

Undergraduate Experiential Learning Policy

Purpose

In alignment with the BYU Mission & Aims, experiential learning activities should “inspire and excite students to learn in ways that have a deep and long-lasting impact”, in an environment where “learning leads to revelation”.⁽¹⁾ Experiential learning, defined as learning that occurs outside of the classroom, complements and improves upon undergraduate didactic learning in several important ways. It aligns meaningful experiences with learning outcomes. In doing so, it amplifies deeper learning through “substantive reflection and metacognition”.⁽²⁾ Experiential learning improves students’ ability to transition between theory and practice, helps deepen understanding of difficult concepts, and provides early opportunities to experiment with applying newly gained knowledge to contemporary problems.⁽²⁻⁵⁾ In addition to the many ways in which these out-of-classroom experiences improve student learning, experiential learning supports students to stay on track for graduation, increases the likelihood of attending graduate or professional school, and improves job placement post-graduation.⁽²⁾

The BYU Department of Public Health recognizes and embraces the important role of experiential learning as part of the undergraduate experience. The department also recognizes the importance of providing flexibility for students. This necessitates providing students with multiple options to choose from, including experiences such as study abroad, mentored research, community-based initiatives, and internships where students can tailor their learning to their individual interests and needs. These guidelines are provided to help students and faculty: (1) define the elements that comprise experiential learning; (2) identify the various experiences that meet the experiential learning criteria; and (3) outline the requirements and process for completing such experience within the Department of Public Health.

Process for Completion

Public health undergraduate students at BYU must fulfill 3.0 credits of experiential learning. Students have the flexibility to tailor their experience by completing all 3.0 credits via one option (e.g., HLTH 491R: Mentored Research) or a combination of options (e.g., HLTH 491R: Mentored Research and HLTH 496R: Academic Internship). Students pursuing public health have the flexibility to fulfill their experiential learning requirement at any point during their undergraduate program. While this flexibility allows students to choose a timing that aligns with their academic and personal goals and exposes them to the practice of public health, it is generally advisable to consider completing the requirement in their last semester or two - especially if completing an internship. This approach enables students to leverage the comprehensive knowledge gained throughout their academic journey, thereby maximizing the value they contribute to the experience. Fulfilling the experiential learning requirement through

the internship option in the final stages of their education also enhances students' potential to secure a job offer from their internship site.

The process for completing the experiential learning requirement includes: (1) identifying the opportunity, (2) fulfilling approval requirements, and (3) completing the experience.

1. Identifying the Opportunity

Students have several experiential learning options to meet this requirement. They should consider which experience(s) best aligns with their personal learning objectives and their future academic and/or career goals. Approved options include the following:

Public Health Internship (HLTH 496R): An internship provides students with career-related experience in public health towards the end of their academic experience. They are more focused on real-world work experience, allowing participants to contribute to meaningful projects within an organization. Participants gain insights into their potential future careers and/or opportunities for future employment in public health or a public health-related field. To find internship opportunities, students can connect with professors or explore positions on platforms like Handshake. Please note the following emphasis-specific requirements when choosing an internship:

- *Environmental and Occupational Health*

BYU undergraduate students in the Environmental and Occupational Health (EOH) emphasis of the Public Health major who complete an internship (i.e., HLTH 496R) to fulfill all or part of the Public Health major's 3.0 credits of experiential learning requirement must address at least one of the following EOH emphasis learning outcomes during the completion of their internship(s):

1. Environmental/Occupational Hazards Assessment: Assess the various biological, chemical, and physical hazards of the ambient, indoor, and work environment that can adversely affect human health.
2. Environmental/Occupational Health Interventions: Anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and control environmental and occupational hazards.
3. Environmental/Occupational Moral Code and Ethics: Apply moral and ethical principles as they apply to the science of Environmental/Occupational theory and practice.

