Practice Hours Guidance for Non-Clinical Engineers, Environmental Health officers, and Scientist officers receiving Health Professions Special Pays (HPSP)

Per CCI 633.01, *"Special Pays,"* non-clinical officers within the Engineer, Environmental Health, and Scientist officer categories who receive an Incentive Pay (IP) or a Retention Bonus (RB) are required to complete and submit 80 practice hours by December 31 of each year.

This communication provides guidance to these officers on how to document and submit practice hours.

ELIGIBILITY

Engineer Officer
For an Engineer officer to be eligible for IP and RB, they must have a current, valid, and unrestricted Professional Engineer (PE) Registration or have four years of professional experience with a license/certification relating to their specialty, approved by the Director, Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ).

Environmental Health Officer
For an Environmental Health officer to be eligible for IP and RB, they must have a current, valid, and unrestricted credential as a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH), Certified Safety Professional (CSP), Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS), Certified Health Physicist (CHP), or a license/certification relating to their specialty, approved by the Director, CCHQ.

Scientist Officer
For a non-clinical Scientist officer to be eligible for IP and RB, practice hours must require application of the professional skills associated with the specific discipline of the officer's U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree.

OBTAINING PRACTICE HOURS

Engineer, Environmental Health, and non-clinical Scientist officers can obtain annual practice hours through the following three pathways, or any combination of the pathways.

Option 1: Practice Hours Earned Through Official Job Duties

The officer's Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report (COER) Rater will sign as the Practice Site Supervisor in Box 22 and the Reviewing Official will sign as the Operating Division (OPDIV) Supervisor in Box 24 of the Practice Hours form (PHS 7047).

Use case for Engineer officers in an 0800 Series billet:

- The Engineer officer holds a Professional Engineer (PE) license from any U.S. State Board and serves in a billet associated with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM 0800 professional series for engineers in the civil service.

Use case for Environmental Health officers in a primary position requiring the application of their license or certification:

- The Environmental Health officer holds a current, valid, and unrestricted CIH, CSP, REHS/RS, CHP, or a license/certification related to their specialty, approved by the Director, CCHQ, and serves in a primary position that requires the application of their license or certification, such as Environmental Health officers serving in OPM occupational (civil service) series 0688, 0690, or 1306.

- Officers should work with their Rater and Reviewing Official to determine whether their position requires the application of their license and/or certification for at least 80 hours annually.

- Officers may use their billet description, position description, statement of duties, USAJOBS description, and/or educational qualifications to support the determination.

Use case for non-clinical Scientist officers in a primary position related to the discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree:

- Non-clinical Scientist officers whose primary position requires the application of professional skills associated with the specific discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree.

- Officers should work with their Rater and Reviewing Official to determine whether their position requires the application of the professional skills associated with the specific discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree for at least 80 hours annually.

- Officers may use their billet description, position description, statement of duties, USAJOBS description, and/or educational qualifications to support the determination; the Rater and Reviewing Official must concur, as noted above.

- The officer will include the following sample statement in the "Detailed Description of Practice Hours Activity Completed" in Box 14 of the Practice Hours Form (PHS-7047).

    - "Working in a position (SPECIFY POSITION) that requires application of my professional skills of my USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree in (SPECIFY DISCIPLINE)."

Option 2: Practice Hours Obtained Through Official Job Duties Outside the Standard Billet/Series listed in Option 1

Practice hours may be completed during duty hours and must be documented through a Position/Billet Addendum (PHS-7085). The PHS-7085 needs to be updated only when there's a change in the officer's official duties or a change in the officer's Rater. The form must be signed by the officer, their supervisor, and their agency liaison. The officer should upload the signed form to their electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).

The officer's COER Rater will sign as the Practice Site Supervisor in Box 22 and the Reviewing Official will sign as the OPDIV Supervisor in Box 24 of the Practice Hours form (PHS 7047).

Use case for Engineer Officers not in an 0800 series billet:

- The Engineer officer holds a Professional Engineer (PE) license or other CCHQ Director-approved license/certification meeting the requirements of CCI 633.01, Appendix D, but does not serve under an OPM 0800 series billet.

- Practice hours obtained through the collateral duties at the officer's OPDIV must be recognized as engineer-related work. Some examples of qualifying practice hour activities can be found in the table on the Practice Hours Opportunities page: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/HPSP/HPSP_Practice_Hours_Opportunities.aspx.

