

Master of Public Health - Professional Practice Unit Information for potential host organisations

The Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne

The Master of Public Health (MPH) at the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health orients high-achieving students towards future careers as leaders in public health. We attract outstanding graduates from all over the world who have a record of academic achievement, who aspire to leadership roles in public health and who seek to contribute to improving the lives of others.

The MPH Professional Practice Unit

The Professional Practice Unit (PPU) is workplace unit* that MPH students may apply to undertake in the last year of their degree. Students selected for the PPU complete a discrete project in a specialised area of public health at a host organisation. The unit allows students to extend their skills in a practical workplace setting, while integrating course theory with practice. Students spend a minimum of 20- 30 days (160- 240 hours) undertaking the PPU at their host organisation.

Subject Objectives

Upon completion of this subject, students should be able to:

- Apply, integrate and synthesise knowledge and skills acquired throughout the course to tackle real-world public health challenges,
- Analyse, evaluate and propose practical solutions to problems identified within the bounds of the project,
- Solve practical problems whilst working with potentially unstructured and incomplete information,
- Develop professional networks within a given public health context,
- Demonstrate and critically reflect upon key professional attributes sought by employers (such as communication and interpersonal skills, project management skills, team work and initiative) ,
- Clearly communicate findings and results in a professional public health context.

Generic Skills

Upon completion of this subject, students will have developed skills in:

- Initiative, autonomy and organization,
- Problem-solving,
- Oral communication,
- Finding, evaluating and using relevant information,
- Written communication,
- Working with others and in teams.

* The Professional Practice Unit is generally unpaid, however a possible exception to this may be where a student undertakes the PPU in their own workplace.

Structure and timing of the PPU

The 20 - 30 days (160- 240 hours) can be completed in a 4-6 week block (full-time), or over an equivalent part-time period (e.g. 2 days per week for 10 weeks). Students may begin the PPU in Semester 1 or Semester 2, depending on their course plan. The specific timing of the unit can be arranged between the student and their workplace supervisor.

What is required of the host organisation?

- Provide a primary supervisor; this person should have at least two years experience and should have expertise in the specialist area in which the project is being undertaken e.g. health program evaluation. The primary supervisor should be available to meet with the student during the PPU.
- Provide a work station on-site at the host organisation for the PPU period.
- Return two, signed, paper copies of the 'Vocational Placement Letter Agreement' (or other negotiated agreement) to the University prior to the student commencing the PPU.
- Provide a workplace induction for the student on the first day of the PPU.

What is the role of the host organisation supervisor?

The role of the host supervisor is to:

- Determine the nature of the project to be undertaken in consultation with the student and the PPU Coordinator; discuss the project with the student, and (if appropriate) collaborate with the student to define and refine the details of the planned project prior to the placement beginning
- Meet with the student regularly during the placement (e.g. at least once per week in a four week placement) to providing guidance in completing the project.
- Ensure that a workplace induction is provided for the student on the first day of the placement, including information relating to the OHS/EHS requirements of the host organisation.
- Provide the student with mid placement feedback and complete a brief Workplace Supervisor Report – worth 20% of the students total subject mark at the end of the placement.

A 'PPU Host Supervisor checklist' is available and contains more detailed information.

What is the role of the PPU co-ordinator?

The role of the Professional Practice Co-ordinator is to:

- Work with host organisations and students to identify potential projects and to arrange suitable matches for the PPU.
- Support students and host organisation supervisors (as needed) during the process of defining the project, to ensure the project is suitable for student and meets the subject requirements.
- Monitor and students throughout the PPU, and be available to students and host organisation supervisors to discuss any questions, issues or concerns throughout the unit.
- Oversee marking of student assessment pieces at the University.

What knowledge and experience will the students have?

Some students coming into the MPH will have experience in health or public health, either locally or from overseas. Some students will not have previous employment experience in a related area. All students undertaking the Professional Practice Unit will have completed core subjects for the Master

of Public Health and a number of elective subjects in a field relevant to the placement (e.g. health promotion or health policy). For more information on the subjects within the MPH please refer to: <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/courses/244cw>

What sorts of projects do students undertake?

