fieldwork enrollment.

During the fieldwork project, students are expected to meet regularly with the preceptor to discuss progress and raise any questions or problems regarding the work. Students are expected to treat the fieldwork as they would any job and follow organizational policies and meet all commitments to the agency. In addition, if the student feels that the field experience will not enable him or her to produce the agreed upon deliverables (whether from lack of access, lack of supervision, changing organizational priorities, etc.) it is up to the student to alert the field supervisor.

Responsibilities of the student:

- Identifying and organizing the fieldwork project.
- Submitting appropriate paperwork.
- Following the policies, rules, and regulations of the field agency or organization.
- Maintaining the agreed upon working hours.
- Maintaining a professional attitude and conduct.
- Seeking and accepting the field preceptor's guidance and appraisal of performance throughout the work period.
- Sharing with the field preceptor any questions and concerns regarding the progress of the fieldwork.
- Planning for conferences with the fieldwork preceptor.
- Attending requested meetings and workshops.
- Submitting to the host agency all agreed upon deliverables within the time frames indicated by the preceptor.
- Completing and submitting fieldwork course deliverables to the fieldwork director.
- Providing the host agency with a copy of the student's final capstone project, where relevant.

For further information, please contact the faculty fieldwork director.

Checklist of Fieldwork Submissions:

- Current CITI Certificate
- Human Subjects Research Form (a.k.a. HRPP Review)
- Fieldwork contract
- Two Progress Reports
- Preceptor Evaluation (submitted by preceptor)
- Reflection on Fieldwork
- Student Evaluation of Fieldwork

Faculty Academic Advisor

Within each department, the faculty member who serves as the student's academic advisor is responsible for working with the student, as needed, to develop and finalize the fieldwork contract.. **The faculty academic advisor provides guidance to the student to maximize the learning potential of the field experience.**

- The faculty academic advisor helps the student, as needed, to develop learning objectives for the placement and finalize the contract.
- The faculty academic advisor assists students in the initial conceptualization of the Capstone project from the fieldwork experience.
- The faculty academic advisor instructs students on topics aimed at improving the fieldwork experience and preparing the student for the Capstone course.

Faculty Fieldwork Director

The faculty fieldwork director is responsible for the overall direction of fieldwork, from identifying host agencies and cultivating student placement opportunities, to supporting students through the placement process, from initiation to completion. Specifically, the fieldwork faculty director:

- Orients students to the fieldwork placement experience and course expectations prior to enrollment.
- Assists students with securing placements, approves the student's fieldwork contract, and clears the student for course registration.
- Guides and tracks course assignments, submission of IRB determination forms related to Fieldwork, and placement evaluation forms.
- Provides guidance and support to the student during the semester.
- Assists students and preceptors in resolving problems that arise during fieldwork placement.
- Recommends the student's grade for the course (pass or fail) based on a review of the fieldwork supervisor's evaluation and additional fieldwork requirements.

Preceptor

The preceptor is the key to a successful fieldwork experience. The preceptor serves as both supervisor and mentor. Preceptors are expected to provide students with an orientation to the organization and project, meet with students regularly, and provide guidance and feedback. The preceptor is expected to have expertise in the area of the student's project so proper guidance can be provided, and an MPH or other graduate degree, or significant and demonstrable experience in a public health management role. Preceptors help students develop a written fieldwork contract specifying the expectations for the fieldwork placement they will complete. Preceptors also complete an evaluation of the student's performance at the end of the work experience, as the preceptor has the primary responsibility for supervising and guiding the student in the development and implementation of the fieldwork project. The role of the preceptor includes the following activities:

Preceptor Responsibilities:

- Assist the fieldwork student in determining specific, mutually-agreeable, written fieldwork objectives and deliverables to the host agency.
- Orient the student to the host agency's mission, programs, policies, and protocols.
- Commit time for instructional process interactions and dialogue with student.
- Provide supervision of the student's activities.
- If indicated, resolve conflicts with agency policy.
- Prepare an evaluation of the student, discuss it with the student, and transmit it to the faculty fieldwork director.
- Share any feedback about the fieldwork experience with the faculty fieldwork director.
- Allow the student to use some or all of the work product to prepare the Capstone paper, if warranted and as agreed upon in the fieldwork contract.

