



# Master of Science

Research Experience Guidelines

Practicum or Thesis

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## INTRODUCTION

The mission of Kent State University is to “discover, create, apply and share knowledge; foster ethical humanitarian values; educate students to think critically; expand students’ intellectual horizons; and prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers.” To this end, students pursuing a Master of Science in Clinical Epidemiology (MSCE) will not only engage with faculty in the classroom but will also apply their knowledge and skills in “real world” settings with support and guidance from clinical or community preceptors and the College faculty. These practical experiences are gained throughout the MSCE program of study and are particularly emphasized in the research experience (practicum or thesis). Completion of the research experience is a requirement.

## SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Students may choose to complete either the Research Practicum in Clinical Epidemiology or the Thesis as their research experience. Students should discuss with their academic advisor which experience is best suited for their goals and consider the timing of the research experience as it relates to completing coursework. It is encouraged to start the research experience in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester (fall of the second year) of the program, depending on if the student is full-time or part-time. At this time, the student will have taken most of the methods and biostatistics courses in the program. After approval has been received, students will enroll in either Research Practicum (EPI 63192) or Thesis I (EPI 63199).

### ***Option 1: Research Practicum in Clinical Epidemiology (EPI 63192)***

Students who choose to conduct the research practicum should meet with their academic advisor to discuss what they would like to do and how to identify a preceptor/site to work with. The student should be **proactive** in identifying a research experience and site. As the student is approaching the research experience, they should reflect on their completed coursework; identify their research interests; and identify a research site or faculty member with whom they will conduct the research experience; identify MS competencies to address in their research; and generate a preliminary list of learning objectives and activities. In this stage, students are encouraged to think about the “next steps” in their careers and design a research experience that will help them achieve those professional goals.

After students have developed a preliminary concept about the research experience they would like to pursue, they will complete the Practicum Agreement Form. After the Practicum Instructor or advisor approves the Practicum Agreement Form, it is signed by the student, preceptor, and the Practicum Instructor. The student will upload the form to the Canvas course. The student can then register for practicum.

Completion of the practicum requires 135 contact hours (3 credit hours) and the development and presentation of a portfolio. This means that students will need one to two semesters to complete the required number of contact hours and develop and present a high-quality portfolio. Details on the requirements of the portfolio and presentation are contained in this document.

The practicum is graded on a “Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory” basis and the grade is recorded in the student’s academic record. The grade is based upon the quality of the portfolio, the oral presentation, preceptor evaluation, student evaluation, and faculty assessment.

### ***Option 2: Thesis (EPI 63199)***

Thesis is a formal research experience and involves a research study that the student develops in conjunction with their thesis advisor. The student who completes thesis generally intends to pursue a doctoral program. The thesis experience is rigorous and requires a formal proposal document, formation of a thesis committee, conduct of a research study, and defense of the thesis to a thesis committee and the university. Thesis is a

lengthy process and the student should expect to take a year or more to complete the thesis, depending on the study undertaken. The student is required to register for Thesis I for six credits total and if the thesis has not been successfully defended after the semester in which they have registered, the student must continue to register for Thesis II (EPI 63299) until they have successfully defended the thesis. More information on the formal process, formation of the committee, and other requirements can be found in the University guidelines for thesis. <https://www.kent.edu/graduatestudies/thesis-dissertation>

### **PRACTICUM SITE AND APPROVAL PROCESSES**

Practicum projects can be completed in a variety of settings outside of the College or within the college with a faculty member. The practicum setting can include a health department, clinical research center, hospital, and other community-based organizations where the student can conduct a research study. Host sites must sign an Affiliation Agreement to host a practicum student and the site must be approved by the Practicum Instructor. Additional levels of approval may also be required.