Use case for Environmental Health officers not in a primary position requiring the application of their license or certification:

- The Environmental Health officer holds a current, valid, and unrestricted CIH, CSP, REHS/RS, CHP, or a license/certification related to their specialty, approved by the Director, CCHQ, but does **not** serve in a billet requiring the application of their professional certification(s) and/or licensure. For example, the officer is not in an OPM 0688, 0690, 1306, or similar series.

- Practice hours obtained through collateral duties at the officer's OPDIV must be recognized as environmental health-related work. Some examples of qualifying practice hour activities can be found in the table on the Practice Hours Opportunities page: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/HPSP/HPSP_Practice_Hours_Opportunities.aspx

Use case for non-clinical Scientist officers not in a primary position related to the discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree:

- Non-clinical Scientist officers whose primary position does not require application of the professional skills associated with the specific discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree.

- Practice hours activities obtained through collateral duties at the officer's OPDIV must be recognized as requiring application of the professional skills associated with the specific discipline of their USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree. Some examples of qualifying practice hour activities can be found in the table on the Practice Hours Opportunities page: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/HPSP/HPSP_Practice_Hours_Opportunities.aspx).

- The officer should include the following sample statement in the "Detailed Description of Practice Hours Activity Completed" in Box 14 of the Practice Hours Form (PHS-7047).
    - "Working in a position (SPECIFY POSITION) that requires application of the professional skills of my USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree in (SPECIFY DISCIPLINE)."

Option 3: Practice Hours Completed Through Deployment, Temporary Duty (TDY), or Approved Outside Activities

A non-comprehensive list of TDY opportunities and approved practice hours activities is available on the Practice Hours Opportunities page in CCMIS. Please note that some agencies may have practice hours opportunities that are not included here: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/HPSP/HPSP_Practice_Hours_Opportunities.aspx.

Practice hours performed as an outside activity may be compensated or non-compensated. To conduct such practice hours, officers must annually complete an HHS-520 "Request for Approval of Outside Activity" or an equivalent form for non-HHS agencies.

The Practice Site Supervisor and the OPDIV Supervisor (typically the COER Rating Official) will sign in Box 22 and Box 24 of the Practice Hours form (PHS 7047), respectively.

Use case for Engineer officers:

- The Engineer officer holds a current, valid, and unrestricted license or certification related to their specialty, approved by the Director, CCHQ.
- Practice hours are performed through deployment, TDY assignments, or approved outside activities that align with licensure or certification requirements. Activities performed in non-engineering roles (e.g., administrative or finance assignments) will not be counted toward practice hours.

Use case for Environmental Health officers:

- The Environmental Health officer holds a current, valid, and unrestricted CIH, CSP, REHS/RS, CHP, or a license/certification related to their specialty, approved by the Director, CCHQ.
- Practice hours performed through deployment, TDY assignments, or approved outside activities must be recognized as environmental health-related functions and require the application of professional certifications and/or licensure. Activities performed in non–environmental health roles (e.g., administrative or finance assignments) will not be counted toward practice hours.

Use case for Non-Clinical Scientist officers:

- Practice hours completed through deployment, TDY assignments, or other approved activities must require application of the professional skills associated with the specific discipline of the officer's USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree.
- The officer will include the following sample statement in the "Detailed Description of Practice Hours Activity Completed" in Box 14 of the Practice Hours Form (PHS-7047).
    - "Working in a position (SPECIFY POSITION) that requires application of the professional skills of my USPHS Commissioned Corps qualifying doctoral degree in (SPECIFY DISCIPLINE)."

SUBMITTING PRACTICE HOURS

Practice hours must be submitted via the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) Forms platform. Instructions for using the Forms platform are available in the Practice Hours Guide: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/pdf_docs/Practice%20Hours%20User%20Guide.pdf

If an officer identifies a potential practice hours activity that is not included on the Practice Hours Opportunities page, the officer can submit the activity to the Practice Hours Steering Committee for review. Instructions to submit the request can be found here: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PracticeHoursSteeringCommitteeFAQ.aspx

Officers are encouraged to submit completed practice hours as early as feasible. Early submission supports more accurate workforce planning and reduces the administrative burden that often accumulates by 12/31 of each calendar year.

Additional information can be found on the Practice Hours FAQ page located her: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/HPSP/HPSP_Clin_FAQ.aspx