4. The Relationship Between Fieldwork and Capstone

Fieldwork is a prerequisite for Capstone. In other words, students may start the Capstone course only when they have completed their fieldwork and understand how it will inform the Capstone project.

Connecting Fieldwork to Capstone

The fieldwork experience can provide the basis and the foundation for the Capstone project. During fieldwork, the student is involved in public health practice, and shapes a research question and study design which, ideally, will be executed through the Capstone project. Generally, data or information produced in the fieldwork experience – for example, designing or evaluating a new program, or developing and testing an algorithm, etc – provides the basis for the research question, analysis, and findings reported in the Capstone paper. The Capstone paper reflects the research question and investigation informed by the student's fieldwork experience.

The Master's Essay is an exception to this model. Here, students work with individual faculty members or academic institutions on specific research projects. To be eligible for the Master's Essay option, students must receive approval from their department's chair. Students who are interested in pursuing the Master's essay option in lieu of the Capstone paper should first discuss this plan with their faculty academic advisor.

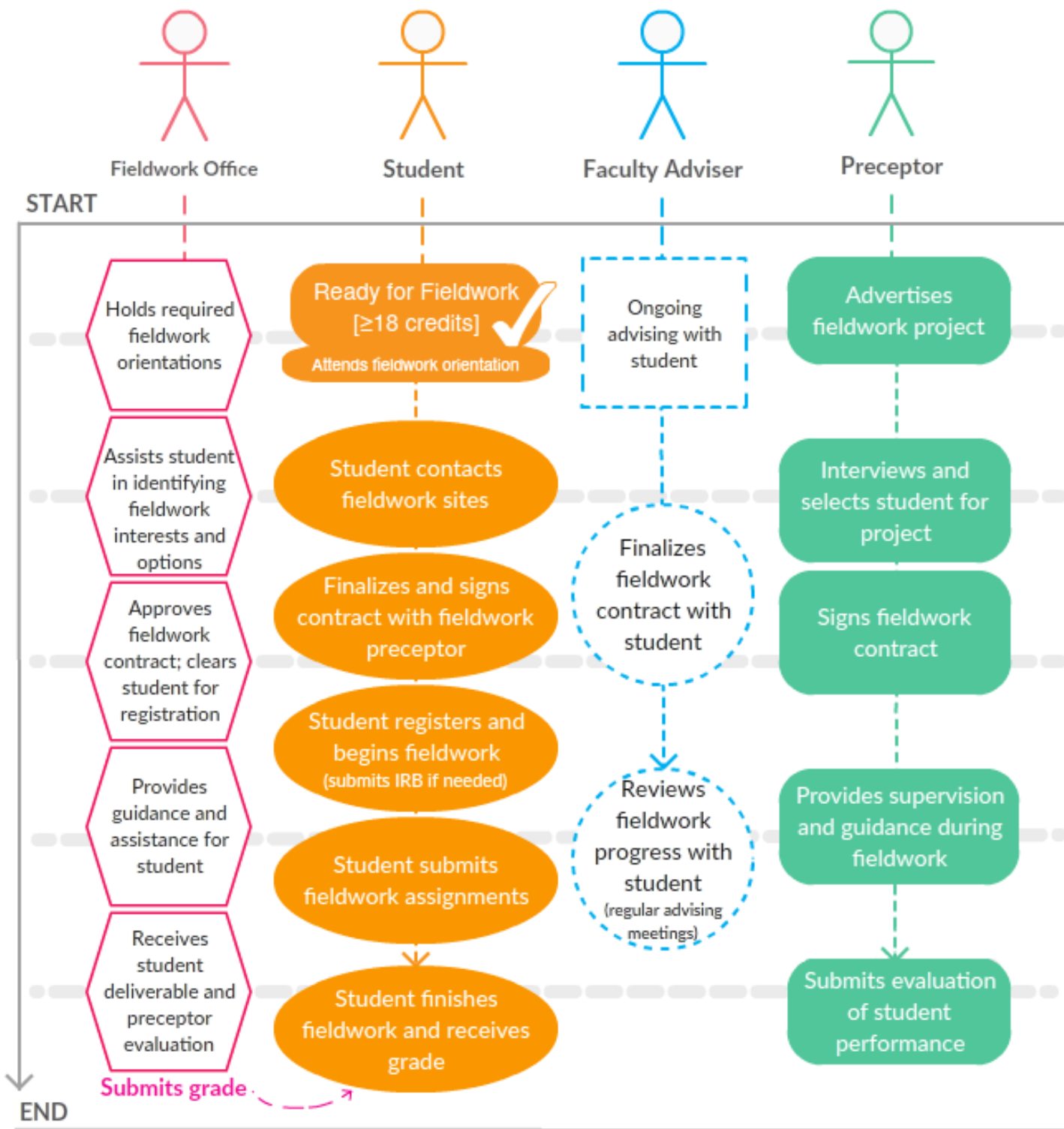
While students are not required to focus their Capstone paper on research or project work developed in the fieldwork placement, it is strongly encouraged, to establish continuity between the public health practice and research experience. This issue may also arise should the fieldwork project fail to generate data or information that can be used for the Capstone paper.