Students undertake a project that allows them to utilise skills and knowledge gained in their chosen MPH specialist area/s. These specialist areas are: Epidemiology & biostatistics; Infectious disease epidemiology; Indigenous health; Gender & women's health; Global health; Health economics; Economic evaluation; Health program evaluation; Sexual health; Social health; Health policy; Health Promotion; E-health, Non-communicable diseases.

Type of projects include, but are not limited to: development of an evaluation framework, carrying out a small scale program evaluation, literature reviews, data analysis, a scoping exercise to address an issue or problem, grant applications, small scale program or policy development, report writing, development of materials for dissemination of research findings or other public health information, or collection and analysis of interview and / or focus group data.

In identifying potential projects, host organisations might find it useful to consider a problem, issue or question that they wish to address, or a small project that they have not yet had the opportunity to complete. A discrete component of a larger project could also be suitable. During the PPU students should have the opportunity to carry out their own independent work but also to experience the collaborative nature of a workplace, for example by participating in workplace activities of such as team meetings, seminars or events.

Assessment

Students submit a total of four assessment tasks to the university: a 1000 word project outline, an oral presentation (20 minutes), a 5000 word project report (or equivalent assessment piece) and a Workplace Supervisor Report.

At the conclusion of the placement the workplace supervisor will be asked to complete a brief Workplace Supervisor Report which is worth 20% of the total assessment for this subject. This gathers supervisor feedback related to the specific work skills developed and demonstrated. All assessment pieces other than the Workplace Supervisor Report will be marked by the University.

Vocational Placement Letter Agreement

The University of Melbourne requests that a Vocational Placement Agreement be established between the University and the host organisation prior to the commencement of a PPU. The standard version of the 'Vocational Placement Letter Agreement' is available from the PPU co-ordinator. Potential host organisations are requested to arrange for the agreement to be reviewed by their legal advisor in the early stages of planning for a PPU placement.

Intellectual property arising from the PPU

The standard 'Vocational Placement Letter Agreement' for the PPU sets out that intellectual property in the student's assessment materials (including the main report) will remain vested in the student; and, a licence will be granted to the host organisation to use the student's assessment materials (for example, main report) in their business operations. Alternative arrangements in regard to intellectual

property may be appropriate for some PPU projects, and this should be discussed with the PPU co-ordinator at the earliest possible time.

Privacy and confidentiality

In some cases students may be given access to confidential information as part of their project. Students are required to discuss privacy and confidentiality in relation to their project with their host supervisor and the PPU co-ordinator before commencing. As part of the University's Vocational Placement Agreement with your organisation, students will be asked to sign a Deed Poll in relation to the placement which includes a section regarding confidential information, therefore, a separate confidentiality agreement for the student is not required.

What are the health and safety obligations of host organisations?

Participating hosts must have a formal OHS/EHS plan (or commitment to safe work practices), provide a comprehensive workplace induction for the student on the first day of the PPU, and promptly report any difficulties or incidents to the Professional Practice Coordinator.

What about Insurance and Workers' Compensation?

Students are covered by the University's Personal Accident, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance policies whilst they are participating in relevant and authorised Work Experience placements. Host organisations must have public liability insurance, at a minimum. The Professional Practice Unit is unpaid, so Worker's Compensation does not apply.

Fair Work Act (2009)

The Professional Practice Unit meets the requirements of a "vocational unit" under the Fair Work Act (2009) as the unit is embedded within the curriculum and is unpaid*.

What happens if the student is absent, or other unexpected difficulties arise?

If unexpected difficulties disrupt the placement, either through unforeseen workplace issues or student circumstances, please contact the PPU Coordinator as soon as possible.

What is the next step in becoming a host organisation for a University of Melbourne MPH student?

As a next step in hosting an MPH student please contact the Professional Practice Coordinator. Please also email a short description of the project idea (or project area) that you wish to offer, and the contact details of the planned host organisation supervisor. Selection and matching of students typically takes place around mid-December (for placements the following year). We also ask that you arrange for your organisation's legal advisor to review the 'Vocational Placement Agreement' (available from the PPU co-ordinator) early on in planning a placement.

To ensure that the Professional Practice Unit provides the utmost benefit for students and host organisations, students are matched with hosts according to subjects completed and their interests. Please note that we may not be able to guarantee the availability of a student for every organisation.

If you would like to participate in the Professional Practice program or discuss possible projects, please contact:

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