

## Guidelines for Students and Practicum Supervisors

The Public Health Program and the University College at the University of Toronto is a multidisciplinary undergraduate program of critical studies in the determinants of health and health care. To supplement in-class learning with off-campus experiences, the Public Health Program offers a practicum course in addition to its core academic and research courses.

PHS400Y is an individual field placement with a Public Health professional in which the student applies theory and skills to a specific project or activity. The student will engage in ongoing work with an organization or institution, and is also expected to reflect on that experience in order to gain deeper understanding of Public Health. The course culminates with the production of a poster presentation at the annual University College Research & Practice Day held in late March.

### Course Details

Course Code	Course Title	Duration	Prerequisites	Exclusions	Open To
PHS400Y	Public Health Practicum	Full-Year (1.0 FCE)	PHS350Y	UNI400	Public Health Majors

### Types of Practicum Activities

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the Public Health Program, practicum placements provide students with real world training in a wide range of organizations and institutions. Placements can take place in a multitude of settings such as hospitals, government departments, community centers or non-profit organizations. Taking a practicum course can help students improve both specific skills (e.g., research design, policy writing, or job-specific technical skills) and general professional skills (e.g., project management, oral presentation, written reports).

A practicum in Public Health should involve work that:

- The student undertakes on a volunteer basis (i.e., students cannot be paid for their work AND receive course credit).
- Benefits the student by developing skills and/or applied knowledge relevant to Public Health (so, work should not be menial or highly repetitive).
- Does not replace the work of paid employees of the organization or institution.

Activities undertaken in a practicum can include:

- Formal or informal training activities to enhance the student's knowledge, skills and competencies in order to function well in the workplace.
- Job shadowing of one or more employees of the organization/institution.
- Hands-on work that supports the practicum institution or organization (this can include customer/client service, writing projects, use of task-specific technology or software, program evaluation, planning, design, and/or management, or other activities).

Please contact the Public Health Program Director before you register if you are unsure whether an activity is appropriate for a practicum.

Students are expected to spend approximately 8 hours per week in their placement activities between October and mid-February (not including the winter holiday and reading breaks; this timeline should be made clear to prospective supervisors). They will also be expected to participate in a small number of class meetings (primarily at the beginning and end of the placement) and to complete course assignments as assigned by the PHS400Y instructor.

### Setting up a Practicum in Public Health

The student is responsible for finding an appropriate placement and practicum supervisor. Once students have completed PHS350Y – Public Health Research & Practice, they should have the knowledge and skills needed to find and engage potential placement organizations, as well as appropriate professional and ethical expectations.

The Practicum Supervisor can be from any institution or organization outside of the University of Toronto that has the capacity to provide an immersive practicum experience and appropriate supervision. This means:

- The organization/institution hosting the student should be aware of and approve of the student's activities.
- The supervisor should be willing and able to provide ongoing hands-on direction to the student, and to ensure that the tasks assigned to the student contribute meaningfully to their learning.
- The supervisor should also be able to commit to filling-out at least two ***Practicum Progress Reports*** and the ***Practicum Final Evaluation*** which make a substantial contribution to the students' final course grade.

Please note that research-related activities undertaken with a supervisor who is a faculty member with an appointment in an academic unit at the University of Toronto would be more appropriately undertaken through a Public Health Independent Research course (PHS450Y, PHS451Y, and PHS480H – see the ***Public Health Independent Research Courses Guidelines*** for more information).

## Course Registration Instructions

To enroll in PHS400Y1, students must successfully complete PHS350Y, and find an appropriate practicum placement and supervisor (see above). Once the practicum project has been agreed upon by both parties, students are expected to have at least one meeting with their supervisors to discuss these course guidelines and together fill-out and sign the ***Practicum Agreement*** form which can be obtained from the Office of Academic Services or found online at: <http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/health-studies-courses>).

The Student, Practicum Supervisor and Course Instructor must all sign the ***Practicum Agreement*** and the student will not be enrolled in the course until it has been approved by the Course Instructor and Public Health Program Director. Once completed and approved, it should be submitted to the University College Office of Academic Services (UC 173). Students will then be enrolled in the course by the Public Health Program Assistant. Completed forms should be submitted no later than the end of the second week of classes in September; the course component of PHS400Y begins in the first week of classes.