Students who choose to focus their Capstone project on content other than the work they were involved in during their fieldwork placement should discuss these plans with their faculty academic advisor prior to enrollment in the Capstone course.

5. Fieldwork Timeline and Process

When?	Activity
Preparation for supervised fieldwork	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notify your faculty academic advisor of intention to register for fieldwork, and discuss your eligibility for the course. 2. If you are searching for fieldwork opportunities or assessing potential fieldwork sites, contact the faculty fieldwork director to help identify target sites and to confirm program fit. 3. Fieldwork Orientation Sessions are held at least four times each semester, and offer information and guidance for identifying and securing a placement. <p style="text-align: center;">NOTE: STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT AN ORIENTATION SESSION IN THE SEMESTER PRIOR TO PLANNED FIELDWORK OR EARLIER IS A REQUIRED PREREQUISITE TO COURSE ENROLLMENT.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Identify a fieldwork opportunity. Working with the faculty fieldwork director and in consultation with the faculty academic advisor, secure the placement with the preceptor and finalize a Fieldwork contract. (<i>see contract template in the Appendix</i>) 5. Submit the finalized, approved Fieldwork contract to the faculty fieldwork director. Completing this step will confirm your eligibility for course registration in the upcoming semester.
Carrying out and participating in supervised fieldwork	<p>Begin the fieldwork placement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork course begins. • IRB review is required before the student can begin any data collection activities. The student develops and finalizes submission to the GSPHHP HRPP office. All students must present a current CITI certificate, even if the project does not require IRB review (eg, systematic literature reviews). All students must file a Human Subjects Research form with the HRPP office. • Submit progress reports, attend group meetings, and meet with your faculty academic advisor and the faculty fieldwork director, as instructed. A work/time-log of fieldwork activities is recommended, so you can recall how your time was spent, confirm the number of hours spent (required 180 hours total), and articulate the processes involved. • Students will complete two progress reports to track their progress, assess potential challenges in the placement, and identify solutions.
Successful completion of the fieldwork experience	<p>Fieldwork students must submit and receive a passing grade for several deliverables to successfully complete the supervised fieldwork requirement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit a current CITI certificate. Complete and submit a description of the fieldwork activities in the Human Subjects Research form to the HRPP office, and receive a determination prior to beginning data collection. 2. During the course of the fieldwork experience, submit two Progress Reports. 3. Submit two evaluation forms: the Student's Evaluation of Fieldwork Experience Form (student submits), and the Preceptor's Evaluation of student performance (preceptor submits). Forms are provided in the <i>Appendix</i>. 4. Complete and submit your Reflections on Fieldwork (<i>instructions in the Appendix</i>).

Fieldwork Timeline Workflow



6. CUNY Policy for Student Research with Human Subjects and IRB

All students are required to complete and submit a Human Subjects Research Form at the beginning of the fieldwork placement.

This brief form describes the project, as well as any human subject involvement, and institutions/individuals involved. The GSPHHP HRPP office will review this document and assess whether a full IRB proposal must be submitted, or if the project is exempt from human subject research issues.