- *Epidemiology*

BYU undergraduate students in the Epidemiology emphasis of the Public Health major who complete an internship (i.e., HLTH 496R) to fulfill all or part of the Public Health major's 3.0 credits of experiential learning requirement must address competencies in at least three of the following seven domains in the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) 2023 Applied Epidemiology Competencies at the Tier 1: Foundational level during the completion of their internship(s):

Technical Core Domains:

Domain 1. Data Analytics and Assessment Skills

Domain 2. Public Health Sciences Skills

Domain 3. Communication Skills

Domain 4. Community Partnership Skills

Leadership and Management Domains:

Domain 5. Management and Finance Skills

Domain 6. Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills

Domain 7. Policy Development and Program Planning Skills

For details of the CSTE 2023 Applied Epidemiology Competencies and the Tier 1: Foundational level, please see

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/aecfolder/CSTE_AEC_Report_On_lineDistri.pdf

- *Health Promotion*

The internship is designed to integrate the concepts of public health and health promotion learned in the classroom with real-world experience. A health promotion intern should gain experience in both their emphasis-specific and department-wide course learning outcomes:

1. Show evidence of participation in competencies and areas of responsibility appropriate for your public health emphasis: (internship coordinator evaluation)

Health Promotion: a minimum of 8 sub-competencies from at least 4 competencies spanning at least 2 of the 8 Areas of Responsibility, Competencies, and Sub-competencies for the 2020 *Health Education Specialist Practice Analysis*. Please see: https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2251/hespa_competencies_and_sub-competencies_052020.pdf

2. Demonstrate professionalism at the internship site, including dress and grooming, collegiality, appropriateness, communication, and punctuality (preceptor evaluation).
3. Demonstrate professional competence and ability to complete assigned tasks and meet the agency's expectations (preceptor evaluation).
4. Practice ethical standards appropriate to the internship site (preceptor evaluation).
5. Successfully complete the hour requirement for the internship (internship coordinator evaluation). Successfully complete the internship deliverable to the Internship Coordinator (internship coordinator evaluation).

- *Health Science*

Health Science internships must have an explicit focus on public health or on the integration of public health and health care. Activities focused solely on routine clinical duties (e.g., those of a CNA or MA) or those of a secretary or receptionist in a health care setting do not fulfill the learning objectives of this internship. In addition, interns' work must align with at least one of the following Health Science emphasis-specific competencies:

1. Building cultural competency to work among diverse populations and settings
2. Analyzing major public health issues in vulnerable and marginalized populations
3. Engaging in inter-disciplinary collaboration between the public health sector and other sectors
4. Improving access to and quality of health care services through integration with public health, especially by addressing social determinants of health inequities
5. Managing and analyzing quantitative health-related data

Mentored or Field Research (HLTH 491R): Mentored research involves on/off-campus research opportunities that have either a primary focus on public health or a clear public health component. Faculty members often seek students to assist with their unique research agendas. Students can also propose their research projects guided by a faculty member. To explore research opportunities, students should communicate with professors who are conducting research that matches their interest. Field research involves students working alongside a research team to gain familiarity in their field, often collecting new data alongside BYU faculty. Students may be mentored by faculty outside the Department of Public Health if they can demonstrate that the research is either primarily focused on public health or has a clear public health component. Students can complete mentored research through a Kennedy Center sponsored field school if it aligns with public health. For questions about counting mentored research credits toward the experiential learning requirement, please contact the student experiences coordinator.

International Studies Program (Courses Vary): The International Studies Program (ISP) incorporates study abroad and internship initiatives focused on public health. Led by a BYU public health professor, study abroad programs feature on-site lectures, study sessions, and/or research opportunities. During these programs, students engage in didactic courses where faculty members present information and guide them through the learning process in the field. Lasting for up to a term or semester, these trips offer students unique adventures and experiences. In contrast, internship programs link students with organizations and agencies in global settings, providing mentorship by preceptors in the field. The Department of Public Health offers the Global Health Internship Program and the Malawi International Development Internship Program through the Kennedy Center.

Public Health Practicum (e.g., HLTH 199R): A practicum occurs earlier in a student's course of study and provides exposure to practical experiences related to the field of public health. It is primarily aimed at providing students with an introduction to practical aspects of their field, helping them connect theory to real-world applications.

Campus Community Engagement (e.g., HLTH 3XXR): This category encompasses various public health-focused or public health-related engagements, such as service learning, competitions, leadership roles on campus (e.g., in the BYU Public Health Association or BYU Occupational Health Association), and clinical or primary care settings. This may include cooperative education or clinical education experiences. Students can explore opportunities for campus community engagement by visiting with faculty and/or the Student Experience Coordinator.