#### **International Practicum**

Students wishing to conduct their practicum outside of the United States, must obtain additional approval by the Office of Global Education (OGE) and must follow additional guidelines, including immunization and vaccination, additional health insurance, and other requirements. Students should be aware that the University and College reserve the right not to approve practicum projects in foreign countries, especially countries with travel restrictions or advisories. Students wishing to conduct their practicum projects in foreign countries must expect and budget additional time to complete the approval process. See the OGE web site for more information: <http://www.kent.edu/globaleducation>

#### **Practicum Projects at the Student's Place of Employment**

Students wishing to conduct a practicum project at their place of employment must also obtain additional approval by the Practicum Instructor. Practicum projects occurring at the student's place of employment must have a scope of work that is "above and beyond" the student's normal job duties. Verification from the student's supervisor may be requested. A preceptor from the place of employment will need to be able to support the student's work.

#### **Examples of Practicum Projects**

A practicum project serves as evidence of the student's ability to apply knowledge and skills gained in coursework to a clinical epidemiology problem. Practicum projects can take many forms, depending upon the student's interests. Examples of practicum projects include, but are not limited to:

- A secondary data analysis of BRFSS data in which the student asks a health-related question, cleans and manages the data, analyzes the data, and writes a publication-ready manuscript
- A secondary data analysis of a study carried out by a faculty member who has data that the student can use to ask a research question and carry out a study
- Working on a clinical research study as a research assistant at a hospital. The student acts as an integral part of the research study and may perform activities such as identifying participants, consenting participants, collecting data, cleaning and managing data, analyzing data, and helping with writing up the results. These are examples.
- A primary data collection study carried out in a hospital – for example, a student who works in a hospital has access to a patient population, has made an observation that patients who are discharged from the

hospital are returning after a few days at home because their COPD symptoms were not resolved and they had a worsening of symptoms at home. The student decides to carry out an education intervention to teach the patients how to self-manage their care after discharge.

- A policy review of clinical procedures for the top three chronic diseases at a hospital system with recommendations for interventions that can be tested in a pilot study.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The student has the primary responsibility of identifying a practicum project and site, developing, conducting, and presenting the practicum project and ensuring that all requirements are met. To this end, the student is responsible for:

### Development Phase

- Reflecting on completed coursework, identifying areas of interest for further study, developing a list of possible sites to conduct the practicum, and generating a preliminary list of learning objectives and activities to be reviewed and approved by the Practicum Instructor.
- Obtaining the approval of the Practicum Instructor before contacting potential field preceptors or community sites to negotiate a practicum project. The student must work with the college to secure a Site Agreement with the community organization before the student can begin the practicum project.
- Completing the Practicum Agreement Form and obtaining all necessary signatures before beginning the practicum project. Time spent before approval of the Practicum Agreement Form will not count toward the minimum contact hour requirement.
- Submission of the Preceptor's curriculum vitae (CV) or resume along with the signed Practicum Agreement Form as needed.
- Enrolling in the appropriate Practicum Experience course (i.e., EPI 63192). Students cannot enroll in the course until they have submitted the signed practicum agreement form.
- Working with the Practicum Instructor to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of projects involving data from human subjects. You must have IRB approval before you can start any project that involves data from human subjects—whether you collected the data or not.

### Implementation Phase

- Completing the KSU-approved CITI training entitled, "GCP for Clinical Trials with Investigational Drugs and Medical Devices." While the student can complete any of the CITI trainings, the GCP training is specific for clinical research and is encouraged.
- Please note that this training must be completed before IRB approval can be given. Students that have completed the CITI training in the last three years can waive this requirement by submitting the training certificate to the Practicum Instructor.
- Completing all required aspects of the practicum project, as described in the Practicum Agreement Form.
- Behaving in a professional manner while completing the practicum project including appropriate attire, language, communication, and general appearance is an important part of the practicum and should be practiced daily.
- Documenting the time devoted to the practicum project using the approved time sheet (see Appendix).
- Negotiating absences and make-up time directly with the field preceptor. Please note that the Kent State University holiday schedule does not necessarily coincide with the holiday schedule of the field site.

- Contacting the Practicum Instructor when problems arise including if the student is asked to do anything s/he finds objectionable, sign any documents, perform any clinical functions, or anything else that falls outside of the scope of the Practicum Agreement Form.
- Completing assignments/tasks given by the Practicum Instructor.

