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NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA  
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICUM MANUAL

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## **UNIT 1 THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICUM**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.8 Introduction**
- 1.9 Ethical and Professional Conduct**
- 1.10 Aim of the Practicum**
- 1.11 Objectives of the Practicum**
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#### **1.1 Introduction.**

This document or Practicum manual is produced by the Department of Public Health of the National Open University of Nigeria and it is intended to help and guide you as a student of Masters of Science in Public Health on how to conduct the Practicum of the Department. The document provides clear and concise information on the Practicum experience to guide you, your Faculty Supervisor, and Practicum Preceptor at the Practicum site or organisation.

The Practicum which is intended to provide hand-on experience in the field of public health is an essential part of the MSc Public Health Program and is embedded in the Public Health curriculum. The Practicum aims to provide you with opportunities to apply and test public health concepts and theories which you learnt in the course work in practical settings so as to improve your learning related to the Programmes of public health competencies.

The Practicum is a 4 credits units which must be conducted in partnership with an agency, community, ministry or organization that is providing a public health service which may include Hospitals, Ministry of Health Planning unit, Primary Health care agency, Disaster management service, NGOs and any other organization providing health services in broader sense of public health public or nongovernmental.

For the purpose of the conduct of the practicum and its effective supervision, the Study Centre, through the coordination of Desk Officer will identify a competent practicum organisation Instructor who will

serve as a guide throughout the period of the practicum. The Department will be required to appoint a competent member of academic Staff who will liaise or coordinate with the Desk Officer and the Instructor for the proper supervision and monitoring of the practicum, and this will require at least one on-site visit.

### **1.2 Ethical and Professional Conduct.**

As a trainee Public Health professional, ethical and professional conducts are mandatory for every National Open University of Nigeria Student, therefore ethical and professional conduct is essential during the conduct of the practicum. Besides the NOUN ethical practices, the student must also adhere strictly to the ethical conduct of the practicum organisation including dress code, time of operation and any other related conduct applicable. Students must exhibit commitment to excellence, honesty and integrity and respect for others in the place of practicum placement.

### **1.3 Aim of the Practicum.**

The Practicum is aimed at giving the students the opportunity to participate in on-going intervention programs and activities at the Local Government, the community and health facility levels. The students are to produce reports on health systems research based on their experiences at different levels of activities.

Visits to various public health programmes such as the following: Environmental health services including visits to water treatment works, sewage treatment plants, market and other food processing factories and abattoirs, refuse disposal systems etc. Community Welfare Services, lectures and visits to Remand Homes, Homes for motherless and handicapped children, prisons, schools for the deaf etc. Public Health Department, Maternal and Child Health Services, Public Health Laboratories, lectures and demonstration on their activities including testing of water, Control of Communicable diseases, the tuberculosis clinic and the infectious diseases clinics and Occupational Health Services.

## **1.4 Objectives**

The Objectives of the practicum are to:

1. Expand the Knowledge base of Public Health Practice
2. Allow students to appreciate the relationships among public health organizations, Government health agencies and parastatals and other governmental entities.
3. Expose the students to various career opportunities in public health and to allow host organisation to benefit from service provision by participating students.
4. Provide opportunity to participating students to apply practically what was studied theoretically.
5. Expose students to partnership and employment opportunities as well as collaborative activities and research.

## **1.5 Expected Learning Outcomes**

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of types of questionnaires
- ii. Explain the different types of questionnaire administration
- iii. Demonstrate field work leadership ability and teamwork
- iv. Analyse and clean data obtained from the field in the questionnaires
- v. Demonstrate understanding of role of community Health intervention
- vi. Develop clear measurable practicum objective as a community health practitioner
- vii. Apply evidence-based practice to public health
- viii. Develop ability to interact sociably with a given community
- ix. Undertake a community-based need assessment and propose how the community can address its health needs
- x. Organise, plan and Participate in a public health improvement programme
- xi. Develop Health education material base on the culture and religion of the community



## **1.6 Conclusion**

The practicum is aimed at exposing the students to hand-on experience of the theoretical knowledge of public health acquired during the course work and is a mandatory programme for the award of the Degree.

## **1.7 Summary**

The practicum which is a 4 Credit Unit should be conducted in such a manner that will allow the student to expand their knowledge base of Public Health Practice. Ethical and professionalism must be exhibited throughout the six weeks period.

## **UNIT 2 CONDUCT OF THE PRACTICUM**

### **2.1 Prerequisites**

### **2.2 Identification of Organisation and Placement**

#### **2.2.1 Change of Practicum area**

### **2.3 Planning**

### **2.4 Implementation**

### **2.5 Documentation**

### **2.6 Final Report and Deliverables**

### **2.7 Grading**

### **2.8. Conclusion**

### **2.9 Summary**

### **2.1 Prerequisites.**

It is expected that every student will participate in the Practicum which is usually after the completion of all course work and passing at least the core PHS courses.

