



CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

STUDENT HANDBOOK

BRIDGING THE CLASSROOM AND THE WORKPLACE
REVISED APRIL 2024



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Definition of Co-operative Education

The Douglas College Co-operative Education Program enables students to integrate academic studies with related employment experience. Co-op students alternate semesters of classroom studies with semesters of paid, full-time employment, called Work Terms, under the guidance of College faculty. The goal of Co-operative Education is to help students develop the necessary confidence and employer-valued abilities to succeed in today's competitive job market.

The Co-op Program is structured as follows:

- Co-op Prep Term - to develop career management skills and apply for work permits, if required.
- Co-op Seeking Term - to polish interview skills, apply for jobs suitable for their work term.
- Co-op Work Term - to take on a paid, full-time, career-relevant job for a semester.

As part of the Co-op experience, students are assigned a Faculty Advisor who guides them to establish Learning Objectives, meets the employer, and ensures a valuable educational experience.

The Co-op Team at the Douglas College Career Centre develops contacts with local businesses, industry and government. Through a competitive application and interview process, students are employed by organizations for a Work Term. Although the College cannot guarantee a Work Term for all qualifying students, Co-op staff work with students to assist them in achieving their goals by providing training in career management skills, job search and an online Co-op job board with appropriate jobs listed. Considerable care is taken to match the skills, knowledge, and aspirations of Co-op students with employer requirements.

Criteria Governing the Co-op Program

Each Work Term is developed and/or approved by the College as a suitable learning situation. The student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing.

- The student is paid for work performed.
- The student's progress in the job is monitored by a Faculty Advisor.
- The student's performance in the job is supervised by the employer and evaluated by both the employer and the Faculty Advisor.

Students will achieve a Co-op designation on their credential when they successfully complete one Work Term in an approved two-year program. Students who are approved in a four-year program must successfully complete three Work Terms to receive a designation on their credential.

Benefits of Co-op for Students

- A Co-op Work Term provides students with an opportunity to acquire valued knowledge and experience and to establish contacts with professionals in their chosen field. It provides a learning environment to build confidence and self-esteem.
- It prepares students to better navigate future career options and strategies.
- It provides an opportunity for international students to gain Canadian work experience and professional references in Canada.
- Students can earn \$9,000 - \$12,000 per Work Term, which can be allocated toward tuition fees, loans, and other expenses. (The salary range is based upon a typical Co-op Work Term experience where the student is working 35 hours per week for 16 weeks).
- Students with a Co-op Work Term experience on their resume experience a higher employment rate and a shorter time period between graduation and landing a career-relevant job.*

**A Simon Fraser University study shows that Co-op graduates experience a higher employment rate than non-Co-op graduates and find employment sooner after graduation: 91% of Co-op graduates are employed within 2 months versus 60% for non-Co-op graduates.*

If it is true that “It’s not just WHAT you know but WHO you know that counts,” Co-op provides the opportunity to make contacts with the “WHOs”.

Work Activities Performed by Co-op Students

There are many opportunities for students. Job experience for Co-op students may include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • Corporate Accounting Intern | • Desktop Support Analyst |
| • Tax, Audit, or Compliance roles | • Network Analyst |
| • Data Entry | • Sport Camp Programmer |
| • Data Analytics | • Human Resources Assistant |
| • Corporate Financial Services | • Canada Border Services Officer |
| • Administrative roles | • Data Scientist |
| • Research and Writing | • Project Assistant |
| • Marketing Assistant | • Logistics Co-op |
| • Social Media or Digital Media | • Veterinary Technician Assistant |
| • Sales | • Health Information Management Assistant |
| • Software Developer | |
| • Full Stack Software Engineer | |

Co-operative Education Programs

Students who are in programs outside of the formal partner academic programs listed below may be able to join Co-op and should speak to the Co-op Team for advice on eligibility.

