PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines and expectations for the successful planning, execution, and evaluation of practicum experiences within academic programs. This policy aims to ensure that students gain valuable practical insights, contribute meaningfully to global health initiatives, and adhere to ethical and professional standards during their practicum.

DEFINITIONS

Practicum: A structured, hands-on learning experience that allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings relevant to their field of study. It is designed to encourage critical thinking and strategic problem-solving. These projects typically culminate in a tangible deliverable, such as a report and oral presentation (defense).

Defense: An oral defense is a formal presentation and discussion of a student's practicum project as part of the required deliverables.

Preceptor: An experienced professional from the organization where the practicum is conducted, responsible for guiding and mentoring students throughout their practicum.

Supervisor: An academic supervisor overseeing the overall progress of the practicum, ensuring alignment with learning objectives, deadlines, and reporting requirements.

Practicum Site: The organization or location where students undertake their practical training.

Practicum Committee: The committee oversees the planning, implementation, and evaluation of practicum experiences for students in academic programs; to ensure that practicum experiences align with academic and professional standards.

Defense Committee: The committee that evaluates a student's written and oral defense of their practicum project. This committee assesses the students' ability to articulate their study findings and methodologies and defend their work against questions and critiques.

TYPES OF PRACTICUM PROJECT

Practicum projects may encompass various formats, each designed to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios effectively. These include:

1. **Research-Based Projects:**
   o Focused on addressing specific research questions or problems through systematic investigation. This category includes action research, which involves a reflective process of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating to enhance practices in a specific setting.

1.1. Ethnographic Studies:
o In-depth qualitative research aimed at understanding cultural practices, behaviors, and experiences within a specific group or context.

1.2. Case Studies:
o In-depth analysis of specific cases focusing on individual, organization or events to understand the complexes that may exist.

1.3. Survey Research:
o These may be cross-sectional and will involve data collection through administration of questionnaires through face-to-face, telephonic and emails to gather quantitative or qualitative insights about a phenomenon of interest about a population.

1.4. Experimental Research:
o These will be conducted in a controlled environment to observe a causal relation between two variables, thus testing the hypotheses.

1.5. Phenomenological Research:
o Focus on exploring and describing lived experiences of individuals in relation to a particular phenomenon of interest.

1.6. Mixed Methods Research:
o Combining qualitative and quantitative research approaches to provide an in-depth understanding about the phenomena of interest.

2. Design-Based Projects:
o Involves applying theoretical knowledge to solve practical issues through the development of new programs, interventions, or training initiatives. These projects focus on creating tangible solutions to real-world challenges.

3. Evaluation Projects:
o Assess the effectiveness of existing programs or interventions using quantitative and/or qualitative methodologies. This category includes evaluating effectiveness of clinical practices or interventions on outcomes.

4. Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses:
o Comprehensive reviews of existing literature on a specific topic aimed at drawing broader conclusions.

5. Social Marketing and Technological Solutions Projects:
o Designing and executing marketing strategies to promote social change or public health initiatives, that may include the development of technological tools, platforms, or devices (e.g., mobile applications, databases) to address specific needs within a community or organization.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all UGHE students participating in practicum experiences as part of their academic programs, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

PROCEDURE

1. Practicum Selection

Practicum projects can be identified in two ways:

• Proposed by faculty and made available for student selection

• Proposed by students

• Proposed by the preceptor

All practicum projects and sites will be approved by the practicum team and the relevant department to ensure alignment with institutional and academic goals.

2. Assignment of supervisor and preceptor

Students will be assigned a supervisor and preceptor throughout their practicum experience.

• The preceptor is typically an individual working at the project site, ensuring that students receive relevant support and insights on the day-to-day field work. In some projects, such as secondary data analyses, they may not have a preceptor since there is no practicum site; in these cases, students will only have an academic supervisor.

• The assignment of academic supervisors will be based on the specific expertise of faculty members relevant to the practicum project to provide appropriate mentorship tailored to their project objectives, facilitating a more enriching learning experience. In some cases, a practicum project may have multiple academic supervisors, often consisting of both senior and junior faculty members. The senior faculty member typically provides overarching guidance and strategic insights, while the junior faculty member can offer additional support, focusing on day-to-day project management and practical aspects of the research or implementation process. This collaborative supervisory approach fosters comprehensive support to the student's professional development.

3. Proposal Development

Students, in collaboration with their academic supervisors and preceptors will develop a comprehensive proposal, outlining their project objectives, methodologies, expected outcomes, and the significance of their work in relation to global health initiatives.

Additionally, students should develop a budget associated with their project. The proposal must follow the proposal template provided by the practicum team and the specific departments.

4. Proposal approval

Before implementation, all proposals must be submitted to UGHE Institutional Review Board (IRB) for ethical approval. In addition to IRB approval, students may need to seek permission from the ministries, hospital or community where the practicum will take place. This may involve submitting a proposal for review by relevant stakeholders to ensure that the project aligns with local policies and practices.

