

# Employer Handbook

## Co-operative Education Program

Faculty of Arts  
University of Calgary



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

Section I - Orientation to the Co-op Program  
Section II – When you Hire a Co-op Student

# Section I - Orientation to the Co-op Program

## 1.1 Introduction

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The Cooperative Education (Co-op) is a three-way partnership between the employer, the student, and the University.

This handbook is your guide to the Co-op process at the University of Calgary and should ensure a rewarding experience for all parties involved. The Co-op Program is committed to continuous evaluation and improvement of the services it provides to students, the University and the employer. In order to achieve this goal, we need feedback from you. Please feel free to e-mail, call, or write to us with your feedback, concerns or queries.

Mandy Foley  
Co-op Coordinator  
403.220.8636  
[afoley@ucalgary.ca](mailto:afoley@ucalgary.ca)

## 1.2 Co-op Contacts

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We are here to assist employers with your hiring needs. We look forward to working with you, and here are some examples of where we can help:

- ▶ Provide information on how to post positions on the University of Calgary online job board, CareerLink.
- ▶ Send resume books of interested and available students
- ▶ Provide information on appropriate salary ranges
- ▶ Provide performance management resources
- ▶ Provide connections to Career Services on campus

The physical location and mailing address for the Co-op Office is:  
SS 102, 2500 University Drive NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4

## 1.3 Co-op Programs

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With more than two dozen areas of study to choose from, our students have a wide range of expertise. There's a great match for every employer. Some areas our students specialize in are:

- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Canadian Studies
- Communications
- Development Studies
- Earth Sciences
- East Asian Studies
- History
- International Indigenous Studies
- International Relations
- Latin American Studies
- Law and Society
- Linguistics



- Economics
- English
- Film Studies
- French, Italian and Spanish
- Geography
- Germanic, Slavic and East Asian Studies
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Religious Studies
- Science, Technology and Society
- Sociology
- Urban Studies
- Visual Studies
- Women's Studies

## 1.4 How to Hire a Co-op Student

As an employer, you will be aligned with a Co-op Coordinator who can help you with all the steps in the hiring process, from writing your job posting to performance evaluation for each student.

To hire a Co-op student:

1. Prepare a Job Description and submit online at: <https://careerlink.ucalgary.ca/login/employer-login.htm> (You may need to create an account first)
2. Determine the Salary - Salaries are set by the employer based on the type of job and the level of expertise required. The Co-op Coordinator can provide salary ranges if requested.
3. Select and Interview Students - Review the applications for your job and select students to interview. We can arrange interviews for you or you may call the students directly.
4. Send Letter of Offer - Send a formal letter of offer to the student you have hired.

### Key Recruitment Dates

Student placements are on an ongoing basis, so begin your recruitment activities as early as possible. We suggest posting available positions three to four months prior to the start of the Work Term to ensure a good selection of candidates.

### Key Recruitment Dates

Job Advertised	Interview Dates	Work Term Begins
Jan-Apr	Feb-Apr	May
May-Aug	Jun-Aug	Sept
Sept-Dec	Oct-Dec	Jan

Co-op Work Terms are four-month placements starting in January, May or September. Students require 3 four-month Work Terms to complete the Co-op program. As a result, employers have year round access to motivated students to help meet their business needs.



### Salaries

Salaries are generally set by the employers within the salary structure of their organization depending on the type of job and the level of expertise required. The Co-op Office can provide current salary ranges if required.

### Benefits

Benefits are the responsibility of the employer and must be provided under the relevant legislation.

### Student Job Development

Co-op students are encouraged to develop their own Work Term opportunities and may approach your organization. If you are already dealing with University of Calgary to negotiate a Co-op placement for the upcoming Work Term, please advise the student to contact the Co-op Program.

If you have not been actively employing Co-op students through our Co-op Program, you may, of course, negotiate directly with the student regarding work placement. However, once the student has notified us of the potential Work Term, contact will be made by the Co-op Coordinator to discuss with you the type, quality and quantity of work to be done by the student.