Co-operative Education is offered as an option within the following academic programs:

- Accounting - Diploma
- Commerce and Business Administration – Diploma
- Computing Studies and Information Systems - Diploma
- Financial Services - Diploma
- General Business - Diploma
- Management - Diploma
- Marketing Management – Diploma
- Veterinary Technology Diploma
- Associate of Arts Degree (University Transfer Arts)
- Associate of Science Degree (University Transfer Science):
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Accounting
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Accounting and Finance
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Finance
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Health Information Management
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Human Resources Management
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Health Information Management
- Post Baccalaureate Diploma - International Supply Chain Management
- Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Computer and Information Systems
- Bachelor of Business Administration - Accounting
- Bachelor of Business Administration - Financial Services
- Bachelor of Business Administration – Management (all concentrations)
- Bachelor of Physical Education and Coaching

To earn a diploma, associate degree or post-baccalaureate diploma with a Co-op Education designation, students must successfully complete one, 12 to 16 week Work Term. A degree with a Co-op designation requires completion of three, 12 to 16 week Work Terms.

Admission Requirements

To be eligible for a Co-op Work Term, students must:

- Have attended all Co-op Education workshops/activities scheduled in the semester prior to a Work Term.
- Be registered as a full-time (that is, a minimum of nine credits) student in a program nationally approved for the Co-op Education program at Douglas College. *If you do not see your program of study in the previous list, please contact the Co-op Team to confirm your eligibility.*
- Have completed at least 18 program-related credits at Douglas College prior to their first Co-op Seeking semester.
- Have attained a minimum grade point average of 2.33 in course work at Douglas College.

Application Requirements

Interested students should attend an information session at the beginning of term. Don't miss this! Check the Co-op site for details of dates, times and locations.

In addition to the information session, students are required to apply online for Phase 1: Co-op Prep in CareerHUB and submit their application by the announced and posted deadline.

Program Requirements

Phase 1 First Term: Co-op Prep requires students to attend mandatory workshops/activities which will prepare them to apply for Co-op Work Term positions. Students participating in Co-op Prep should have completed a minimum of one semester of post-secondary studies before joining the program.

Note: International students will be required to apply for an IRCC Work Permit for Co-op. Instructions are given to students for this process, along with attending optional workshops to assist with the application process.

These workshops are held at the beginning of each term. Please check the Events and Workshops Calendar in CareerHUB for dates and times.

Phase 2 Second Term: Co-op Seeking allows students to view the Co-op job board in order to view job descriptions, apply to program specific jobs with the goal of receiving an interview and ultimately a job offer.

Phase 3 Third Term: Co-op Work Term is the semester a hired student will spend working full time hours for an organization that will impart practical, hands-on training and mentoring specific to their program of study. They will have a Faculty Advisor from their program to guide them through this work experience.

Fees and Credits

Co-op fees for a Work Term are based on a flat fee per semester. Please review Tuition Fee Charts found on the Douglas College website to determine the correct amount. Students must pay for each work term by the beginning of the semester.

Additive Credits for Co-op are granted when students have mastered all required criteria. Students will be assigned a grade of MASTERY when ALL of the following are achieved:

- Job search documentation and job interview result in a Work Term,
- Work Term Learning Objectives are defined and fulfilled,
- Work Term project is completed based on given criteria,
- Employer's evaluation is satisfactory based on given criteria,
- Faculty Advisor's evaluation is satisfactory based on given criteria.

Nine (9) additive Co-operative Education credits will be awarded for each completed work term.

Upon successful completion of one work term, students in a two year program will be eligible for a Co-op designation on their diploma, associate degree or post-baccalaureate diploma.

Students who are in a 4 year degree program, after successfully completing three Co-op work terms will receive a designation on their credential.

Remuneration and Expectations

Remuneration

A student's rate of pay while on a Work Term is established in accordance with the organization's regular pay scale and the current employment market. Job requirements and level of responsibility also influence the salary paid. While the Co-op Work Term will aid you financially, the reason you choose Co-op should be for the experiential learning component of your academic program.

Expectations of Employers

Employers participate in Co-op Education because it gives them short-term, highly motivated, and skilled employees. They also have the opportunity to "test drive" and screen future employees. They may need assistance during peak business periods, relief for regular staff, or help in completing projects. Employers expect Co-op students to be conscientious, reliable, and professional. They pay students regular rate salaries and expect quality work.