Please note that if the goals and/or tasks of the practicum are to be changed significantly, the ***Public Health Practicum Amendment Form*** must be filled-out, signed by both the student and the supervisor and turned-in to the Office of Academic Services.

## Public Health Program Responsibilities

The Course Instructor and the Director of the Public Health Program are available to discuss practicum ideas with Supervisors and Students prior to submission of the ***Practicum Agreement***. They will review all forms submitted and provide feedback to both Students and Practicum Supervisors when appropriate. The Course Instructor and the Program Director will also be available to mediate any disputes between the student and supervisor that may arise.

The PHS400Y1 Course Instructor is responsible for scheduling class meetings, setting and grading course assignments, and reviewing the ***Progress Report Form*** and ***Final Evaluation Form*** provided by the Practicum Supervisor. The Course Instructor will submit a final course grade to ROSI/ACORN based on the student performance in the assignments as well as in the practicum, according to the grading scheme described in the Course Outline.

## Student Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to find a practicum supervisor and to work with the supervisor to define the practicum activities. The Course Instructor and the Public Health Director are also available for meetings to assist students as they connect with potential supervisors, and to confirm appropriate practicum work.

Students should spend approximately 8 hours per week over the course of the academic year in their practicum placement. Students are expected to find their own transportation to the placements and arrive on time to scheduled hours of work. They should keep in mind that they are representing the University and should display a high level of professionalism and respect towards their placement organization. Students will need to meet regularly with their Practicum Supervisor and follow their instructions on completing the practicum work in the style and manner required by the Placement Organization.

Students also commit to attending all formal class sessions related to the practicum course, including periodic class meetings held in the scheduled class time. In addition, students must complete all assignments associated with the course (as described in the Course Outline) as they would in any regular course and must agree to participate in the University College Research & Practice Day exhibition held at the end of the academic year for which they will produce an academic-style poster presentation reporting on their Practicum experience.

## Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors must meet with the students before the practicum begins to establish the goals, work plan, schedule, and output(s) of the practicum. The supervisor should provide ongoing hands-on direction to the student, and to ensure that the student is attending regularly and contributing positively to the organization, and that the tasks assigned to the student are contributing meaningfully to their learning; the supervisor and student should also meet regularly to discuss how the practicum is going and to discuss student performance. The supervisor will need to fill-out two *Practicum Progress Reports* and the *Practicum Final Evaluation*.

Supervisors are invited to attend the University College Research & Practice Day exhibition at the end of the academic year, where students will present an academic poster formally reporting on the Practicum work.

## Student Evaluation

Students in PHS400Y will be graded by the Course Instructor (NOT the Practicum Supervisor). However, marking will be based partly on evaluation of professional participation in placement activities as reported by the Practicum Supervisor. Course grades in the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto are based on this system:

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point-Value	Definition
90-100	A+	4.0	<b>Excellent:</b> Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A	4.0	
80-84	A-	3.7	
77-79	B+	3.3	<b>Good:</b> Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature
73-76	B	3.0	
70-72	B-	2.7	
67-69	C+	2.3	<b>Adequate:</b> Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63-66	C	2.0	
60-62	C-	1.7	
57-59	D+	1.3	<b>Marginal:</b> Some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53-56	D	1.0	
50-52	D-	0.7	
0-49	F	0.0	<b>Inadequate:</b> Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.

## Form Checklist & Deadlines

FORM	DEADLINE	SUBMIT TO:
Practicum Placement Agreement	Second week of classes in September	Office of Academic Services (UC, Room173)
WSIB Post-Secondary Work/Education Placement Agreement	Submitted with Placement Agreement	Office of Academic Services (UC, Room173)
Practicum Progress Report #1	Before the end of the Fall Term	Course Instructor
Practicum Progress Report #2	Before the final day to drop the course	Course Instructor
Practicum Final Evaluation Form	Last day of classes (before exams) in April	Course Instructor
Practicum Amendment Form (if needed)	As soon as a need for change is identified, but no later than the last day of February	Office of Academic Services (UC, Room173)
WSIB Post-Secondary Student Unpaid Work Placement Claim Form (if needed)	As soon as any injury/accident takes place.	Office of Academic Services (UC, Room173)

All of these forms can be found on the Public Health Program website (see: <http://www.uc.utoronto.ca/health-studies-courses>).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Public Health Practicum, please contact the **Course Instructor**, the **Program Director** at [healtPHStudies.director@utoronto.ca](mailto:healtPHStudies.director@utoronto.ca), or the **Public Health Program Assistant** at [uc.academicsservices@utoronto.ca](mailto:uc.academicsservices@utoronto.ca) or 416-978-8083, or visit the University College Office of Academic Services, in Room 173, 15 King's College Circle, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 3H7.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is eligible to take the Public Health Practicum Course?

