



East Tennessee State University
College of Public Health

DrPH Applied Practice Experience Guide
2020-2021 Academic Year



COLLEGE *of*
PUBLIC HEALTH

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Greetings,

These guidelines provide important information relevant to your DrPH Applied Practice Experience course (COBH/EPID/HSMP 6850). This practical application experience is intended to challenge you to engage collaboratively with public health or health services professionals and ultimately, to make significant contributions to the field of public health. This opportunity to learn while at the same time gaining experience as a future public health leader is made possible through the cooperative efforts of a broad array of public and private health-related affiliate organizations.

As you complete this experience, you will maximize its benefits if you put forth your utmost effort and take initiative. Dive in, be inquisitive and show initiative in seeking out opportunities to demonstrate your competence and skills. Likewise, use this opportunity to develop a professional network that will be invaluable as you pursue your professional goals both short term and for years to come.

All of us at the ETSU College of Public Health offer our best wishes for a highly successful Applied Practice Experience. Make the most of the adventures you are about to encounter, and do not hesitate to call on your faculty advisor if they can be of assistance in any way.

Best wishes!

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Key Terms

- **Applied Practice Experience / APE** – an experience previously known as the “Field Experience / Internship / Practicum” that challenges DrPH students to engage collaboratively with health care and public health professionals
- **Faculty Advisor / DrPH Advisory Committee Chair** – the faculty member in your department that serves as your instructor for the 6850 APE course
- **APE Affiliate Organization** – the organization where the student’s APE will take place, decided in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor
- **APE Preceptor** – the individual at the chosen APE organization who will serve as the student’s supervisor / practice mentor
- **Alternate Applied Practice Experience / Alternate APE** – an option for students who have at least 4 years of full-time professional public health experience to complete an abbreviated (150 contact hours) applied practice experience
- **Competency-Based APE Objectives / Learning Objectives** – a set of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) objectives that students set at the start of their APE; a minimum of 5 foundational and/or concentration competencies are selected with at least one being from the Leadership, Management and Governance section
- **Reflective Final Report** – includes the student’s expression of personal and/or professional reactions to the APE

Overview

The DrPH Applied Practice Experience (APE) experience provides an opportunity for students to gain practical skills and to demonstrate their ability to apply public health concepts and leadership competencies in a practice setting that is relevant to their concentration area. All DrPH students must complete an APE in which students are responsible for completion of at least one project that is meaningful for the affiliate organization AND to advanced public health practice.

During your practice experience, you are expected to demonstrate your knowledge and skills through the application of public health theories and principles to the development and implementation of special project(s). Your work product may be a single project or a set of related projects that demonstrate a depth of competence.

Relevant organizations may include governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial and for-profit settings. Importantly, the APE should take place within an organization external to our College in order to ensure that the focus of the experience is on application of learning to a real-world setting. The APE may be completed within a student's own work setting as long as the APE project(s) is distinct from the student's regular job responsibilities.

The practice experience may commence only after you have completed **12 Credit Hours** in the DrPH program. Consult the course sequences in the DrPH Handbook for guidance regarding the timing of APE completion. Full-time students are expected to complete their APE during their first summer in the program. Part-time students may consult with their faculty advisor regarding the timing of their APE.

To begin the APE, you must:

- Select, with approval of your faculty advisor, an affiliate organization that is of particular interest to you and is appropriate to your program of study and professional goals;
 - The student must identify the organization and preceptor in the semester prior to starting the APE.
 - The faculty advisor, with input of the student's advisory committee and/or the DrPH Program Coordinator as appropriate, must ensure that the organization will offer the student significant advanced-level practical experiences collaborating with practitioners, allowing opportunities to develop leadership competencies and contribute to the field.
- Register for COBH/EPID/HSMP 6850. You are required to complete a total of 300 contact hours (**6 Credit Hours**) for the APE (these hours can be divided across more than one organization if desired or needed);
- Work with your faculty advisor and APE preceptor to select **at least 5 DrPH foundational and/or concentration competencies** that will be reinforced and assessed through application. These identified competencies will form the backbone of your APE

objectives. At least one of these competencies should be from the **Leadership, Management, & Governance** domain (see table on pgs. 10-11).