Course Information and Sequence (sample)

Prerequisites	Mandatory	Optional	Credits
18 credits + mandatory workshops* + interviews	COOP 1100		9.0
COOP 1100 + interviews		COOP 1200	9.0
Academic semester + COOP 1100 + interviews	COOP 2300 or COOP 2310		9.0
Academic semester + COOP 1100 or 1200 + interviews	COOP 2300	COOP 2400	9.0
Academic semester + COOP 2300 or 2400 + interviews	COOP 3500 or COOP 3510		9.0
Academic semester (for BBA students only in 4 th year)		COOP 4500	9.0

Note: GPA = 2.33 or greater

*Must have completed all Co-op Prep workshops/activities

Mandatory Workshops/Activities

All interested students wanting to join the Co-op program should attend an Information Session. The Co-op Prep sessions which consist of workshops and one-on-one coaching appointments are designed to assist the student to plan and apply to appropriate jobs, create industry standard documents and prepare for employer's interviews. The series of workshops and activities are required to be completed in one semester, while remaining a current student. For students with disabilities, flexible options are available.

International students will be able to attend an optional workshop hosted by the International Department to assist with applying for their Co-op work permit. All international students beginning their Co-op Seeking Term must submit a copy of their work permit to the Co-op office in advance of viewing the job board. If you have questions, please contact the International Department at 604-527- 5650. For any information concerning operational protocols, contact the Co-op Team at 604-527-5100.

Responsibilities of the Partners

The Co-op partnership means employers, students, and Douglas College work together for enrichment of experience in the classroom and the workplace. In joining this partnership, each participant acknowledges the requirements of Co-operative Education.

The Student

- Completes the academic requirement of Co-op programs;
- Prepares resumes and cover letters, and meets interview requirements;
- Attends Co-op Work Term meetings and workshops/activities;
- Completes the required number of Work Term hours;
- Honours the acceptance of Co-op employment as a contractual agreement with the employer;
- Participates as an ambassador of the Co-operative Education partnership by striving to be a productive, motivated, and responsible employee;
- Respects the policies, confidentiality, and proprietary information of the employer;
- Signs the student evaluation agreement and completes Work Term documentation requirements on CareerHUB, in unison with their Faculty Advisor who will also save their documentation in student records in CareerHUB;
- Participates in the on-site visit and in the employer evaluation process and;
- Completes the Co-op Work Term project, report or portfolio requirements.

The Employer

- Determines the salary, employment status, vacation pay, etc. for the student;
- Provides relevant, paid employment for the Co-op Education qualifying period;
- Welcomes the student and introduces them to the specific tasks of the job;
- Supervises the student;
- Provides a mid-term evaluation of the student during the work site visit with the Faculty Advisor and Co-op Advisor;
- Provides guidance on the student's Work Term report;
- Completes a performance evaluation for the student at the conclusion of the Work Term; and maintains Comprehensive General Liability coverage appropriate to the organization's operations, including Employers' Liability, and ensures that students are covered by Workers' Compensation, where applicable.

Co-op Team

- Facilitates the selection of eligible students for Co-op programs;
- Helps prepare students for Work Term(s);
- Organizes and facilitates job postings, employer–student interviews and recommendations;
- Reviews the student's progress throughout the Work Term as well as attend the mid-term site visit with student, employer, and Faculty Advisor;
- Ensures effective liaison between faculty, employers and students;
- Assists students with their educational, career and personal development;
- Develops and maintains Co-operative Education opportunities within the professional, business, government, and service-related industries; and
- Promotes Co-operative Education to organizations, groups and individuals within the community.

Co-op Calendar Tentative Schedules

Semester 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend information session and complete Co-op application by deadline.• Attend mandatory preparation workshops/activities.• Missed workshops will result in removal from the program.
Semester 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply for jobs and attend interviews as opportunities arise. Continue to monitor CareerHUB for jobs.• Receive Work Term offer. Faculty Advisor assigned.• Register in appropriate COOP course and pay fees.
Semester 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal oriented work experience.
Semester 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return to full-time studies with a minimum of 9 course credits.

Business Conduct of the Co-op Student

To be successful in your first Work Term and continued Work Terms, you should establish effective work habits, communication techniques and develop working relationships. The following list of tips will assist you.