PHS400Y1 is restricted to Public Health Majors and Specialists who have taken PHS350Y1 as a prerequisite.

### How do I enroll in a Public Health Practicum?

Course enrollment is done by the Public Health Program Assistant once the *Practicum Placement Agreement* has been completed and signed by the Student, the Placement Supervisor, and the Course Instructor. Students **cannot** register in this course directly through ROSI/ACORN. To complete registration, you must find a supervisor, complete the Practicum Placement Agreement form and return it to the University College Programs Office by the deadline. See “Registration Instructions” above.

### How do I find a Practicum Placement and Supervisor?

Students are expected to find their own supervisor for the course; the Course Instructor and/or Program Director can offer some advice and assistance, but will not make arrangements on behalf of students. To find a Practicum Supervisor, begin by identifying organizations and individuals doing work you find interesting; then approach them (by email, phone, or in person) to ask about the possibility of doing a practicum with them.

The prerequisite course, PHS350Y – Public Health Research & Practice, attempts to provide students with the skills and materials needed to approach possible supervisors and Practicum Placement Organizations. It is suggested that students start making inquiries and arrangements for their practicum as early as possible after finishing that course.

### When should I enroll in the Public Health Practicum course?

You can begin the enrolment process as soon as you have found a supervisor – the Program Office can process your registration any time before the deadline (second week of classes in September). In order to find an appropriate supervisor and get the paperwork filled-out, students should begin the process as early in the summer as possible. In addition, the size of the course is restricted, and spots are available on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is important to get your paperwork in on-time.

### Do I need to get Research Ethics Board approval for my practicum project?

If your practicum involves conducting research with human participants, and your supervisor does not already have approval from the Research Ethics Board to conduct the research, then ethics approval is required. The ethics process can be time consuming, so you should consult with your Practicum Supervisor to work this into your activity schedule. The *Undergraduate Ethics Review Form for Student-Initiated Projects* is available on the UofT website at: <http://www.research.utoronto.ca/forms/>.

### What should I do if my Practicum Supervisor and I are having trouble agreeing?

You should aim communicate your goals for the practicum in the initial Agreement, as this will stand as a binding agreement between you, your supervisor and the Public Health Program.

Once the practicum has begun, differences of opinion can occur. It is best to meet in-person with your supervisor to discuss your concerns. If your attempts to resolve the situation are unsuccessful, bring it to the attention of the Course Instructor and/or the Public Health Program Director, who will work to resolve the situation.

### What if I want to change my Practicum Activities?

Generally, switching your practicum (e.g., changing the location of the practicum or the Practicum Supervisor) once the practicum has started is

not possible. However, if you would like to change the types of activities included in the practicum, you should discuss this with your supervisor. If s/he agrees, the practicum can be changed by completing the *Practicum Amendment Form* and submitting it to the Course Instructor for approval. The Public Health Program Director should also be informed.

### What if I get sick and can't go to my practicum?

If you are unable to fulfill your practicum duties because of illness or other extenuating circumstances, contact **both** your Practicum Supervisor and the Course Instructor as soon as possible to arrange accommodation and get your work back on-track. Please note that the course instructor must be informed of any deviations from the practicum plan (including issues with attendance), and any significant changes from the practicum described in the *Practicum Placement Agreement* should be documented in a *Practicum Amendment Form*.

### Can I take PHS400Y again, with a new supervisor or practicum project?

No, PHS400Y can be taken only once.

## Helpful Resources

### Creating an Academic *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) and cover letter:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/create-your-academic-cv-and-cover-letter/>

### Job Searching:

Government of Canada Services for Youth websites:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/youth.html>

University of Toronto work-search tip sheets:

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/tipsheets>