5. Budget development

UGHE may financially support some practicum projects. Students must develop a detailed budget that accounts for various expenses, including materials, travel, and any necessary equipment or software for data collection and analysis, with justifications for each budget item to ensure transparency and accountability. Students will be required to refer to the Practicum Budget Policy (will insert policy number) for specific guidelines and procedures. The practicum budget will be reviewed and approved by the practicum team and the leads for specific departments. If funding is not required for the project, students will not need to submit the budget for approval.

6. Implementation

Upon receiving approval, students will execute the proposed activities, collecting data, and engaging with stakeholders. Students are responsible for making all logistic arrangements. Regular communication with both the academic supervisor and preceptor (if applicable) is essential during implementation to address any challenges that may arise and ensure that the project remains on track. Students are encouraged to maintain detailed records of their activities and findings throughout this phase, as this documentation will be critical for the reporting process.

7. Report

Students will submit a comprehensive final report that adheres to the template requirements provided by the practicum team. It is essential for students to ensure that their final report meets the established standards, as failure to pass the report (below 70%) will result in ineligibility to defend their practicum project.

8. Financial reconciliation

At the end of the field practicum activities, all students will be required to present a financial statement that outlines all expenses incurred against the money that was given to them. For each transaction incurred a proof of expenditure in terms of receipts/mobile money transactions will be expected. All expenditures incurred but not in line with the **Practicum Budget Policy (AP-GE 7)** will not be reimbursed and the procedures to handle incompliance are outlined in the **Practicum Budget Policy (AP-GE 7).**

9. Defense

Students who passed the final written report will be allowed to present their practicum projects orally (defense) in front of a panel of three examiners. This examination committee must include at least one internal examiner, one external examiner, and one PhD or equivalent doctoral degree holder. The student's practicum supervisor or preceptor cannot serve as examiners in the defense. To qualify for completion of their academic program, students must successfully pass both the written final report and the oral defense.

10. Data Privacy and Confidentiality

Students must adhere to guidelines for protecting sensitive data, including compliance with relevant laws and institutional policies regarding data collection, storage, and sharing. Confidentiality agreements must be always upheld. Upon completion of the project, students must submit all digital data and hard copies to the practicum team for archiving.

11. Deliverables

In the year preceding the beginning of the practicum, students from the various departments will be provided with detailed timelines and deliverables to be met during practicum. Furthermore, at the beginning of the Practicum module, students will be provided with detailed information about the deliverables and schedule. They must follow the outlined timelines and requirements to ensure successful completion of the practicum experience.

FINANCING OF PRACTICUM

• Students will not receive remuneration for their work during the practicum. They are encouraged to seek out projects that can be integrated with existing resources to enhance efficiency and impact. While UGHE may occasionally provide financial support for practicum projects, such support must be approved in advance.

• Students may also utilize external assistance, such as data collectors, to aid in their projects. However, prior approval from both the academic supervisor and preceptor is

required before engaging any external personnel. This ensures that all external contributions align with the project's objectives, institutional guidelines, and financial and legal processes.

• External preceptors and supervisors working with UGHE students during the practicum will be eligible for financial compensation. In such cases, an agreement will be signed to detail the terms and conditions. UGHE full-time faculty and adjunct faculty are not qualified for compensation.

PUBLICATIONS AND AUTHORSHIP

Students are encouraged to publish findings resulting from their practicum experiences. Following the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines for publication include clear criteria for authorship, which should be based on the contributions made to the research. Generally, the academic supervisor will hold senior authorship, reflecting their significant involvement in the project. However, this must be agreed upon in advance by all parties involved to avoid any misunderstandings later in the publication process. If a preceptor organization is involved in the practicum, it is essential that they are informed about any planned publications to ensure compliance with their policies and to facilitate proper acknowledgment of their contributions. Additionally, proper acknowledgment of community partners in publications is essential to recognize their role and support in the research process. Students must adhere to ethical publishing practices and consult with their academic supervisors throughout the publication process to ensure all guidelines are met.

RESPONSIBILITY

Practicum team
• Responsible for overseeing the practicum program, providing guidance to students, and liaising with practicum sites.

Academic Supervisors
• Assist students in developing meaningful practicum plans aligned with their academic and professional goals.

Preceptor
• Provide clear project direction.
• Offer constructive feedback on student performance.
• Support students in field logistics and assist in navigating the field environment.

Student

• Engage actively in the practicum experience and take ownership of project outcomes.

• Follow the established schedule and ensure timely submission of all deliverables.

• Adhere to ethical standards and maintain professionalism throughout the practicum.

• Communicate regularly and effectively with the preceptor and seek guidance as needed.

• Reflect on experiences and apply feedback constructively to improve performance.

• Prepare agenda and minutes for all practicum related meetings.

MATERIALS/DOCUMENTATIONS

•   Practicum Budget Policy – (AP-GE 7)

•   Proposal template

•   Final report template

•   Grading rubric

REVISION/REPLACING

This policy shall be subject to review in five years (01/11/2029).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

This policy shall come into effect on the date of its approval by the Academic Commission of the University of Global Health Equity.

Approved by: **Date:** 07/11/2024

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UGHE