### Final Phase

- Obtaining approval from the Practicum Instructor of a draft for the report/document that becomes the final practicum work product or narrative.
- Preparing the portfolio (see requirements).
- Obtaining approval from the Practicum Instructor to finalize the portfolio.
- Submitting the portfolio (see requirements).
- Completing all final requirements, including the Student Evaluation of Preceptor and Site form.
- The Preceptor must complete the Preceptor Evaluation of Student form and submit it directly to the Practicum Instructor.

### PRECEPTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The preceptor is located at the host agency and has the primary responsibility for providing a supportive learning environment for the student and evaluating the student's work. To this end, the field preceptor is responsible for:

#### Development Phase

- Meeting with the student to develop the practicum project.
- Discussing the Practicum project with the practicum instructor.
- Reviewing and signing the final Practicum Agreement Form (see Appendix).
- Submitting a resume/CV to the Practicum Instructor that includes professional experience, education, and certifications or licensures.

#### Implementation Phase

- Providing a safe and productive work environment for the student including a work area, computer, office supplies, or other items needed to complete the practicum project.
- Providing access to technical, laboratory, administrative, or other equipment needed to complete the practicum project.
- Signing time sheets (see Appendix).
- Maintaining an appropriate professional mentor relationship with the student.
- Supporting the student during the practicum project.
- Reporting any problems to the Practicum Instructor.

### PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS

Each student must complete items as part of the final portfolio that summarizes the practicum experience. After completion, the portfolio will become a public document that resides in the department's library.

***Students are required to work closely with the Practicum Instructor on the development of the portfolio, including submitting drafts by the stated due dates.***

#### 1. Practicum Final Work Product (Research Narrative or Technical Report)

A student has the choice of either selecting a research narrative or technical report (approximately 8 to 15 pages, including figures and references). The research narrative is a scholarly description of the Practicum project. Typically, sections of a research narrative will consist of the following: Introduction [with literature review], Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions/Recommendations, and References. If your Practicum involves a final work product for your organization, i.e., technical report, you are welcome to use that product instead of writing a separate narrative.

**Formatting Requirements of the Practicum Final Work Product**

The practicum final work product must adhere to the following formatting requirements:

Requirement	Description
REFERENCES	Citations and references should follow appropriate reference formatting for a journal that is appropriate to the clinical research field (e.g., JAMA, BMC, etc)
FONT and SPACING	12-point Times New Roman double-spaced
MARGINS	1" top, bottom, left, right
HEADER and FOOTER	No header, page numbering at bottom right of page
TABLES and FIGURES	These should be presented in conventional formatting for the journal referenced above

**2. Presentation**

Presentation Requirements

Students must prepare a presentation of their practicum project to other students, faculty, staff, their preceptors, and community members. The preceptor is encouraged, but is not required, to attend.

Students should prepare the presentation using Microsoft PowerPoint and include enough slides to fill 15-20 minutes. PowerPoint presentations may be done in person, virtually, or as voice over PowerPoint. Please check with your practicum instructor on the format for that semester.

**APPENDIX A**

Practicum Agreement Form

**MSCE PRACTICUM AGREEMENT FORM**

**Student/Practicum Information**

Student's Name	
Practicum Title	
Dates of Practicum	
Hours Per Week	

**Preceptor/Site Information**

Name of Site			
Site Address			
Preceptor Name		Phone	
Preceptor Title		Email	

Are you employed by this organization/agency?  Yes\* No  
***\*If yes, please complete this section on employment information***

**Employment Information**

Student's Job Title	
Supervisor	
Job description and principal duties  <i>Provide a justification for how the proposed practicum project is "above and beyond" the student's normal job duties.</i>	

**Foundational Competencies and MSCE competencies**

*Students must identify at least 3 of these 7 Foundational Competencies and 2 of the 4 MSCE competencies listed below that align with the practicum project objectives.*