## 1.5 Benefits of Coop for the Employer

Co-op students have completed at least two years of post-secondary education. Previous employers who have hired Co-op students have indicated the following benefits:

- ▶ Access to highly motivated and capable students from different majors to perform specific tasks or projects
- ▶ Four, eight and sometimes twelve month work term availability of students
- ▶ A cost-effective way of evaluating future employees – co-op can be an extended interview
- ▶ Returning students "sell their experience and your organization" to other students
- ▶ Meet short-term staffing needs due to holidays, vacations, promotions, training commitments, peak work-loads, illness or special projects
- ▶ Opportunity for present employee development in the area of (student) supervision
- ▶ Student opportunities beyond the classroom; train and develop Canada's youth
- ▶ Direct input to the educational process via suggestions on relevant curriculum or the pre-employment training
- ▶ A partnership with University of Calgary.

### Career Link

For all Campus Recruitment information including job postings and career fairs, refer to Career Services

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/careers/employers>

## 1.6 Benefits of Co-op for the Student

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Students gain a well-rounded education, enriched by practical experience. The student develops maturity and self-esteem as productive members of the workforce.

- ▶ Opportunities to develop relevant workplace skills and realistic expectations of the workforce before graduation
- ▶ Opportunities to test and gain broader understanding of career options, in a variety of employment settings
- ▶ Financial remuneration which helps to reduce educational costs
- ▶ Documented practical experience, a valuable resume, job search skills, and a network of contacts upon graduation
- ▶ Maturity and self-esteem as productive members of the workforce as well as confidence and team-playing skills
- ▶ A greater understanding about life-long learning and professional development
- ▶ Development of strong oral and written communication and presentation skills required of most professionals
- ▶ Understanding of the academic program through practical application.

## 1.7 Benefits of Co-op for the University of Calgary

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When students make a successful transition from school to work, it is good for business, the economy, community, and most of all, the students. The University benefits in the following ways:

- ▶ The ability to attract superior, highly motivated students
- ▶ Co-op students enrich the general educational community of the campus upon returning from their Work Terms
- ▶ Well-qualified graduates who are prepared to assume a productive role in society
- ▶ Enhanced visibility and reputation through interaction with the community
- ▶ Feedback from employers on the quality and relevance of program curriculum
- ▶ Information on current research and development in employment sectors, with opportunities for collaborative projects
- ▶ Enhanced university-industry relations

## 1.8 The Work Term

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A Work Term needs to be a minimum of 12 weeks and can be 4 months long. In certain circumstances, a Work Term may be longer if the work experience offers variety and challenge in a different setting, or department. Work Terms can start in January, May or September. The specific start and end dates of the term should be discussed with the student. Students require 3 four-month Work Terms to complete the Co-op designation.

Other criteria that define a Work Term include:

- ▶ Hours should be full time (a minimum of 32 hours per week)
- ▶ Work Terms may be 8 months in length, and in some cases up to 12 months in length
- ▶ Work must be supervised, and ideally students work in a team of at least 4 others
- ▶ Work must be paid. In some cases, the pay is minimal but the experience is fantastic

Work should be related to the student's degree and career goals. Sometimes, a first Work Term may provide the student with office experience, or basic field experience before actual 'degree-related' work occurs but should provide some alignment with the student's field of study.

## Section II – When you Hire a Co-op Student

### 2.1 Setting Expectations

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Co-op students expect to be treated like any other employee within your company and should have a challenging job experience. As an employer you are not only looking for a job well done, but for students to do their jobs with enthusiasm and initiative.

To ensure expectations between yourself and the student are clearly understood, we suggest that you orient the students to all aspects of your company.

Typically, students will appreciate the relevance of their specific duties if they understand and realize the overall objectives of the company. Also, the students should be introduced to other team members with whom they will be working. This will help the students appreciate the skills and accomplishments of others and see how their contributions fit into the larger company objectives. During the orientation and training, tasks assigned to the students



should be clarified and an effort made to show them how to perform the tasks.