- Work with your faculty advisor and APE preceptor to develop a set of competency-based objectives to be achieved during your APE. These SMART objectives should reflect your applied APE project(s) and be linked to your identified competencies.

Students with at least 4 years of full-time public health practice experience (at the time of application for the APE) may be eligible for the Alternate Applied Practice Experience, which consists of 150 contact hours and development of a portfolio, rather than the standard 300 hours in the field. Students should indicate their intention to apply for the Alternate Applied Practice Experience on the APE application. Approval decisions are made by the DrPH Operations Committee.

Application Timeline for the DrPH APE:

To be considered in a timely manner, you must submit the APE Online Form no later than:

- **The 2nd Friday in February** for an APE in the following summer or fall semester;
- **The 2nd Friday in October** for an APE in the following spring semester;

You must confirm your APE organization no later than:

- **April 1st** for an APE in the following summer or fall semester;
- **November 1st** for an APE in the following spring semester

****NOTE:** Failure to meet these deadlines may result in delaying your APE by one semester or longer. Do not procrastinate - start soon!

APE Deliverables

The major APE deliverables are as follows:

- 1. A listing of a minimum of five foundational and/or concentration competencies to be applied during the APE, including at least one leadership competency.**
 - a. A listing of competency-based objectives that reflect the proposed applied project(s) and work product(s)**
- 2. The work product(s) completed during the APE**
- 3. Mid-Term and Final Work Timesheets**
- 4. Final Oral Presentation**
- 5. Final Report / Reflection**

Department-Specific Examples of Work Products:

COBH: Community health needs assessment, including data collection tools; Health education/promotion program manual; Evaluation plan; Training manual for program administrators/facilitators/evaluators; Health communication plan/materials, including infographics or other tools for communicating to diverse audiences; Group model-building workshop script; Systems map/causal loop diagram/stock and flow diagram; Community-based toolkit; Survey tool or instrument; Grant proposal; Policy analysis or evaluation; Policy brief; Dissemination & Implementation (D&I) Science proposal; Dissemination product (e.g., website, journal article, stakeholder presentation)

EPID: Data collection operations manual; Data synthesis report for public health policy recommendation; Surveillance system evaluation report; Surveillance system guideline manual

HSMP: Quality/process improvement program; Communication plan for internal and/or external stakeholders; Recommendations for population health improvement; Analysis of health system performance (cost analysis, health outcome analysis, and/or health service utilization analysis); Project implementation manual; Program evaluation; Policy analysis and/or evaluation; Policy brief; Legislative advocacy plan; Strategic management plan; Workforce development/continuing education project; Grant proposal; Organizational culture/effectiveness survey; Dissemination product (e.g., website, journal article/editorial, issue brief, presentation)

Start Date:

Your APE begins the first day of classes for the respective semester and ends when your final deliverables are accepted by your faculty advisor.

Work Hours/Timesheet:

You are expected to work at the affiliate organization for a minimum of 300 hours. If you plan to complete your APE in a 15-Week semester, you should plan to work ~20 hours per week at your APE organization. Specific schedules may be arranged between you and your preceptor; you are, however, expected to dedicate whatever amount of time is requested by your preceptor and realize that you may be asked to work on evenings or weekends.

You should follow the official [ETSU Academic Calendar](#) when planning your work schedule. It is important that you inform your preceptor of any “days off” well in advance as a professional courtesy.

You are required to maintain a timesheet of clock hours “worked” and submit it to your faculty advisor at both the mid-point and end of your APE. You will find the timesheet template in the Appendix of this guide.

Preceptor Evaluations:

Your APE preceptor will complete two evaluations of your performance (a mid-term preceptor evaluation and final preceptor evaluation) based on your accomplishment of projects aligned with your chosen DrPH foundational and concentration competencies.

Oral Presentation

Near the end of the semester you plan to finish your APE, you will work with your faculty advisor and your department's executive aide/coordinator to schedule your final oral presentation. College faculty, staff, and students will be notified of the date, time, and location of your formal presentation and are welcome to attend. Your APE organization and other practitioners, as appropriate, will also be invited to your oral presentation.

