Practice Experience
Project & Mentor Overview

OVERVIEW: The purpose of the practice experience component of the practicum courses is to have students engage in professional interactions with mentors and develop proposed projects in the areas of population health and leadership in healthcare. The practice experiences provide an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge, concepts and skills that they have acquired during their program of study to real world practices. The practice experiences are project-based, which involves an on-site based experience with a mentor. The courses do not involve clinicals as direct patient care is not allowed.

MENTOR OVERVIEW: Students must secure a mentor for each practice experience course. The role of the mentor is to provide interaction, guidance, and professional role modeling for students along with assisting the student in exploring either a health issue in the community or a quality/safety issue at the site. All mentor requirements are outlined in the “Undergraduate Practicum Manual”. A few requirements are as follows:

- Mentors must hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in the field related to their role.
- The mentor must have a minimum of 1 year of experience and a current job role relevant to the project. Please see the practicum manual for other state requirements.
- The mentor should be a Registered Nurse.
  - NURS 4210/4211: Students may use another qualified interdisciplinary mentor working in population health, but a nurse is strongly preferred.
  - NURS 4220/4220: Mentor must be an RN.

TIPS TO SECURE A MENTOR:

- Connect with colleagues at your place of employment as a resource.
- Use your professional and personal networks to make connections, contacts and referrals.
- Grow your professional network through events at work, professional associations or even social functions.
- Develop a profile on professional networking sites to network such as LinkedIn.
- Connect with colleagues, friends, classmates and alumni of Walden for contacts and referrals.
- Connect with professional nursing related groups in your local area.
- Contact your state board of nursing to see if they have a list of available preceptors or resources.
- Explore professional nursing associations, organizations and networks to find mentor resources.
- Conduct an internet search of possible sites of interest and conduct cold calls and face-to-face visits.
- Connect with your own health care provider for contacts and referrals.

Schedule an appointment with your regional Field Experience Coordinator or Nurse Field Experience Coordinator to discuss ideas for securing a mentor and field site.
Schedule an appointment at http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/fieldexperience/son/contactus.
PROJECT & MENTOR OVERVIEW

NURS 4210/4211: Role of the Nurse Leader in Population Health

Project Overview:
- **Title of Project:** Population Based-Nursing Care Project
- **Purpose of the Project:** Students will design and present a potential project to improve the health for a specific population group. The focus of the project is on primary prevention of a health problem in the community.
- **Project Outcome:** The goal of the project is to improve the health of a specific population of interest or a population at risk. The outcome of the project should focus on primary prevention with system-level and population-based interventions.

Mentor & Site Guidelines:
- **Examples of Mentors:** Public health nurses, infectious disease nurses/physicians, public safety personnel, public health staff, school nurses, nutritionists, health educators, diabetes educators, or other qualified interdisciplinary mentor related to population health or public health.
- **Examples of Sites:** Departments of Health, public health offices, community health centers, family planning centers, schools, nutrition departments, public safety departments, etc. Hospital settings are not an appropriate site for this course.

Project Examples:
- Prevention of STD in the community
- Prevention of cervical cancer in the community
- Prevention of head injuries while riding bicycles
- Prevention of childhood obesity
- Prevention of HIV transmission
- Prevention of diabetes
- Improvement of vaccination compliance for schools
- Prevention of unintended pregnancy

NURS 4220/4221: Leadership Competencies in Nursing and Healthcare

Project Overview:
- **Title of Project:** Practice Experience Quality and Safety Project
- **Purpose of Project:** The practice experience project identifies a measurable patient-centered practice problem related to quality or safety and relevant to a practice setting. Students will design and offer a potential project plan to improve a quality and safety problem.
- **Project Outcome:** With the help of a nurse mentor, students will analyze the quality improvement data available, identify a quality or safety problem, develop an evidenced-based change in practice and develop a quality improvement plan.

Mentor & Site Guidelines:
- **Examples of Mentors:** Chief Nursing Officer, Directors, Nurse Managers, Quality Improvement Nurses, Nurse Managers of a Patient Care Unit, Manager of Quality Improvement, Nursing Educators, Infection Control Practitioners or other qualified nursing leaders.
- **Examples of Sites:** The practice experience can be completed in any setting where data is being collected and measured to improve an outcome for a patient population. Site settings could include health care settings, inpatient, hospitals, outpatient clinics, primary care clinics, community clinics, home health and hospice, dialysis units, schools, physician offices, clinics, etc.

Project Examples:
- Improve rates for CAUTI Rates (Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infection), CLABSI Rates (Central Line Associated Blood Stream Infections), HAPI Rates (Hospital Acquired Pressure Injury), HAPU (Hospital Acquired Pressure Ulcers)
- How to improve medication error rates
- How to improve patient satisfaction
- Study patient satisfaction through coordination and integration of care (ease of scheduling, access, wait times, etc.)
- Improve communication, information and education for the patient to increase retention and satisfaction
- Improve systems for discharge to increase efficiencies and reduce discharge delays
- Best practices for patient falls (e.g. equipment needs, proper body mechanics, etc.)
- Best practices for hand washing
- Development of safety checklists
- Best practices for follow-up and return phone calls