- A professional appearance. Clarify with your employer in advance of your start date as to their expectations of what you should wear to the workplace.
- Actively participating with your new team. It is important to start your Work Term with a good impression. Attendance, punctuality, your initiative and enthusiasm, along with your dependability, time management and organization skills will all play a part in your evaluation at the end of your Work Term. Remember you have agreed to their terms of employment and it is your responsibility to abide by their requirements for the position.
- Introducing yourself to your new team. In the workplace, you typically address one another by your first name. Please be aware some formalities in businesses still exist, for example, the CEO of an organization is often addressed using a formal title, Mr. or Ms. preceding their last name. Until the person has told you otherwise, please follow this guideline.

- Employment roles often involve working within a group of your colleagues. You are encouraged to offer your support and assistance while being respectful of the team's recommendations to complete the job. Provide updates to your colleagues and ensure that everyone who has contributed to the work is acknowledged.
- Often employers arrange team outings with the goal of building strong working relationships. You are encouraged to participate, but always keep in mind you are at a work function. Confidentiality and professionalism should always be followed. Your Offer Letter may include a confidentiality agreement to review and sign; regardless of if you have or have not, keep in mind this employer could be your permanent employer when you graduate.
- Stop from participating if there is a conflict of interest and/or you are in a position to provide profit to a friend or relative.
- Use your own phone on your scheduled breaks to make personal calls. Ensure your phone is turned off while working. Avoid all social media sites, personal texts, and using company email to send personal information while working.
- As part of the team, you are a paid employee. It is strongly recommended you do not listen to or share office gossip, offensive jokes, or use inappropriate language. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, remain professional and walk away.
- Communicating effectively is vital in maintaining good relationships and providing good customer service. Remember to: ask your colleagues or clients questions for clarity, take notes, and listen attentively; use direct eye contact to indicate your interest.
- It is important to be in constant contact with your supervisor, especially in the first weeks of your Work Term. You want to ensure you are on track with assigned task/projects so suggest weekly or bi-weekly check-ins with your supervisor. You are encouraged to ask questions, clarify goals, and examine relevant issues. Remain in contact through your supervisor's preferred means of communication.
- In the workplace it is imperative for you to follow your employer's policies regarding e-mail and Internet use. If you have not been advised as to the company's policy or if one does not exist, use their email and internet for business. Your own phone can be used during your coffee or lunch breaks to make and receive personal calls. Remember to turn your phone off or put it on silent when working.

Telephone Communication

When making calls:

- Have an agenda and any files needed on hand.
- Identify yourself and state the reason for your call.
- Speak clearly and concisely.
- Determine whether there is a need for action by either party.
- Summarize the next steps.
- If leaving an email, be prepared to leave a clear, concise message.
- Thank the receiver of the call for their time.

When answering calls:

- Identify your name and company.
- Return messages promptly so that the caller feels valued.
- It is usually preferable to take a message rather than put someone on hold, but if you must do so, thank people for waiting. If they are waiting for someone else, check back frequently to verify whether they want to continue holding.
- Before passing on messages, verify the spelling of the callers' names and take their phone numbers.
- Wait for the caller to say 'goodbye' before hanging up.
- Request permission before putting a call on the speakerphone.
- Learn how to transfer calls when you begin your new job.

Resolving Problems and Conflict

You are encouraged to discuss any concerns or problems you might be facing with your supervisor or your Faculty Advisor. This is an area where learning takes place to resolve issues moving forward.

Potential Problems

Even though your supervisor might think you are still busy with your assigned task, do not be afraid to ask them what else you can do or if anyone else in the department needs assistance. You might discover projects in your area that are not being worked on and this will be a time for you to be proactive and suggest that you can start working on them. Share with your supervisor that you are willing to take on additional challenges.

Depending on the role you were hired for, ask your supervisor for feedback. You believe you can manage a challenge, but your supervisor would like you to have more training in a particular area. Open dialogue to see if common ground can be achieved.

Managing Conflict

- Always appear professional, pause before you respond and choose your words carefully, and speak slowly.
- Discuss only relevant details and avoid making accusations.
- Listen completely before responding, restate the problem, and be sure that you are both on the same track.
- Focus on finding a fair and equitable solution, acknowledge if you have made an error and apologize.
- Share the encounter with your supervisor so they are aware of what transpired.
- Remember you are in a learning environment; accepting criticism will assist in your development within your role. Your supervisor and Faculty Advisor want you to succeed.