The oral presentation consists of an integration of APE competencies and objectives, knowledge and skills acquired in your program of study, a description of your APE special project(s) and work product(s), and an assessment of your overall experience. Your formal presentation should last about 20-25 minutes, allowing for about 5-10 minutes for questions from your colleagues. It should be supported with a slideshow (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slides) and/or other audiovisual materials as appropriate.

At a minimum, your final oral presentation should consist of the following components:

1. Introduction
 - Your name and credentials
 - Your preceptor's name and credentials
 - Brief description of the affiliate organization
 - Explanation of why you chose this APE organization
2. Major Activities/Projects in your APE (the "heart" of your presentation)
 - Present your identified competencies that were applied during your APE
 - State the initial research question/problem/assignment, as applicable
 - Describe your APE project(s)
 - Highlight your competency-based objectives aligned with your project(s)
 - Discuss how your project(s) involved advanced-level collaboration with practitioners
 - Explain the skills and/or techniques applied including foundational and concentration-specific concepts, theories, or tools, with emphasis on leadership skills
 - Present your work product(s).
 - Highlight accomplishments and challenges in developing work product(s).
 - Explain the outcomes and/or benefits of your projects/work:
 - to your host organization
 - to advanced public health practice
 - to your leadership development.
3. Your Candid Assessment of the APE

- Share 3 or 4 beneficial aspects of the APE
 - Describe how you are better prepared for your future endeavors as a result of the APE
 - Evaluate the overall effectiveness of your APE – What was spot on? What could have been better?
 - Offer your insights and recommendations about how we might improve the DrPH program to better prepare students for the APE and subsequent employment
4. Your Future Plans
- Tell the audience what your plans are for the remainder of the DrPH program and beyond!

Final Report / Reflection

In your final report and reflection, you will present a detailed description and evaluation of your APE. Your report should be a professionally written document in Microsoft Word that is double spaced with 12-point font. It should not exceed 10 pages and should contain (at a minimum) the following sections:

1. Title Page
 - Your name
 - Course identification (including semester and year)
 - Date of submission
 - Faculty advisor signature line
2. Acknowledgements
3. Table of Contents
 - Including corresponding numbered pages in your written document
4. Background/Introduction
 - Rationale for your APE organization selection and overview of what you hoped to accomplish during the experience
 - Description of the Affiliate Organization
 - Mission, structure, policies, operating procedures, job requirements and other background information that will help the reader understand the nature of the organization and your role within the organization
5. APE Objectives and Projects
 - Discuss specific foundational and concentration competencies applied during your APE
 - Present your competency-based objectives established for your APE as well as associated project(s) and activities completed during the APE
6. Personal Evaluation of the APE
 - This component of the APE should include your personal and professional reactions to the APE

- Outline your short- and long-term educational and professional goals; consider how your APE objectives, as established at the beginning of your experience, were intended to align with these goals.
 - Describe how effectively your APE objectives were achieved– which were met, and which were not met?
 - Offer a candid assessment of problems or obstacles encountered in meeting objectives – how were any barriers addressed? What did you learn from these challenges and solutions?
 - Reflect on leadership skills applied and leadership skills gained during the APE, including collaboration with practitioners and contributions to the field.
 - Assess strengths of your work product(s) and opportunities for improving these products
 - Describe strengths of the APE in preparing you for future endeavors, and extent to which your experience helped to advance your educational and professional goals
 - Discuss how the APE process might be improved for future students
7. Citations/References (as appropriate)
 8. APE Work Product(s) (see examples above for Concentration-Specific Materials)

Establishing the APE Organization – Internship Affiliation Agreement

Under the guidance of your DrPH Advisory Committee, you should begin developing a list of potential APE organizations of interest, including suitable APE preceptors. Preceptors and APE organizations are established based on recommendations from faculty, students and other public health/health services professionals. A current listing of approved affiliate organizations is maintained by the APE Coordinator and is also available [online](#).

Any APE organization must be:

1. Approved by the DrPH Coordinator; and
2. Currently under an Internship Affiliation Agreement with the College of Public Health
 - a. If you plan to work with a non-affiliated organization, an Internship Affiliation Agreement must be prepared and processed by the APE Coordinator. This process typically takes about six weeks.

It is critical that you begin the process of arranging your APE early in the **semester before you plan to begin the experience**. Consult with the APE Coordinator regarding the need for an Internship Affiliation Agreement with your chosen organization.