<b>Foundational Learning Objectives (Foundational Competencies) Pick 3</b>
1. Explain public health history, philosophy and values
3. Explain the role of quantitative and qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population's health
4. List major causes and trends of morbidity and mortality in the US or other community relevant to the school or program
5. Discuss the science of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention in population health, including health promotion, screening, etc.
8. Explain biological and genetic factors that affect a population's health
9. Explain behavioral and psychological factors that affect a population's health
10. Explain the social, political and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities

<b>Competencies for Academic Master's Degrees in Public Health Fields (MSCE Competencies) Pick 2</b>
(C8) Design basic quantitative and qualitative research to address public health problems.
(C12) Apply epidemiologic methods to assess the risk of communicable and non-communicable diseases in the community.
(C19) Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation
(C1) Analyze quantitative data using biostatistics, informatics, computer-based programming and software, as appropriate

**Practicum Overview**

*Provide an overview of your proposed practicum. 1) Include background information on the agency in which you will be placed. 2) Where specifically you will be practicing within the agency? 3) What roles and responsibilities will you undertake? 4) Describe the final, written product that you intend to submit in partial completion of the practicum requirements (i.e. a work product such as a program/policy manual or handbook, or a research narrative)*

### Practicum Learning Objectives

Students must identify 5 measurable learning objectives, the timeline associated with completing the objectives, the method(s) for completing the objectives, and what evidence will document the completion of the objectives. Begin the learning objectives with the following verbs: **define, describe, discuss, explain, identify, demonstrate, differentiate, compare, design, formulate, evaluate, assess, or analyze.**

**Examples of Learning Objectives (and Competency C1, C8, C12, C19). You may use these objectives and/or create your own.**

1. Perform chart reviews or chart abstraction (C1)
2. Demonstrate competence in analyzing epidemiologic or clinical data (C1)
3. Explain a clinical or population health problem (C12)
4. Describe the population under investigation (C8)
5. Create the table and results section for statistical analysis (19)
6. Describe clinical policies for major disease categories (C12)
7. Explain a clinical or population health problem (C12/C19)
8. Describe the population under investigation (C8)
9. Identify national guidelines for major diseases (C12)
10. Discuss recommendations for policy or interventions (C19)

Learning Objective #	Foundational and MSCE Competency #	Timeline	Method(s)	Evidence
#2	C1	March-April	Clean and analyze data collected on survey	Tables and results section of paper

### Human Subjects Research

Does your project involve collecting or using information from a living individual in any way? This includes but is not limited to: performing secondary analysis of existing data; reviewing existing records; conducting interviews, focus groups, or surveys; observing participants; and examining biological specimens.  Yes\*  No

*\*If yes, you must work with the Practicum Instructor to complete the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms at Kent State University and receive approval before collecting or using human subjects' data. IRB approval may also be required from partnering agencies.*

**NOTE: Major deviations such as content, description or objectives from this agreement require the completion and approval of a new form along with approval by the Practicum Instructor.**

## Signatures

By signing below, the student and preceptor agree with the policies, procedures, and expectations stated on this document, the Practicum Guidelines document, and any associated syllabi.

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Student

Date

---

Preceptor

Date

---

Practicum Instructor

Date

## **APPENDIX B**

### Practicum Time Sheet

\*Note: This form must be typed.



## **APPENDIX C**

Preceptor Evaluation of Student

## PRECEPTOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT

*The student's grade on the practicum is based upon the quality of the student's portfolio, the portfolio presentation, an overall assessment by the faculty, and your evaluation as the field preceptor. Please complete this assessment during the midpoint of the practicum project and when the practicum project is completed. Please submit this assessment directly to the Practicum Coordinator.*

Mid-Point Evaluation
  Final Evaluation

### Student/Practicum Information

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Preceptor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preceptor Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please refer to the Practicum Agreement Form to assess the performance of each professional competency. Please note any comments you have on how well the student performed the competency.*

Competency #	Rating – Please circle one for each competency			
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well

<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				

**Learning Objectives**

Please refer to the Practicum Agreement Form to assess how well each learning objective was achieved. Please note any comments you have on how well the student achieved the learning objective.

