Walden University Master of Science in Health Informatics (MSHI)
Field Site Practicum Guide

Purpose of the MSHI Practicum experience:
The Practicum provides an opportunity for applying and integrating in a healthcare setting, the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the Master of Science in Health Informatics program and for further development of key professional competencies ("Practicum"). The Practicum is in alignment with the student’s academic and professional goals. It proceeds under the supervision of a Walden Faculty Member and can occur in a hospital, health insurance company, medical group practice, pharmaceutical company or other appropriate setting ("Field Site"). Supervision is provided by an on-site preceptor ("Preceptor"). Students start their 120-hour Practicum with participation in an accompanying online seminar course and begin development of a professional portfolio based on assigned professional development activities. These activities are aligned with health informatics content areas determined by academic and professional organizations. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of student performance is provided by the Preceptor and the course instructor.

The Practicum is a capstone experience designed to provide students who have finished their course work with the opportunity to (1) synthesize knowledge, (2) develop competence in professional practice in the foundation areas identified by the Walden Faculty Member, (3) apply knowledge to the solution related to the development of products and protocols used in health care, and (4) develop a respect for and commitment to continued professional knowledge. The field instruction experience that each student receives through the Practicum is a critical educational component of the MSHI program.

Walden University views the field experience as a joint sharing of responsibility among the student, the Preceptor, and a Walden Faculty Member (i.e., the course instructor). Two additional staff members at Walden, the Practicum Coordinator and Field Education Coordinator will oversee the administrative aspects and the quality of the experience from beginning to end.

Competencies that the student should expect to gain from the Practicum must reflect application of the Core Health Informatics competencies. Examples of appropriate tasks include (but are not limited to) participating in the following:

- The design, development, implementation, or management of a clinical or administrative information system
- The evaluation of the compliance of health IT solutions to current standards
- The system acquisition process
- The evaluation of IT effectiveness in an area of a healthcare organization
- The writing of policies and procedures
Field Site and Preceptor Expectations:

Jointly supervising a student taking field instruction is an important undertaking. Walden University would like to thank you for your interest in providing field instruction for our students. The following are the expectations and responsibilities that the Field Site and the Preceptor need to consider.

- The student and the Preceptor should discuss learning and teaching styles and expectations, methods for facilitating learning, and methods for evaluating progress.
- The Preceptor must provide the student with an orientation to the Field Site, including safety, policies, and procedures within which the student is to operate.
- The Preceptor should clearly identify tools and learning opportunities, provide frequent constructive feedback, and provide ongoing evaluation of the student.
- The Preceptor should be available to the student as needed, and provide close coordination of any additional persons that will work with the student.
- The Preceptor must provide at least one (1) hour of direct supervision to the student for every fifteen (15) hours worked. This may not be delegated.
- The Field Site must provide the student an appropriate work space and a private space for student evaluation.
- The Preceptor must sign off on all time sheets to certify that the student worked the hours indicated. This may not be delegated.
- The Practicum requires a minimum of 120 hours.
- At least one (1) mid-term conference call is required to take place during each term. The conference call is between the student, the Preceptor, and a Walden Faculty Member. Additional calls may be requested by any party.
- A student evaluation at the end of the experience is a very important aspect of the Practicum. The Preceptor is expected to fill out and return the evaluation form that will be provided towards the end of the Practicum. The evaluation will be used by the Walden Faculty Member in providing the student assessment.

Field Site Benefits:
The Field Site is gaining an individual who has successfully completed all requirements for a MSHI degree with the exception of the Practicum. The student is a productive asset capable of assuming responsibility and fulfilling tasks. The Practicum assignment may also provide the Field Site with an opportunity to observe the student as a prospective employee.

Required Field Site Documents:
The student will be providing the Field Site with information and several documents that will need to be signed and returned to Walden before the student begins the Practicum. The student will provide the Field Site with a schedule of Practicum deadlines.

Preceptor Resume/Curriculum Vitae:
Please note that persons providing direct supervision of students within the MSHI program must have, at minimum, a Master’s degree and at least two (2) years of relevant experience, post degree. The resume or curriculum vitae (CV) of the proposed Preceptor is required as proof of educational background and health informatics experience, and must reflect employment by and correct contact information for the Field Site. The student must email the Preceptor resume or CV along with the Practicum Application to the Walden Field Education Coordinator. Upon approval of the Preceptor, the Field Education Coordinator will send a notification email to the student.
Field Site Affiliation Agreement:
This legal document addresses the responsibilities of the Field Site and Walden University. Both the Field Site administrator and Walden University Practicum Coordinator sign this document. This document is located on the Walden website.

The Field Site may wish to use its own agreement. If so, the student shall provide the Field Site with Walden contact information so the approval process can begin. The student shall direct the Field Site to email an electronic copy of the agreement in Word format to mshifieldtraining@waldenu.edu. It may take up to 6-8 weeks for approval.

The Field Site Affiliation Agreement must be submitted to the Field Education Coordinator no later than the Practicum Application deadline. Field Site Affiliation Agreements submitted after the Practicum Application deadline will not be accepted and will result in a one (1)-term delay of approval.

Learning Agreement:
The Learning Agreement must be filled out jointly by the approved Preceptor and the student. The Learning Agreement form is available on the Walden website. The Practicum Coordinator will review the Learning Agreement and the student will be notified of approval. Upon approval, the student and Preceptor will sign the Learning Agreement and send to mshifieldtraining@waldenu.edu. If changes are needed, the student will be notified and must submit a revised version of the Learning Agreement.

Walden University’s Policy on Electronic Signatures
Walden University manages the Practicum Application processes in a nearly paperless environment, which requires reliance on verifiable electronic signatures, as regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an electronic signature can be the person’s typed name, email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Walden Staff will verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden University).

Please direct questions to:
Field Education Coordinator
College of Health Sciences
800-925-3368
mshifieldtraining@waldenu.edu