### **2.2 Identification of organisation and Placement**

The student should be able to identify the specific area of Public health they are interested in conducting the practicum on. Health education, Health Promotion, Health advocacy, Maternal and child health, health financing/social insurance. Once the area is identified, then the student must also identify the relevant health agency, parastatal, organisation or community based programme where the practicum is going to be conducted.

After identification of the appropriate organisation, it is the responsibility of the student to apply to the relevant organisation for placement of the practicum, however, where introduction letters are required, the Study centre can write to the organisation introducing the student. Students that are already working in health organisations are still required to formally apply to the organisations and seek official placement as practicum students and must also be attached to a preceptor in the work place who will supervise the student during the practicum. Registered NOUN students working in an organisation are

not allowed to supervise or serve as preceptors of other students that are conducting practicum in their organisation.

In situation where a student is conducting the Practicum in his or her place of work, the Practicum must be planned in such a way that it will deviate from the normal work schedule of the student. It must be extended in such a way that new experiences and additional skills are acquired beyond the normal work schedule.

### **2.2.1 Change of practicum area.**

During the course of the practicum experience, if the Practicum Preceptor or the Department Practicum Coordinator finds out that a student is having difficulty functioning in a particular setting, the student may be reassigned to another organisation or asked to withdraw and retake the practicum experience in another semester. Where the student's behaviour is determined to be unprofessional, unethical, or outside the rules of the agency or university, by the department or Practicum preceptor or a formal complaint is received by the university from the organisation where the student is undertaking the practicum, the student may be withdrawn from the practicum programme and will be asked to repeat the practicum in another semester.

## **2.3 Planning**

Identification of Stakeholders in a community: Visit a community and identify community Leaders, Village Head, ward head, religious leaders such as Imam and Pastor and also Youth and women associations in the community. The student at this stage should utilised a structured household questionnaire to collect information on health of families in the community. The structured questionnaires are patterned after those of the primary health care system. The information collected by each student/groups are recorded, analysed and submitted as a report of the fieldwork activities. The practice gives the student an opportunity to translate theoretical concepts and principles in public health into practical experiences needed for program formulation, planning and implementation. Identify and participate in community health intervention programmes in the chosen community of Participation in Public Health programmes of the Organisation.

## **2.4 Implementation**

Implementation of the Practicum is the sole responsibility of the Student. Although the Preceptors, academic staff of the Department and desk officers at the Study centres are involved in one way or the other. The students should continue to review their work plan with the consent of the Practicum Preceptor to ensure that all the set out objectives, competencies and deliverables itemised in the proposal are met. In the event that the student encountered any problem or difficulty during the implementation of the practicum or noticed deviation from the work plan or inability to achieve the set objectives, the Preceptor and Desk officer of the Faculty must be contacted immediately, before the Departmental visit.

## **2.5 Documentation.**

Documentation is a very important aspect of practicum particularly that a concise report is expected to be submitted at the end of the programme. During the practicum, the student must ensure proper documentation of the following:

1. All activities carried out during the practicum while listing the most important activities of the period that may include dates and times only as needed for clarity. Activities such as interesting meetings, either group meetings or with individuals, duties assigned, other organisations visited, training completed, projects worked on, and other significant activities must all be documented.
2. Key Learning Experience(s) in a short form, not more than one or two paragraphs. Students must demonstrate ability to concisely produce a report of how the activities carried has added to his knowledge base and relate it to theoretical aspect learnt in coursework.

S/No	week	Activity	Date	Objectives	Remark

## 2.6 Practicum Final Report & Deliverables

At the end of the practicum, the student shall submit a final written report of the practicum experience. The practicum final report should be a concise summary of the programme, indicating:

- i. Why the work was done,
- ii. The goals and objectives,
- iii. the methods by which these were achieved and evaluated, related products that were created and results obtained and,
- iv. Discussion of the impact of the practicum activity (and recommendations for future activities to the sponsoring organization and/or the field, and/or research).

The write up for submission to the department should be as outlined in already uploaded seminar format.

## **2.7 Grading**

The practicum preceptor identified by the Study Centre will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the student during the practicum. Weekly documented activities carried out as documented by the student will be submitted to the workplace preceptor for check and grading during Departmental visit.

The final grade will be the sum total of the field work graded by the Department 60% and the submitted practicum report that will be graded over 40%. The score by the Department and the score of the written practicum report to be presented by the student at the end of the exercise will constitute the final grade of the student.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The practicum which is an academic exercise will be graded through the preceptor's marks and the marks attained after submission of the written report.

## **2.9 Summary**

The procedures for the practicum are clearly highlighted. Identification of practicum organisation, planning, execution and proper documentation of all activities carried out and submission of final report which will be graded.

The aims, objectives and deliverables must be clearly outlined and achieved by all students for the practicum to be accepted.