Developing Competency-Based APE Objectives

Once your APE organization has been established, you, your advisor, and your APE preceptor will develop a set of specific objectives for the course. Your objectives should: 1) align with **at least five** selected DrPH Foundational/Concentration Competencies (including **at least one Leadership, Management & Governance competency** --see table of competencies below); and 2) reflect the projects(s) that you will complete during the experience. Focus should be placed on one or more **work products** to be completed during your APE that draw upon knowledge and skills acquired in previous coursework and experiences and reflect a contribution to the field of public health. After your objectives have been drafted, you will submit them to your faculty advisor for final approval (should be submitted no later than the end of the 2nd week of the semester you begin the APE).

Example Learning Objectives:

- Utilize appropriate approaches to statistical analysis and interpretation through application of [insert database or dataset name here] data.
- Translate community and behavioral surveillance research into recommendations for population-based programs and policies to [insert health issue here] incidence in [insert community name here].
- Develop capacity-building strategies and best practices to reduce [insert health issue here] incidence and improve related health promotion efforts at the individual, organizational, and community levels.

DrPH Foundational Competencies

All students, regardless of their concentration, are expected to apply foundational competencies into their APE project(s), final report and presentation. Students select, at a minimum, **five foundational and/or concentration** competencies to guide their APE including at least **one** competency from the **Leadership, Management & Governance** domain.

DrPH Foundational Competencies
Data & Analysis
(1) Explain qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and policy analysis research and evaluation methods to address health issues at multiple (individual, group, organization, community and population) levels.
(2) Design a qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, policy analysis or evaluation project to address a public health issue.
(3) Explain the use and limitations of surveillance systems and national surveys in assessing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs and to address a population's health.
Leadership, Management & Governance
(4) Propose strategies for health improvement and elimination of health inequities by organizing stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, community leaders and other partners.
(5) Communicate public health science to diverse stakeholders, including individuals at all levels of health literacy, for purposes of influencing behavior and policies.
(6) Integrate knowledge, approaches, methods, values and potential contributions from multiple professions and systems in addressing public health problems.
(7) Create a strategic plan.
(8) Facilitate shared decision making through negotiation and consensus-building methods.
(9) Create organizational change strategies.
(10) Propose strategies to promote inclusion and equity within public health programs, policies and systems.
(11) Assess one's own strengths and weaknesses in leadership capacities, including cultural proficiency.
(12) Propose human, fiscal and other resources to achieve a strategic goal.
(13) Cultivate new resources and revenue streams to achieve a strategic goal.
Policies & Programs
(14) Design a system-level intervention to address a public health issue.
(15) Integrate knowledge of cultural values and practices in the design of public health policies and programs.
(16) Integrate scientific information, legal, and regulatory approaches, ethical frameworks and varied stakeholder interest in policy development and analysis.
(17) Propose interprofessional team approaches to improving public health.
Education & Workforce Development
(18) Assess an audience's knowledge and learning needs.
(19) Deliver training or educational experiences that promote learning in academic, organizational and community settings.
(20) Use best practice modalities in pedagogical practices.