The Human Subjects Research Assessment Form is available on the GSPHHP Research page: <http://sph.cuny.edu/research/hrpp/>

IRB Determination

Where full IRB submission is required, the student is the Project Investigator and the faculty fieldwork director is the faculty advisor. HRPP determination – or, as indicated, IRB determination – is required before the student can begin data collection in the fieldwork experience.

Research Conducted at CUNY

Research conducted under the auspices of City University of New York (CUNY) is subject to federal regulations, which require that all research protocols involving human subjects be reviewed by an IRB office. However, these regulations exempt many types of course-related research activities from IRB review, depending on potential risks to participants. (See <http://sph.cuny.edu/research/hrpp/>)

Definitions

Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (45 CFR 46.102(d))

Interaction includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject (45 CFR 46.102(f))

Intervention includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (for example, venipuncture) and manipulations of the subject or the subject's environment that are performed for research purposes (45 CFR 46.102(f))

Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains (1) Data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) Identifiable private information (45 CFR 46.102(f))

Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (for example, a medical record) (45 CFR 46.102(f))

APPENDIX

CORE MPH COMPETENCIES

1. Apply the public health core functions of assessment, policy development and assurance
2. Apply theories, concepts, models and methods to the design of public health research, policy and practice
3. Adhere to ethical and social justice principles and standards
4. Interpret and analyze public health literature and apply evidence-based research
5. Apply basic statistical and informatics techniques
6. Communicate public health information through oral, written, digital and visual presentation
7. Explain how social, behavioral, biomedical and environmental determinants affect population health
8. Design and evaluate interventions to prevent or control public health problems
9. Collect, analyze and interpret public health data
10. Engage and collaborate with diverse groups
11. Describe the legal foundations of the U.S. public health system and its interrelationships with other systems including health care, education and environmental protection
12. Apply a framework for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions
13. Explain the context of public and private health-care systems in which health care and public health policy are made and healthcare is delivered

FIELDWORK CONTRACT TEMPLATE

[TO BE PLACED ON HOST ORGANIZATION LETTERHEAD]

Project Title

[Reflects the general focus of the work, ie, topic and setting, or more specific proposed research question, ie, investigation of specific public health problem in type of setting with population group]

[Date]

Dear Fieldwork Faculty Advisor:

This represents an agreement between [student name], MPH/MS student at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, and [preceptor name, prefix/suffix, position title, host organization] describing the expectations of both parties as they relate to the supervised fieldwork to be performed beginning [start-date for placement] and projected to end [end-date for placement] on the [project title]. The fieldwork student and preceptor agree that the fieldwork student is responsible for 180 hours of service in this role.

Project Background

[Provide a paragraph describing the background, context, and overall plan of the project(s) in which the student will be involved, including host organization, topic, and methodology, where applicable.]

If the project involves any of the following, please mention: assessing/monitoring population health; worker health training; health promotion/education; program planning/evaluation; policy analysis/advocacy; researching health issues.

Student Tasks and Responsibilities

[Describe the student's involvement in the project plan and all activities the student will carry out during fieldwork placement, and explain how these activities meet specific learning objectives.]

If student activities involve any of the following, please mention: Research Design; Data Collection; Data Analysis; Research Synthesis; Health Intervention Planning; Health Intervention Implementation; Quality improvement; Program Evaluation; Policy Analysis; Policy Innovation; Communications; Collaboration with Diverse Groups.

Preceptor Responsibilities

[Describe the preceptor's public health experience, including any graduate education, in 1-2 sentences.]

The preceptor agrees to provide the student with guidance, training (as necessary), and supervision through the placement experience, including but not limited to: orientation at the start of the project, regular meetings with the student at a frequency of at least [agreed upon frequency], and an evaluation of the student's performance at the conclusion of fieldwork. The preceptor also [agrees/does not agree] to make [extent of project data] available to the student for their Capstone paper. The preceptor can be reached at [email contact info].

Agreed to by:

Student Name (printed): _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Preceptor Name (printed): _____ Date: _____

Preceptor Signature: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR 'REFLECTIONS ON FIELDWORK'

Students are required to think about their fieldwork experience and provide a written reflection following completion of the placement.

