Boston University School of Public Health
Practicum FAQ’s RELATED TO COVID-19

FOR STUDENTS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING PRACTICUMS

1. What if COVID-19 prevents my practicum from continuing (i.e. hours, deliverables, or changing/ending abruptly)? What if my ability to access needed information changes due to organizations implementing ‘social distancing’ strategies and employees are working remotely?
These are uncharted waters, and both CEPH and BUSPH understands that flexibility is needed while still ensuring that students gain fundamental public health competencies. To that end, practicums constrained by COVID-19 over this period of disruption, may apply these measures if needed.

If your deliverables have changed
Students are able to change competencies and deliverables from what was proposed. You may consider what intermediate work products you have already contributed, and recast them to serve as deliverables. Another possible deliverable option is to craft a well-developed reflection to meet some competencies.

If you have not (or will not) complete the 240-hour requirement – and – are unable to complete your practicum remotely
- If you have completed LESS than 120 hours, you will be required to submit 2 deliverables plus a reflection paper related to your practicum in some way, though your initial competencies may change.

- If you have completed MORE than 121 hours, you will be required to submit 2 deliverables and one of these may be a reflection paper related to your practicum in some way.

If your Supervisor is unavailable to complete evaluations
Supervisors automatically receive reminders to review your work (generated from the Practicum Portal). Students must ask their Supervisor if they are still able to complete a review in the Portal. If not, students must note this when they are describing changes.

- If your Supervisor can not complete an evaluation via the Portal, they may be contacted by Boston University at a later date.

How to communicate your changes to the Practicum team
Communicate changes in the Practicum Portal either in the Midpoint Review or Final Review section, depending on what stage you are at in the Process.

- For changes in deliverables and/or competencies, use the “Did your Practicum Proposal Information change?” textbox as indicated below. (The screen capture is for the Midpoint Review, though the Final Review form is similar). Additionally, in this section, please let us know if your Supervisor can NOT complete your review.
- If your hours are off track, due to Covid-19, please explain why, and indicate how many hours you were able to complete, and whether you expect to be able to complete more.

2. Can I do my Practicum remotely?
   Yes. Completing some or all of your practicum hours remotely is possible, depending on the host organization and Supervisor. Those working remotely should develop a schedule and structure for how they will work and communicate with their Supervisor. (For example, work Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8am-4pm, and speak with my supervisor weekly via Zoom/Skype. Send a summary of work activities at the end of each week.)

3. Due to COVID-19 my supervisor is no longer available to mentor me -- what should I do?
   Is there another person at the site, familiar with your efforts, who can stand in? If that is OK with your Supervisor, you can edit the Supervisor contact information in the Practicum Proposal section in the Portal. Once this is done, the new Supervisor can participate in the 3-step review and approval processes that takes place during the Proposal, Midpoint and Final Review stages.

4. I feel sick, but I know the organization is depending on me. Should I tell my supervisor?
   Yes! When you feel sick with a cold or flu like symptoms, it can be easy to transmit illness to others. It is best to do what you need to do recover and minimize transmission.
5. I feel at risk at my Practicum site -- should I ask to work from home? What if they say no? What if they put pressure on me to stay? If they say no, are there consequences if I chose to leave?
   It is good to speak with your Supervisor to learn what is possible. Practicum Staff are also available to speak with you about your concerns. While not all practicum activities can be completed remotely, we want you to feel safe and follow reasonable guidelines.

6. My scope of work has changed and I’m not happy about it. What do I do?
   Some like to say, the only constant is change. It’s a universal truth. Your ability to cope and adjust to change is an important quality, especially in times of change. But there are some things you can do: 1) Consider the big picture and whether the change is something in your control and what options you have, and 2) Speak with your Supervisor about the change and what might be possible to alter or mitigate its adverse effects. Change may not be easy, but communicating appropriately with your Supervisor is a key step to learning whether adjustments can be made. Practicum staff can help you clarify what is problematic, figure out what options you have, and what is your best approach.

7. My supervisor wants me on emergency preparedness and I want to say no, but I feel like I’m selling out. What should I do?
   We want you to feel safe and to follow reasonable guidelines. Each individual will have their own sense for what is best for them, particularly in risky situations. Sharing your concerns may help you learn more to feel better about the situation or may also help you come to a decision you want to make. Reach out to Practicum Staff to discuss your individual situation.

FOR STUDENTS LOOKING FOR PRACTICUMS

1. What if COVID-19 prevents me from finding a Practicum and my graduation timeline is put at risk?
   As we are learning from news reports, COVID-19 is disrupting all kinds of things: from big events and conferences, School classes, professional and personal life activities, not to mention the upheaval of being impacted from the disease, restrictions, and possibly self-quarantine, etc. What we do know is that organizations run on people and public health agencies are busy at work to help address many issues. Many still need and want interns. We continue to post opportunities and foster ways to connect to organizations, through remote meeting options, (see in Handshake) so you can learn about their opportunities. We think it will still be possible for many to keep their timelines. But given the state of disruption, some timeline adjustments may be required.

