

Requesting Practicum Credit for Prior Experience **Department of Epidemiology**

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The practicum requirement: The practicum requirement in Epidemiology is intended to provide students with an out-of-the-classroom experience in public health. Except for the Global Health Track, all master's students in the Department of Epidemiology are required:

- To complete an epidemiologically-relevant practicum equivalent to 8 or more full-time weeks, or
- To demonstrate equivalent experience at the time of matriculating at Mailman.

Global Health Track: Global Health Track students are required to complete the practicum requirements of the multi-departmental Global Health Track. There is no practicum equivalent experience granted through the Department of Epidemiology for students in this track. In addition, the practicum requirement for Global Health is generally for six months at an international location. Global Health Track faculty should be consulted regarding details on the Global Health Track practicum.

Getting practicum credit for past experience: Many students have prior epidemiologically-relevant experience that can be used to fulfill the practicum requirement for the Master's degree in Epidemiology, but this must be documented in the graduate record before practicum credit can be given. Practicum Equivalent Credit is considered only for work experience completed prior to entering the Master's program at Mailman and only for those students NOT enrolled in the Global Health Track.

The process for receiving credit for past experience is detailed below. After submission of all required documentation, a team of faculty and staff discuss the scope and quality of the experience and reach consensus on whether it is acceptable for practicum equivalent credit. Four items must be submitted when requesting approval of past experience in fulfillment of the practicum requirement:

1) A two paragraph letter. This 1-2 paragraph letter should request that your "experience be accepted in fulfillment of the practicum requirement for the Master's degree in Epidemiology." In the letter, detail the epidemiologically-relevant portions of your past jobs, internships, summer work, or other equivalent experience. Include the name of your supervisor(s) and the institution where the work was done for which you are requesting equivalent experience.

NOTE: The letter should NOT use the word "waiver". Practical, epidemiologically-relevant experience is a requirement for all degree candidates in the Department of Epidemiology. This requirement is not being waived—rather prior equivalent experience is being accepted in fulfillment of this requirement. (This distinction has been made by site visit team members during accreditation site visits.)

2) Current resume or CV. This should minimally include your educational degrees attained, work experience, and any publications that you may have authored or coauthored.

3) Good Clinical Practices (GCP) Certification. This certification can be completed on-line through links listed at this website under other resources.

4) Patient Privacy (HIPAA) Certification. This certification can be completed on-line

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When should the request be filed? To be granted practicum equivalent experience, the request should be filed during the first semester. This provides time to plan a practicum should prior experience not be sufficient.

With whom do I file the request? The letter should be addressed to Dr. Joyce Pressley (jp376@columbia.edu). Please include the letter and CV in one e-mail. If electronic copies of the GCP and HIPAA certifications are available, these should also be attached to the e-mail containing the letter and CV.

How soon will I know whether it is approved? No decision regarding practicum equivalent credit will be made until all 4 required items are complete. Once the request for practicum equivalency is complete, the acceptability of the experience will be reviewed and the student notified usually within a few days. If the process takes longer than one month, the student should contact Dr. Pressley at jp376@columbia.edu to inquire.

Final paperwork for your file: For students whose experience is deemed acceptable, a practicum completion form and their resume or CV will be filed with the graduate school. The student should check their degree audit report in Student Services Online (SSOL) to ensure that their practicum requirement has been credited. (This can be found below the students classes and grades on the degree audit report.) If this takes longer than one month after approval of practicum equivalency, the student should notify Dr. Pressley at jp376@columbia.edu.

Transition to the Thesis Considerations: Students who receive practicum equivalent credit should arrive at a thesis topic, decide on a thesis question, and locate a thesis data set prior to the third semester. Assistance in thesis issues can be found on the *Transition to the Thesis* section of this website.