## **Unit 3. ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS**

### **3.1 National Open University of Nigeria**

The University through the Faculty and Department of Public Health Sciences will ensure proper placement of all students for practicum. Besides placement, the Department shall

- i. Act as a resource for assisting the student in identifying possible practicum experience locations;
- ii. Assisting the student in developing an appropriate work plan to ensure adequate learning experience
- iii. The department will through the desk officer at the study centre also approve the work plan and ensure proper evaluation for timely completion of the practicum.
- iv. The desk officer at the Study centre will maintain sufficient contact with students and address complaints on placements and shall issue introduction letter.
- v. The Department Practicum team shall maintain the records associated with each student's practicum experience and monitors the progress of each student during her/his practicum experience, and submits the final practicum experience grade.
- vi. At the end of the exercise for students' practicum experience, the Department Practicum Coordinator through the Study centres is responsible for gathering the final evaluations from the Practicum Preceptor, and gathering documentation of the required student presentations.

### **3.2 Practicum placement organisation**

- i. Orientation.

Once the practicum experience has begun, the Practicum Preceptor should assure that the student is oriented to the organisation, a tour of the organisation and its operational procedures should be made known to the student. In the event the student is a staff of the organisation, still orientation should be given in the new areas the student will conduct the practicum. Records of such orientation should be documented.

- ii. Provision of mentoring services and practical skills and learning experiences related to Public Health.
- iii. Provision of a qualified personnel, employee or affiliate to serve as a preceptor to the student.
- iv. The practicum organisation should also make sure that they have in place policies that will protect students from any form of discrimination and sexual harassment.
- v. Where Identification cards or Badges are required for entry into the premises of the organisation, the organisation should provide the student such means of Identification that will allow entry into the premises for the period of the practicum. • provide an orientation to each MPH student at the beginning of the experience, which includes an overview of site's mission and goals and physical facilities, personnel and other operational systems needed for the student to function appropriately at the site

### **3.3 Preceptor**

The Preceptor should be a skilled practitioner who should be a resident worker in the organisation where practicum is conducted and must be willing to serve as the student's mentor and guide, providing practical experience and supervision for the Practicum project throughout the duration of the practicum. However, if the student is rotating to different departments or units each performing different function, then the preceptor should assign someone competent in the other departments to supervise the student for the period in the said department or unit.

Besides the mentoring and supervision, the Preceptor has the following responsibilities:

- i. Be engaged in work that will help and guide the student to successfully fulfil the requirements of the Practicum.
- ii. Provide an overview of the Practicum Organisation, including its organisational composition and mode(s) of operation, mission, goals, and activities, and target population(s).



- iii. Orient the student to Practicum organisation policies and procedures relevant to enable the student work with the organisation.
- iv. Provide necessary organisational resources for project, including any pertinent reports.
- v. Allot adequate time to spend with the student and provide periodic and timely feedback and guidance to the student through regularly scheduled meetings, formal evaluation, and/or other means outlined in your Practicum Proposal.
- vi. Review and comment on the Practicum deliverables through completion and signing of relevant forms and Log books during and after the practicum

### **3.4 Student**

The student is a major stakeholder in the practicum and the he or she is to determine his area of choice or specialty, where he/she intends to acquire additional hand-on experience in the broad Public Health arena, therefore the student has the following role to play.

- i. Choice of Practicum Organisation. That is the student is responsible for identification of organisation where he/she will conduct the practicum. Similarly after identification, the student must submit the name of Organisation to the faculty desk officer at the study centre for approval.
- ii. Development of Practicum Proposal: the student is responsible for developing the practicum proposal in line with the aims and objectives of the Practicum as stated in this manual. All proposals must be in line with the laid down objectives of the Practicum and must also have deliverables learning outcomes at the end of the programme.
- iii. As a practicum student, all students must comply with the Practicum organisation privacy rules, policies and sign all necessary documents as required by the organisation including non-disclosure agreements.
- iv. All students must ensure completion of progress report which must be signed by the Preceptor who is responsible for supervising the student on weekly basis
- v. Production and submission of final report. All students must prepare a final report at the end of the Practicum exercise, 3 copies of which must be submitted to the faculty desk officer at the study centre.

- All reports must be signed by the preceptor and student with attestation of the originality of the work.
- vi. Documentation: All students are responsible for all documentation during the practicum which ranges from Registration for the course and filling the necessary forms for the practicum. Where introduction letters are required students should contact the study centre for such.
  - vii. All financial obligations such as transportation fare and other expenses that may accrue during the conduct of the practicum for purchase of materials or field trip should be borne by the student.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

All stake holders identified must play their respective roles for the smooth conducts of the practicum.

### **3.6 Summary**

The stake holders so identified includes the National Open University of Nigeria, the Practicum Organisation, the Qualified Preceptor and the students all have critical roles to play.

The student as a major stake holder must strictly adhere to all rules stated here in for a successful practicum