2. Due to COVID-19 I have decided to go home, which is not in Boston. How should I go about finding a Practicum in a different state?
   Searching for a Practicum outside of Boston is no different than searching for a Practicum in Boston – the tools and methods are still the same. Students do their Practicum in many cities and states, and even remotely. Connecting with alumni on LinkedIn and using the Past Practicum Database will be an important step in connecting with organizations in your area as well as Indeed, LinkedIn & Handshake job boards. In addition, we also have additional resources in the Career Library such as organizations in the Major U.S. cities.

3. How long should I wait for what I really want vs. what is available?
   This question is common, even during “normal” times. Some sectors and organizations move more slowly than others. We encourage you to reach out to Practicum Staff to discuss.

4. Everything I’m seeing are projects around COVID-19, but I’m not interested -- should I do it anyway?
   Sometimes opportunities appear differently on the surface; they may be more substantive and interesting than they initially appear. Additionally, some opportunities may have flexibility to be tailored to meet your interests as long as they still meet the organization’s needs. This would require a conversation with the Supervisor. For help determining how to approach this situation, please reach out to Practicum Staff.
5. What is the Career & Practicum Office hearing about Practicums from employers? Should we be worried?
The Career & Practicum Office is in constant communication with our employer partners during these times. So far, it has been very positive regarding employer interest in participating in remote events as an alternative to the Practicum Expo. Additionally, as of this time most employers are not seeing a change in their ability to hire interns. That being said, these are uncertain times -- if we hear anything different we will update you as soon as we know.

6. Will Practicum requirements change?
No. The requirements for Practicum will remain unchanged. However, we are fully aware that in these fluid times a Practicum project may be impacted by the COVID-19 situation, and will handle these situations as they arise. If you are in a situation where your Practicum is directly impacted you should contact us immediately.

7. Will the timelines change for the Practicum Scholar Award?
Yes. The Practicum Scholar Award deadline has been extended to May 15, and awards will be announced on May 22. This is subject to change given the fluid environment.

8. It’s going to be too late now...how can I achieve my timeline?
Fortunately, the Practicum is flexible and can be completed in any semester, and even across multiple semesters! We anticipate the flexibility being a huge asset to students during this outbreak. It is probably good to have a flexible timeline right now as these are fluid times and we cannot anticipate what the future will look like. That being said, if you feel as though your graduation or ILE timeline has been impacted by COVID-19 please be in communication with Practicum Staff so we can handle the situation together.

9. I interviewed for a practicum, but have not heard back, what should I do?
This question is common, even during “normal” times. Some sectors and organizations move more slowly than others. And, unfortunately, many organizations do not have the resources to follow up with every candidate who interviewed for their practicum. If you have a personal or professional networking contact there, it can be helpful to ask them for an update. Some Human Resources departments are open to receiving a follow-up call or email. While you may try that route, do not take it personally if you don’t receive a response. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to Practicum Staff to discuss.

10. I applied to a few practicums, but have not heard back, what should I do?
This question is common, even during “normal” times. Some sectors and organizations move more slowly than others. And, unfortunately, many organizations do not have the resources to follow up with every candidate who applies to their practicum. If you have a personal or professional networking contact there, it can be helpful to ask them for an update. Some Human Resources departments are open to receiving a follow-up call or email. While you may try that route, do not take it personally if you don’t receive a response. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to Practicum Staff to discuss.

11. I received a Practicum offer, but due to COVID-19 it has been placed on hold -- now what do I do?
The situation may vary from organization to organization as they internally begin to deal with the outbreak. In situations like this it is best to contact Practicum Staff to discuss your situation.

12. I’m not seeing a lot of postings.
Currently there are still many postings in Handshake and Indeed. We are not anticipating a sudden decrease in postings at this time. As always be sure to use keywords and filters to find the best opportunities to suit your skills and interests, but also supplement tools such as the Past Practicum Database & LinkedIn for networking as there are some opportunities that may not exist in writing. Be in contact with Practicum Staff for support and
guidance throughout your search as we are still operating at full capacity.

13. We are worried, what is the School doing to help us?
   We are actively working with employers who were attending the Practicum Expo to find virtual alternatives so that students and employers can still engage about Practicum opportunities. We are leaving the registration link open for other employers to participate as well. Additionally, Career & Practicum Office services remain unchanged -- though we will be operating remotely we are confident we can provide the same support that we offer on site.

14. Will there be less money for organizations to pay Practicum students now?
   While we cannot say for sure we do know that the COVID-19 pandemic is going to impact the economy in a major way.

15. Can I still do a global Practicum? Will I be able to apply for a travel stipend?
   Yes, graduate students may still pursue international practicums. Review international practicum guidelines, and the BU Global Programs International Travel Risk Policy. You should consider your own risk tolerance and the situation at your intended site, as well as countries and cities you may pass through to get there. Regarding travel stipends, according to the Boston University President’s March 11 Update Letter, we cannot support international travel with University administrated funds.

General Career & Practicum Office website: https://www.bu.edu/sph/careers/
Practicum Resources website: https://www.bu.edu/sph/careers/for-students/practicum/
Practicum Staff Email: sphpract@bu.edu
Career Advising Staff Email: sphcareeroffice@bu.edu