

HEALTH PROMOTION AND FITNESS MANAGEMENT

PROFESSIONAL CONTACT HOUR REQUIREMENTS

Overview

HPFM students are required as part of their specialization courses to acquire “professional contact hours” to enable them to gain practical experience and additional training outside of the traditional classroom setting. This guide explains the purpose of these hours and how they may be fulfilled. Please contact Dr. Leslie Spencer (856.256.4500 ext. 3761 or spencer@rowan.edu) with additional questions or comments.

Why Do I Need Professional Contact Hours?

While classroom learning is essential, there are certain skills and knowledge that can only be obtained through outside experience. Several surveys of health promotion employers demonstrate that practical experience outside of the classroom is essential for finding a good job in the field, *even for those who have just graduated*. Finally, it is practical experience that will enable a student to determine his/her specific interests and the direction he/she wants to take in the field upon graduation.

What Are Professional Contact Hours?

Professional Contact Hours (PCHs) represent time and effort a student spends gaining practical experience, credentials, certifications and new knowledge and skills outside of the traditional classroom setting. They are divided into the following categories:

Professional Work Experience includes both paid and volunteer work that gives a student hands-on experience in screening and assessment, administration, education, counseling, marketing or evaluation in a health promotion/fitness setting.

Training and Certification includes completion of professional workshops and conferences and the successful passage of certification exams related to health promotion/fitness.

Professional Organization Involvement includes **active** membership and participation in a professional organization, such as the Rowan Chapter of the National Wellness Institute, HES Club, ACSM or AAHPERD. Serving on committees, attending meetings and holding offices counts toward credit in this category.

How Do I Accumulate PCHs?

HPFM students are required to accumulate 20 PCHs in each of the following courses (for a total of 80 PCHs prior to registration for field experience): Foundations of HPFM, Health Behavior, Administration of Health Promotion Programs and Practicum in HPFM. The hours are earned as part of the course and account for 20% of the course grade. Extra hours earned the previous

semester may be applied to the following semester's course. Hours earned in the summer may be applied to the following academic year (fall or spring). **Hours earned more than one semester previously may not be applied toward PCHs.**

A minimum of 20 PCHs need to be earned from each bank over the span of the four specialization courses in which you earn them. The remaining 20 hours can be earned from any category. You may not "double count" an activity. Each activity can be applied to only one category.

All PCHs must be well-documented in order to count! Work experience is documented through a letter from your supervisor on company letterhead verifying the dates and average hours per week that you have worked. Certifications and conference attendance/presentation are documented through certificates, letters of acceptance and conference receipts. Professional organization involvement is documented through a letter from the advisor/president verifying your active membership in the group.

What If I Don't Finish My PCHs?

While you may still pass a course without completing your PCHs, you will not be allowed to begin your Field Experience in HPFM without them. To get approval from Dr. Pagell to begin working at your field site, you must have completed the 80 hours.

How Can I Find Opportunities for PCHs?

There are several ways to find PCHs. Opportunities will be announced in class and in AWHP student chapter meetings. They will also be posted on the HPFM web page under "Professional Contact Hours: Upcoming Opportunities". If you are having difficulty getting hours, please see Drs. Spencer or Pagell for help and suggestions.

Suppose I Don't Have A Car and/or I Have Limited Finances?

With careful planning, all of the hours can be earned at locations within walking distance of the campus. A car will, however, allow you to have more flexibility in choosing what you want to do. If you wish to attend an event but don't have transportation, please speak to Drs. Spencer or Pagell. They can probably find someone else who is going who can take you.

Almost all of the hours can be earned at no cost to you. The one exception is for conferences, training and certification. You need to plan in advance and save money to pay for these. Costs vary widely, so you should make the most of low-cost opportunities. Often, conference presenters (as opposed to those only attending) may attend for free. You might consider submitting a presentation to a conference.

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Activities and Hours for Each Category

The following is a list of approved activities for each category and the “hours” the activity is worth. If you wish to do something not on this list, please speak to Drs. Pagell or Spencer to have it reviewed and, if acceptable, approved. You need to earn a **total of 80 hours**, with a minimum of **20 hours from each category**. Make sure you document and submit your hours on the Documentation Form.

Professional Work Experience

This may include both paid and volunteer work. The work you do must involve some aspect of health promotion/fitness service, such as: assessment, screening, education, counseling, marketing, evaluation or administration of the program or service. Each hour of productive work is considered a “contact hour”. Interviews and observations are not included as part of productive work.

Acceptable settings include:

- A worksite health/fitness program for employees
- A hospital-based wellness or rehabilitation program
- A community agency, such as the Jewish Community Center or YMCA
- A college/university recreation/fitness facility, such as the Student Recreation Center at Rowan or the fitness/wellness center at Gloucester County Community College
- A commercial fitness/wellness facility
- A formal wellness program based in a senior citizen’s center, school or other organization

The following are NOT acceptable settings:

- Any type of retail enterprise, such as a health food store, fitness equipment store or home-based business selling health-related products.
- Medical/hospital work that is not related to wellness or rehabilitation.
- Administrative work in a physician’s or chiropractic office
- Coaching a team or individual sport

To obtain credit for these hours, please have your supervisor write a brief letter verifying that you are employed by or a volunteer for the organization, your duties/activities and the number of hours you have provided productive work (up to 40 hours). **The letter should be on letterhead, signed and dated.** A telephone number and address should be provided for the supervisor.

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Activities and Hours for Each Category

Training and Certification

This may include the following:

Attending a professional conference or workshop (one hour earned for each hour of the event that you attend)

- * Health Promotion local (NJ), regional or national conferences
- * AAHPERD, NWI, ACSM, AJHP regional and national conferences
- * Aerobic and Personal Training Conferences
- * Cardiac/Pulmonary Rehabilitation local professional meetings
- * Any training session sponsored by the Student Recreation Center

Earning a nationally-recognized certification from ACE, AFAA, AAAI, NSCA or ACSM
(10 hours awarded for ACE, AFAA, AAAI; 20 hours awarded for NSCA or ACSM)

Earning the certificate for the NWI Rowan Chapter's blood pressure and cholesterol screening (10 hours awarded)

Presenting at a professional conference (15 hours). (Note: By attending other workshops at the conference, you can earn additional hours.)

The following are NOT included: CPR/First Aid Training, EMT training/certification, Water Safety Instructor

To obtain credit for these hours, you must supply full and complete verification of your successful completion of the event. If a certification, you need to turn in a copy of the certificate. If a workshop, you need to supply a receipt or other official statement of your participation, along with a brochure or program describing the event. If you have presented at a conference, you need to turn in a copy of your acceptance letter.

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Activities and Hours for Each Category

Professional Organization Involvement

This category includes time and energy you have invested in **active participation** in a professional organization. It includes:

Serving as an officer or committee chairperson for the NWI student chapter or HES Club for one academic year (fall and spring semesters) (20 hours)

Note: to earn the hours, you must be active and productive throughout your term

Participate in NWI meetings and serve on a committee (one hour for each meeting attended)

Active participation in any other professional organization or society. Please see Drs. Spencer or Pagell for approval and assignment of hours.

To obtain credit for the NWI hours, have Drs. Spencer or Pagell verify your attendance at meetings and events. For HES Club credit, have Dr. Putman write and sign a note to verify your participation. For participation in other professional organizations, provide a letter signed and dated by the leader of that organization verifying the date, location and type of activity and your level of participation in it.