Concentration-Specific Competencies

DrPH Community Health Competencies
(1) Translate community and behavioral research into population-based programs and policies.
(2) Employ the basic concepts of evidence-based decision making to select and design effective and culturally appropriate intervention strategies by engaging community partners and policymakers.
(3) Collaboratively develop capacity-building strategies at the individual, organizational, and community levels.
(4) Translate health behavior theoretical models into public health interventions.
(5) Translate theories, conceptual paradigms and evidence to inform planning, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of innovative, tailored public health interventions.
(6) Facilitate the identification of health needs, interests, capacities and disparities of communities and special populations using principles and practices of community-based participatory research.
(7) Conduct qualitative research using well-designed data collection and data analysis strategies.
DrPH Epidemiology Competencies
(1) Select and critically evaluate secondary data sources appropriate for addressing a public health issue or question. Explain limitations of secondary data sets (e.g., variables of interest, nonrandom allocation, measurement error, surrogate outcomes) and recommend design and analytic solutions.
(2) Apply appropriate methods and correctly interpret complex and multifaceted data analysis in determining risk factors and causes of health and disease in populations.
(3) Justify appropriate methods for design of data collection tools and protocols, instrument reliability and validity, data monitoring and quality assurance and data archiving for analysis.
(4) Critically evaluate the influence of internal and external validity, effect modification and interaction on the process and interpretation of statistical analyses and epidemiologic data and upon subsequent inferences, conclusions and implications.
(5) Critically review and interpret public health and other scientific literature to synthesize evidence in a public health area, identify gaps in evidence and propose further epidemiologic investigation.
(6) Interpret existing public health information for epidemiologic field investigations, including public health outbreaks and propose recommendations and policy changes for control and prevention.
(7) Apply the ethical and legal principles, including the concepts of human subjects' protection and confidentiality, related to the collection, management, use and dissemination of epidemiologic data for the conduct of research and public health practice.
(8) Demonstrate proficiency in the use of computer software for data entry, database management, data analysis and displaying and reporting results.
DrPH Health Management and Policy Competencies
(1) Evaluate different organizational behaviors, cultures and structures across sectors and levels of governance to improve organizational effectiveness.
(2) Integrate individual health information, population health measures and community resources to redesign health service delivery and improve population health.
(3) Assess the effectiveness of public health and healthcare services aimed at improving population health using applied research and evaluation methods.
(4) Analyze patterns of health services utilization, costs and outcomes and health system performance using applied research methods.
(5) Integrate the principles of organizational theory, behavior and culture to effectively foster shared values for evidence-based decision making and leadership within health service organizations.
(6) Align organizational quality improvement programs with state and national quality initiatives to improve organizational effectiveness and resource use.

Summary of the APE Process

1. The student applies for the APE and has signed approval from their faculty advisor to enroll in COBH/EPID/HSMP 6850 and begin the experience.
2. The student finalizes selection of their APE organization and preceptor, in consultation with their faculty advisor.

****It is suggested that students schedule an in-person meeting with their faculty advisor and APE preceptor to ensure similar expectations for the APE.**

3. The College APE Coordinator ensures a current Internship Affiliation Agreement between ETSU and the proposed APE organization is in effect.

***To be considered in a timely manner, you must submit the APE Online Form no later than:**

- **The 2nd Friday in February** for an APE in the following summer or fall semester;
- **The 2nd Friday in October** for an APE in the following spring semester.

***You must confirm your APE organization no later than:**

- **April 1st** for an APE in the following summer or fall semester;
- **November 1st** for an APE in the following spring semester.

During APE:

4. Students, in consultation with their faculty advisor and preceptor, develop APE objectives based on selected foundational and concentration competencies and individual professional goals. These objectives should reflect the APE project(s) and work product(s) that the student will complete by the end of the APE. Final objectives should then be submitted to the student's faculty advisor **no later than two weeks** into the APE semester.
5. The APE preceptor completes and submits a mid-term evaluation of the student within the prescribed format and timeframe.
6. Students submit their completed mid-term timesheet to their faculty advisor.

At the Conclusion of APE:

7. Students, in consultation with their faculty advisor and departmental executive aide, set the date for their final oral presentation; college faculty, staff, students and guests are notified of the presentation schedule in advance.
8. The APE preceptor completes and submits a final evaluation of the student within the prescribed format and timeframe.
9. Students submit their completed final timesheet to their faculty advisor.
10. Students submit their final oral presentation and final report/reflection and APE work product(s) to their faculty advisor on a mutually agreed upon date and time (prior to the end of the semester the APE is completed).

Course Grading Criteria

Your final grade for **COBH/EPID/HSMP 6850** is calculated as follows:

- Your preceptor's evaluation of your performance (mid-term + final) = **20%**
- Your final oral presentation = **20%**
- Your final written report = **30%**
- Your APE work product(s) = **30%**

Shared Expectations

The College of Public Health views the DrPH APE as a joint venture with community organizations or agencies that are involved in a public health mission. As part of the agreement to collaborate on the education of future public health professionals, our program and the affiliate organization agree to fulfill the following expectations.

The Affiliate Organization will:

- Provide supervised opportunities for you to think and act as a public health professional;
- Provide an opportunity for you to pursue and complete at least one special project with practical relevance to the organization;
- Participate in the development of specific objectives related to the APE;
- Mentor you toward achieving your APE objectives;
- Provide mid-term and final evaluations of your performance;
- Contact your faculty advisor and the DrPH Coordinator for assistance as needed.