Reflections statement should be 3-5 pages in length, and address the following:

- The extent to which your graduate course work prepared you for the fieldwork experience.
- The quality of on-site supervision you received from the preceptor and others at the site during your fieldwork. Was someone generally available to answer your questions and provide feedback? Discuss the usefulness and value of the feedback you received.
- Challenges or problems you encountered during the fieldwork and how they were addressed. What technical or human obstacles did you encounter? Were there any deviations from your original plan or expectations for the fieldwork (for better or worse!).
- The overall quality of the fieldwork. Were there particular skills, knowledge or lessons that you acquired unexpectedly? Explain. Was the fieldwork a good educational experience – why or why not? How did it provide you with a better sense of the skills needed for employment in the profession? Discuss recommendations for improving your fieldwork experience. Explain why you would or would not recommend that other students conduct fieldwork with the same department or agency.
- How has this experience affected you personally? Did this experience influence your interests and career objectives? How did you grow through your fieldwork experience?

PRECEPTOR EVALUATION

Please rank the student's performance in the fieldwork placement on the scale below.

	Excellent (performs on a level that is highly professional)	Above average	Average (needs to improve)	Below average	Not applicable / No opportunity to observe
Appreciation and knowledge of:					
1. Technical & political climate within the agency					
2. Public Health principles and concepts					
3. Best practices in field					
Professional Qualities					
1. Planning / Assessment - understands requirements and is able to identify risks and issues					
2. Implementation / Program Development - is able to develop strategies and interventions to meaningfully address problems					
3. Organization / Time Management - is able to organize tasks and resources and complete assignments on time					
4. Written communication - is able to communicate and document work accurately					
5. Verbal communication - is articulate and able to effectively communicate ideas verbally					
6. Collaboration / Teamwork - works well within teams and is able to establish good working relationships with collaborators					
7. Innovation / Creativity - raises innovative ideas and brings our creative and innovative ideas in others					
8. Leadership - accepts responsibility and is able to facilitate work of committees and groups					
9. Work Ethic - is dependable and driven					
Comments					
Please comment on the student's performance.					
1. Special Strengths					
2. Skills and knowledge needing further improvement					
3. Other comments					

STUDENT EVALUATION OF FIELDWORK

Please provide an honest assessment of your internship experience

1. Student's name: _____

2. Title of project: _____

3. Date of this form: _____

4. Fieldwork start & completion dates: _____

5. Preceptor's name & title: _____

6. Agency name and address: _____

7. Total number of hours completed: _____

8. Describe the primary duties for which you were responsible: _____

9. Overall, how would you rate your fieldwork experience?

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

10. Rate the level of guidance/mentoring you received from your preceptor:

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

11. Would you consider working for this agency after you graduate?

Yes No Not sure

12. Would you recommend this placement for other students? Why or why not?

13. Please provide a brief summary of the most important things you learned from your fieldwork experience:

14. How prepared do you think you are in the following areas as a result of your fieldwork? *Insert an X in the appropriate box for each competency.*

	Very well prepared	Well prepared	Adequately Prepared	Inadequately prepared	Not prepared	Not applicable to my project
Core public health competency						
Apply the public health core functions of assessment, policy development and assurance						
Apply theories, concepts, models and methods to the design of public health research, policy and practice						
Adhere to ethical and social justice principles and standards						
Interpret and analyze public health literature and apply evidence-based research						
Apply basic statistical and informatics techniques						
Communicate public health information through oral, written, digital and visual presentation						
Explain how social, behavioral, biomedical and environmental determinants affect population health						
Design and evaluate interventions to prevent or control public health problems						
Collect, analyze and interpret public health data						
Engage and collaborate with diverse groups						
Describe the legal foundations of the U.S. public health system and its interrelationships with other systems including health care, education and environmental protection						
Apply a framework for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions						
Explain the context of public and private health-care systems in which health care and public health policy are made and healthcare is delivered						

15. In the space below, please provide any additional comments or suggestions that would help improve the fieldwork experience. Use as much space as you need.