Objective #	Rating – Please circle one for each objective			
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				
	Not Performed	Barely Performed	Adequately Performed	Performed Well
<i>Comment</i>				

### Knowledge of Effective Public Health Practice

Indicate your assessment of the student's knowledge of public health practice on a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor 5=Excellent) by circling one number next to each statement below. Circle "NA" if you do not feel qualified to rate the item or if it does not apply.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
The scientific basis for public health	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Methods to assess and analyze health needs of the community target population	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Appropriate theories and models of behavior change	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Individual, small, and/or large group public health strategies	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Relevant public health policies and practices at the local, state, and national	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Community resources	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Models for designing and implementing public health programs	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Effective management practices such as planning, budgeting, marketing, and staffing	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Additional comments on the student's knowledge of effective public health practice:

### Effective Public Health Practice Skills

Indicate your assessment of the student's public health practice skills on a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor 5=Excellent) by circling one number next to each statement below. Circle "NA" if you do not feel qualified to rate the item or if it does not apply.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
Formulate educational/service goals and objectives	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Selects educational or service strategies to the situation	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Delivers service or educational program effectively to clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Makes optimum use of available service/resources	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Develops measures to evaluate program effectively	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Prepares appropriate reports/maintenance records	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Plans and organizes time effectively	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Accomplishes assigned tasks with a minimum amount of supervision	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Additional comments on the student's public health practice skills:

### Relationships with Staff/Clients

Indicate your assessment of the student's relationships with staff and clients on a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor 5=Excellent) by circling one number next to each statement below. Circle "NA" if you do not feel qualified to rate the item or if it does not apply.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
Works harmoniously with colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Works harmoniously with staff	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Works harmoniously with representatives of other agencies	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Participates effectively with group situations	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Communicates effectively with clients	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Communicates effectively with staff	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Additional comments on the student's relationships with staff and clients:

### Personal Traits and Attitude

Indicate your assessment of the student's personal traits and attitudes on a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor 5=Excellent) by circling one number next to each statement below. Circle "NA" if you do not feel qualified to rate the item or if it does not apply.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
Possesses emotional stability and maturity	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Is mentally active and attentive	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Shows leadership qualities	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Shows interest and enthusiasm for assigned activities	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Recognizes own strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Responds positively to supervision	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Additional comments on the student's personal traits and attitudes:

### Potential

Indicate your assessment of the student's potential on a scale of 1-5 (1=Poor 5=Excellent) by circling one number next to each statement below. Circle "NA" if you do not feel qualified to rate the item or if it does not apply.

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	
Shows potentialities of becoming an effective site employee	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Has potential for contributing to profession	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Has potential for supervisory and administrative work	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Additional comments on the student's potential:

**Overall Evaluation of the Student**

*Using the space below, please provide your overall evaluation of the student, including commenting on anything not previously mentioned.*

**Your Feedback on The Practicum Process**

*We routinely make changes to the practicum process to improve the experience for the students and our preceptors. Using the space below, please provide your feedback on this experience and note anything we can do better.*

Preceptor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for serving as a field preceptor. Please send this form to the Practicum Instructor.

## **APPENDIX D**

Student Evaluation of Preceptor and Site

### STUDENT EVALUATION OF PRECEPTOR & SITE

*We also would like feedback from students on the preceptors and practicum sites. Please submit this assessment directly to the Practicum Coordinator. It will not be shared with the preceptor or practicum site.*

Student's Name	
Practicum Site	
Preceptor Name	
Dates of Placement	

*Please provide a general description of the duties and responsibilities you had during your practicum.*

*What experience(s) were most helpful? Why?*

*What experience(s) were least helpful? Why?*

## Preceptor and Site Feedback

*How would you describe the supervision and guidance you received from your preceptor and the site?*

*What feedback do you have to improve the practicum experience at this site?*

*Would you recommend other students use this host site? Why or why not?*

## Additional Feedback

*What additional feedback do you have about how to improve the practicum experience for students?*