Other (e.g., HONRS 499R): Additional opportunities with either a primary focus on public health or a clear public health component, overseen by different campus units, can also fulfill the experiential learning requirement. This includes more applied honors theses or similar

experiences. Approval for these opportunities will be granted on an individual basis. Students considering such an opportunity should consult with the Student Experience Coordinator to determine if it is suitable for meeting the experiential learning requirement.

2. Fulfilling Approval Requirements

After identifying the experiential learning option aligning with students' learning objectives and career goals, they should schedule a meeting with the relevant approver. During this meeting, students will acquaint themselves with the specific approval requirements, often involving the completion of an application or proposal outlining the experience plan. Additionally, students will need to register for a designated experiential learning course. Approval requirements vary for each experiential learning opportunity (see Table 1).

3. Completing the Experience

Once approval is secured, students are authorized to actively participate in the experience. This entails immersing themselves in the proposed tasks, challenges, and responsibilities outlined during the approval process. It is essential for all experiences to be supervised by a professional preceptor — an experienced and knowledgeable individual who serves as a mentor throughout the experience. Each experiential learning opportunity comes with distinct assessment expectations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Experiential Learning Comparisons

	Internship	Mentored/Field Research	International Studies Program	Practicum	Campus Community Engagement	Other
Administrating Unit	Public Health	Public Health	Public Health in collaboration with the Kennedy Center	Public Health	Public Health	Varies
Approver	Student Experience Coordinator	Faculty Mentor	Faculty Director(s)	Student Experience Coordinator	Student Experience Coordinator	E.g., Faculty Mentor/Student Experience Coordinator
Approval Requirements	Internship Proposal	Determined by Faculty Mentor	Plan of Study	Completion of Opportunity Description and Supervisor Contact	Completion of Opportunity Description and Supervisor Contact	E.g., Prospectus
Course Number	HLTH 496R	HLTH 491R	Courses associated with specific international study program (these vary from program to program)	HLTH 3XXR or HLTH 199R	HLTH 3XXR	E.g., HONRS 499R

Preceptor	Community Professional	Faculty Mentor	Faculty Director	Varies	Varies	E.g., Faculty Mentor
Assessment	Final Report	Determined by Faculty Mentor	Course Assignments	Course Assignments	Course Assignments	Varies
More Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://ph.byu.edu/undergrad-internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://lifesciences.byu.edu/advisement/mentored-research/public-health • https://kennedy.byu.edu/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://kennedy.byu.edu/ • https://ph.byu.edu/global-health-internship-program 	Contact the Student Experience Coordinator	Contact the Student Experience Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://honors.byu.edu/thesis

Frequently Asked Questions

What is experiential learning?

Experiential learning is a learning approach where you gain firsthand experiences through active participation, reflection, and application of knowledge in real-world settings. This approach means you will be actively engaged in practical, hands-on experiences as opposed to sitting in a classroom and listening to a lecture. President Kevin J. Worthen referred to this type of learning as important for deepening learning and inspiration - something he called inspiring learning.⁽¹⁾

What is the public health experiential learning requirement?

All public health undergraduate students are required to complete 3.0 credits of experiential learning from a variety of options.

When should the public health experiential learning requirement be fulfilled?

At any time during the student's public health educational career at BYU. While the flexibility allows students to choose the timing that aligns with their academic and personal goals, it is often advisable for some students, particularly in some emphases, to consider fulfilling the requirement in their last semester or two. By doing so, students can leverage the comprehensive knowledge gained throughout their academic journey, which will maximize the value they contribute to their internship experience. Additionally, completing the experiential learning requirement in the final stages of their education enhances students' potential to secure a job offer from their internship provider because they bring a culmination of skills, theoretical understanding, and practical insights to the workplace.

Does the experiential learning requirement need to be specific to my major?

Yes, it must be specific to your major (i.e., public health). Experiential learning that occurs outside of the Department of Public Health may fulfill the experiential learning requirement if you can clearly articulate how your proposed experience connects with public health.

What courses meet the public health experiential learning requirement?

