

PADM 655 – MHA Practicum

Course Description

The School of Public Administration has established its MHA practicum program to place graduate students in organizational settings to afford the student an experiential learning opportunity. The goal of the program is to allow students to integrate their academic background with practical, real world experiences. Such an experience is vital to producing the future leaders of the healthcare industry.

The benefits of the practicum program are three-fold: (1) the program aids in shaping and defining a student's career goals through exposure to healthcare management while still in school, (2) the combination of academic studies and professional experience synergistically improves learning, and (3) it affords an opportunity for students to return to school and share their experiences with new incoming students.

Exposure to a healthcare setting practicum with hours equivalent to that of a 3-credit hour course offers the student some advantages usually associated with 12-18-month post-graduate fellowships. The influences and experiences gained from the practicum will help guide the student in his/her final semesters of studies into a field of healthcare management most suitable for the individual and the prospective organization. Students returning from their practicum are also able to apply their practice knowledge and experience to subsequent coursework. The insights and knowledge gained by the students have a tremendous impact on their ability to grasp and negotiate the more advanced academic material characteristic of the program's later course load.

Course Objectives

At the end of the practicum, students should be able to:

1. Assess the clinical, operational, and managerial aspects of the practicum organization.
2. List and explain the tasks assigned and projects accomplished during the practicum and how they contribute to the student's career goals.
3. Identify and effectively use appropriate communication methods depending on audience characteristics and communication goals.
4. Describe ways in which the practicum has strengthened problem-solving, communication, and presentation skills.
5. Identify key environmental factors affecting the practicum organization.
6. Understand and assess sources of authority and responsibility and how they are distributed within the practicum organization.
7. Explain how the practicum contributed to the establishment of a network of professional relationships.
8. Conduct oneself in a professional manner that cultivates confidence and trust.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

The final course grade is based on feedback provided by your preceptor, completion of written reports, and a culminating presentation.

Reports: At the mid-point of the practicum experience, students are required to submit a written report to their Practicum Preceptor and Practicum Coordinator. The purpose of the report is to provide the Preceptor and Coordinator information on the progress you have made on the initial Goals that were agreed upon by the student and Preceptor. Those goals were:

1. Organizational goals and objectives during your internship (Based on discussions with your preceptor, give detailed description of anticipated projects etc.)
2. Personal goals and objectives (As a student, what professional skills do you intend to gain from your internship experience?)
3. Plan Outline (Provide detail of what you intend to accomplish during your internship experience. Include a general sketch of the project you will present to fellow students and faculty at the end of the semester.

Presentations: All students are required to give a presentation to MHA and other interested faculty and students. MHA students will prepare and present an oral presentation of their practicum experience, expected to be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length and supported by PowerPoint or other appropriate presentation media. The presentation should include a description of the practicum host site/organization and the student's specific role/department/assignment within the organization. The preceptor should be identified and described. The student will present a summary of their practicum experiences and activities and provide a summary of their major learning experiences. All MHA students are asked to attend, regardless of whether they are presenting. We believe that you will find the information in these presentations extremely valuable. New students will have the opportunity to hear what is involved with a practicum and all students will have their education enriched by hearing about the experiences of other students in different settings. This is an excellent opportunity for all students to work on improving their presentation and public speaking skills.

Assignments: Weekly assignments will be set and reviewed by the MHA Coordinator. The weekly assignments will help the student learn about the organization, preceptor and team that make up the practicum organization.

Grading Scale:

The practicum instructor will award a grade of either an "CR" or a "NC" for satisfactory or unsatisfactory work based on satisfactory completion of the requirements outlined above and any additional requirements outlined in SPA policy.

Information for the Practicum Site and Preceptor

MHA Practicum - Preceptor and Host Organization Information

General Description

MHA students in the School of Public Administration are required to complete a **practicum experience**. The goal of the Practicum is to allow students to integrate what they have learned in

their academic coursework in an applied setting. The influences and experiences gained from the practicum will help guide the student as they prepare for the next chapter of their career.

The practicum experience is designed to have students apply their academic knowledge in a formal health care policy/administration setting. The student requirements for the practicum are:

- 24 completed credit hours of MHA course work
- Between 120-160 hours of work (for 3 semester hours of credit)
- A formal public presentation at the end of the experience

The site must be an organization, agency, hospital, or community health center engaged in healthcare activities. This allows the student to develop skills or competencies included in the MHA academic program (e.g. program planning, evaluation, data analysis, policy development, human resources, finance, process improvement, etc.).

Considerations for the Practicum Preceptor and Host Organization

Factors to consider for potential sites:

- The student should identify a preceptor at the host organization who is willing and able to spend regularly scheduled time with the student and provide guidance.
- The organization exhibits willingness to gradually increase student responsibility and independence over the duration of the practicum experience.
- The organization may expect the student to complete the practicum on-site within the organization providing workspace, access to resources, and the possibility to do field work or conduct field visits offsite. However, the practicum can be any combination of on-site and remote work as long as the work plan is agreed upon by the MHA student, the host organization practicum preceptor, and the UNM SPA MHA practicum coordinator.
- The site is a good match with the needs of the student and offers a valuable learning experience for the student.

Examples of Practicum Sites and Projects

MHA students are generally well-prepared to assist with a wide range of projects related to health administration. However, the specific work plan should be tailored to the individual MHA student and agreed upon by the student, the preceptor, and the practicum coordinator.

MHA Practicum Sites can be a wide range of organizations which deliver some form of health or health-related services. Sites have included:

- Hospitals—all departments from HR to compliance to specialty practice, etc.
- Clinics
- Private practices
- Behavioral health practices
- Social service agencies
- Public health departments

- Non-profit organizations
- And many more

The following are a selection of examples from past practicum experiences:

- Assisting with Community Needs Assessments
- Developing culturally responsive policies and procedures
- Conducting patient satisfaction surveys
- Cost-benefit analyses of new software, new billing practices, etc.
- Researching best practices for COVID-19 vaccine outreach to hard-to-reach populations
- Member of performance improvement team responsible for improving O.R. operations.
- Member of a team tasked with designing wayfinding strategies and then implementing the wayfinding plans for a new hospital.
- And many more

If you have questions about any of the Practicum experience, please contact the Department Practicum Coordinator: Paul Musgrave, pmusgrave@unm.edu.

Accommodation Statement

Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you need alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner. If you need local assistance in contacting Accessibility Services, see the Bachelor and Graduate Programs office.