Students (you) will:

- Represent the College of Public Health, the DrPH program and the University in a professional manner at all times;
- Work to achieve the mutually agreed upon set of APE objectives by applying knowledge and skills attained in your previous coursework and collaborating with practitioners;
- Undertake and complete at least one special project according to the approved APE objectives, in consultation with your preceptor and faculty advisor;
- Complete all the APE course requirements as described in a thorough and timely manner;
- Maintain ongoing contact with your faculty advisor during your APE.

The DrPH Program will:

- Ensure that you have a significant advanced-level practical experience collaborating with practitioners and allowing opportunities to develop your leadership competencies and contribute to the field.
- Work with you to identify a minimum of five foundational and/or concentration competencies that are reinforced and assessed through application.

- Provide guidance for your APE project(s) as deemed appropriate by your preceptor;
- Maintain contact with you and your organization , and when possible, visit the organization at least once during your APE;
- Provide support to your APE organization and preceptor as requested.

DrPH Alternate Applied Practice Experience Requirements

Students with **at least four years** of full-time public health practice experience may be eligible for the Alternate APE, which allows qualified students to complete an abbreviated experience that includes **150 contact hours** with an approved affiliate organization. Educational opportunities as part of a formalized course or program will not be counted toward the full-time public health practice requirement. Post-degree experience, however, will be considered.

Similar to the 300-hour APE, students pursuing the Alternate APE will develop competency-based learning objectives to guide their experience, submit an integrative final report and give a final oral presentation. APE preceptor evaluations of student performance are also required.

It is recommended that students wishing to submit an Alternate APE application do so by the end of the spring semester of the first year in the DrPH program. The application must include:

1. A current resume;
2. Relevant descriptions of previous public health practice experience;
3. A 2-4-page analytical self-assessment* of how your previous work experience relates to:
 - a. The DrPH Foundational Competencies
 - b. The student's DrPH Concentration Competencies

**This document should not be a repetition of work experience descriptions, but an analysis of how past and current experiences help to fulfill the foundational and concentration competencies.*

Your faculty advisor will review the application and write a letter of recommendation regarding the request. The faculty advisor will then forward the application packet to the DrPH Coordinator for consideration by the DrPH Operations Committee. The committee's final decision will be communicated to your faculty advisor.

Policy Statement on Drug Screens and Criminal & Sex Offender Background Checks

It is the policy of this university that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession, use of alcohol and illicit drugs on the ETSU campus in the workplace (on or off campus), on property owned or controlled by ETSU, or as part of any activity of ETSU is strictly prohibited. All employees and students are subject to applicable federal, state and local laws related to this matter. Additionally, any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Therefore, the use of alcohol and/or the use of illegal drugs by public health students while engaged in their field experience are strictly prohibited. As this policy refers to positive drug/alcohol screen procedures, the following definitions of “positive” will be used:

1. Screen results indicating use of an illegal drug;
2. Screen results indicating non-therapeutic drug level of prescribed or non-prescribed drugs; and
3. Screen results indicating presence of alcohol in blood.

Criminal Background Checks: If an affiliate organization requires or requests a criminal background check as a condition of the field experience or other opportunity, our students are required to comply at their personal expense.

Sex Offender Checks: If an affiliate organization requires or requests a sex offender registry check (in the context of children, adult or elderly sexual abuse) as a condition of a field experience or other opportunity, our students are required to comply at their personal expense.

What does this mean to you? An affiliate organization can require and conduct drug screening during a public health field experience without cause if such screenings are the policy for employees of that organization or affiliate.

Should an affiliate organization request/require a prospective student intern undergo a criminal and/or sex offender background check the student will be required to provide that check at their personal expense. There are many background checking agencies and the expense is fairly minimal and many background checking services can provide criminal and sex offender checks simultaneously. You can ask the affiliate organization who they contract with or you can locate several via the Internet.

An unsatisfactory criminal background and/or sex offender check might preclude students from fulfilling their mandatory field experience/practicum requirement, which in turn could preclude meeting graduation requirements.