Many courses provide experiential learning opportunities (Table 1). The Department of Public Health defines an experiential learning course as any course that provides students with an opportunity to: (1) be actively engaged with real-world experiences, (2) apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations, (3) collaborate with peers, mentors, or professionals to address problems and challenges, and (4) reflect on the learning experience and make connections with existing knowledge. Typical courses that are designated as experiential learning courses include but are not limited to internships (e.g., HLTH 496R), practicums (e.g., HLTH 199R), study

abroad, field research, honor thesis (e.g., HONRS 499R), mentored research (e.g., HLTH 491R), and campus community engagement (HLTH 3XXR).

Experiential learning courses outside of the Department of Public Health should focus on the unique career goals of the student and the requirements of their academic emphasis. In such cases, students should meet with the Student Experience Coordinator to determine whether the experience will count for the Department of Public Health's experiential learning requirement.

Does an international study program (ISP) count as experiential learning?

Study abroad

Yes, as long as it involves or requires at least 3.0 credits, is led by a BYU public health faculty member, and is a part of the ISP. For example, students who completed HLTH 335: Health Behavior Change (3.0 credits), HLTH 383: Mind/Body Health (3.0 credits), and HLTH 481: Applied International Health (3.0) credits as part of the Europe Public Health Study Abroad would have completed (more than) the required 3.0 credits of experiential learning.

International internship

Yes, as long as it involves or requires at least 3.0 credits. Students who complete 3.0 credits of a global health internship will meet the experiential learning requirement.

Field studies/field school

Yes, as long as it involves or requires at least 3.0 credits. Students who participate in an international field study/field school typically register for at least 3.0 credits of HLTH 491R: Mentored Research for their international field study/field school.

Direct enrollment at a foreign institution

Yes, as long as it involves or requires at least 3.0 credits. Students who complete 3.0 credits of direct enrollment at a foreign institution will meet the experiential learning requirement.

How does the experiential learning requirement differ from the capstone requirement?

Our accrediting body, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), requires that all students in the undergraduate public health program have a cumulative and integrative learning experience that serves as a capstone at the end of the academic program. All public health students are therefore required to complete a public health capstone course in their emphasis area (i.e., HLTH 429 for students in the Environmental and Occupational Health emphasis, HLTH 493 for students in the Epidemiology emphasis, HLTH 494 for students in the Health Promotion emphasis, and HLTH 495 for students in the Health Science emphasis). While the capstone is a

culminating learning experience near the end of your academic program that includes experiential learning, the capstone is a separate requirement that is meant to allow you to synthesize and apply the information you have learned throughout your program of study. The public health experiential learning requirement can be taken at any time during your program of study and not necessarily at the end.

How is the public health experiential learning requirement approved for my plan of study?

It is approved through AIM.

Can courses offered by other departments fulfill the public health experiential learning requirement?

Experiential learning courses, including mentored research, outside of the Department of Public Health should focus on the unique career goals of the student and the requirements of their academic emphasis. In such cases, students should meet with the experiential learning coordinator to determine whether the experience will count for the Department of Public Health's experiential learning requirement.

Can I count credits from multiple classes for the experiential learning requirement?

Yes, as long as you complete the required 3.0 credits of experiential learning. For example, 2.0 credits of internship (HLTH 496R) and 1.0 credits of mentored research (HLTH 491R) could be counted. As another example, 1.0 credit of mentored research (HLTH 491R), 1.0 credit of practicum (HLTH 199R), and 1.0 credit of campus community engagement (HLTH 3XXR) such as being a leader in the BYU Public Health Association or BYU Occupational Health Association could be combined to meet the requirement. It is also acceptable to complete all 3.0 credits of required experiential learning via one class (e.g., 3.0 credits of HLTH 481: Applied International Health, HLTH 491R: Mentored Research, HLTH 496R: Academic Internship).

Can I be paid as a research assistant while simultaneously working for mentored research credit?

No, students cannot “double-dip” by receiving credit and pay simultaneously for the same work. For long-term mentored research, we encourage students to complete their experiential learning credits first, and then work with their faculty advisor to move to a paid position.

Can I fulfill the experiential learning requirement by working as a volunteer research assistant?

No, students must register for 3.0 credits to fulfill the experiential learning requirement.

References:

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