Observe the student's performance and provide constructive feedback on progress made. This will ensure that students have an accurate picture of their work and what is expected of them. Co-op students appreciate having periodic reviews during their Work Term.

Students will need time to adapt to the company culture, policies, and procedures, and to find their way around the work place. A learning curve of one to three weeks is typical.

By considering these suggestions a successful Co-op experience can be realized by all involved parties.

## 2.2 Responsibilities of the Co-op Employer

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Your role as a Co-op employer is to provide the student with a challenging career-related work experience. To ensure that both you and the student benefit from the Co-op experience, we suggest that you:

- ▶ Advise the student of all issues of confidentiality and ensure that non-disclosure agreements are signed
- ▶ Provide the student with a Letter of Offer, which outlines salary and benefits, start and end dates.
- ▶ At the outset, advise the student of all issues of confidentiality in the workplace and ensure any non-disclosure agreements are signed prior to the commencement of work
- ▶ Provide the student with an orientation to the workplace, including an overview of the organization (e.g., mission statement, products, projects, programs, etc.) physical layout, relevant personnel, safety practices, and the duties or tasks expected during the Work Term
- ▶ Provide a Supervisor for the Co-op student who will oversee the student's work and discuss expectations for the Work Term with the student and, on a regular basis, give the student honest feedback on how she/he is doing
- ▶ Engage the student in productive and reasonably challenging work, rather than mere observation. A specific project which the student can work on either in addition to regular duties, or as the sole focus of the Work Term, will enhance the learning experience of the student
- ▶ Participate in the Co-op Coordinator's site visit to assess the student's progress and performance



- ▶ Complete an [Employer Work Term Skills and Learning Assessment](#) form evaluating the student's performance and discuss with the student
- ▶ Contact the Co-op Coordinators regarding any concerns

### 2.3 Responsibilities of the Student

Students participating in the Co-op program are responsible for being reliable, productive employees while also completing the academic components of the Work Term. The student responsibilities include:

- ▶ Complete the requirements of University of Calgary's Co-op Program
- ▶ Attend all pre-employment training sessions and workshops
- ▶ Actively participate in their own job search
- ▶ Prepare resumes, cover letters, and attend all interviews
- ▶ Honour the acceptance of a Work Term placement with you
- ▶ Respect your policies, procedures, confidentiality and proprietary information
- ▶ Conform to all conditions and rules that apply to employees in your organization
- ▶ Arrange on-site visits with the Co-op Coordinator
- ▶ Set goals for learning and work which enhance their academic, professional and personal skills
- ▶ Accept feedback and suggestions for improvement in a positive manner
- ▶ Advise you and the Co-op Coordinator of any concerns or problems with their assignments or working environment
- ▶ Complete all modules of the Co-op Portfolio
- ▶ Pay their Work Term fees as set by the University of Calgary.

### 2.4 Responsibilities of the University of Calgary

- ▶ Efficiently and effectively administering its Co-operative Education Program
- ▶ Liaising effectively and efficiently with employers and faculty
- ▶ Advising its faculty of relevant feedback from employers
- ▶ Informing students, employers and other interested parties of the Co-op policies and procedures
- ▶ Providing equal services to all students and employers
- ▶ Providing students with accurate and information on all recruiting employers



## 2.5 Responsibilities of the Co-op Coordinator

The Co-op Coordinator is the liaison between employers, faculty and students. The Co-op Coordinator works closely with employers and students to develop suitable placements and to ensure the objectives of the program are met. The Co-op Coordinator:

- ▶ Facilitates employer/student contact
- ▶ Ensures fair and equitable treatment of students and employers through the placement process
- ▶ Assists employers through all aspects of the Co-op process
- ▶ Provides Co-op students with appropriate pre-employment training
- ▶ Works with employers and students in monitoring and evaluating students' Work Terms
- ▶ Encourages students to experience a range of employment opportunities during their Co-op program
- ▶ Monitors the placements, ensuring that both the employers' and student' needs are being met
- ▶ Assists employers in identifying and developing Work Terms appropriate for Co-op students
- ▶ Discusses career goals with students and helps them develop these goals
- ▶ Develops new employer opportunities for co-op students
- ▶ Ensures Co-op placements are related to students' program areas

## 2.6 Learning Goals

Within the first weeks of a Work Term, students will submit their [Learning Goals](#). These are the goals for that Work Term. Students are expected to set goals for learning and to work on enhancing their academic, professional and personal skills.

Students are encouraged to share their Learning Goals with their supervisor. During the site visit, these goals are reviewed and they are also reviewed again at the end of the Work Term to evaluate whether or not the goals were achieved.

## 2.7 Site Visit

Site visits are usually organized approximately four to six weeks into each four month Work Term. When location does not allow for an in-person visit, the content of the visit will be conducted via telephone. The Co-op Coordinator will contact the student to co-ordinate times and location with you.

The purpose of the site visit:

- ▶ Ensures that the Work Term is a positive and educational experience for the student;
- ▶ Makes sure that the employer is obtaining the maximum benefit from hiring a Co-op student;
- ▶ Establishes contacts with related businesses or industries;
- ▶ Obtains vital feedback on our curriculum for the purpose of considering course or program changes;
- ▶ Generates constructive criticism on the administration, student preparation for pre-employment workshops and scheduling of the Co-op program.

A typical site visit is arranged as follows:

- ▶ 30 minutes with the student's Supervisor to discuss job responsibilities and establish relevance to program of study and learning goals. Also, to obtain confidential feedback on the student, the curriculum, the administration of the program, and the identification of any future possibilities for collaboration.
- ▶ 30 minutes with the student to discuss learning goals, work placement satisfaction, Work Term Report, and determine whether there are any work-related issues that need to be addressed with the employer (i.e. underutilization of the student, poor working conditions, harassment, need for additional guidance).

The Co-op Coordinators are always pleased to participate in a work site tour to increase personal knowledge of the employer.

Upon completion of the site visit, the completed Site Visit Report is filed in the student's personal file in the Co-op Office and is part of their credit in the Co-op term overall.

## 2.8 Work Term Reports

Co-op students are expected to write a Post Work Term Reflective Analysis Report on each of their four-month Work Terms. The goal of this report is for the student to think reflectively about their work term experience and make connections between academic work and possible career goals. The report should align closely with established learning goals and outcomes and detail successes, challenges and insights. This report does not need to be reviewed by the Work Supervisor.

The Work Term Report is due the April 15, August 15 or Dec 15

## 2.9 Co-op Forms

The end of Work Term: [Employer Work Term Skills and Learning Assessment](#) form is online and we encourage employers to meet with students to review the final assessment prior to submission.

## 2.10 Problems in the Workplace

Should any unusual circumstances arise during the Work Term, such as behavior problems or medical emergencies, you should contact the Co-op Coordinator who will help to facilitate a resolution. Should you consider dismissing a Co-op student, you are urged to consult with the Co-op Coordinator as early as possible to discuss your concerns.

### Lay-offs and Strikes

If you foresee a lay-off or strike that will directly affect the Co-op student, please notify the Co-op Program Office as soon as possible.

## 2.11 International Students

International Students in the Co-op program require a Co-op work permit. This permit is the responsibility of the student and should be obtained before the Work Term.

## 2.12 Thank You

We appreciate the role you have taken on as a Co-op Employer, and key educator and mentor of a Faculty of Arts' undergraduate student from the University of Calgary. Please let us know if there is anything we can provide you to facilitate this process. Do not hesitate to contact the Co-op Program to provide feedback and offer suggestions on how we can improve our program. If you wish to help as a guest speaker at our student training sessions, contribute to an information session about your company, or become more involved with our program's development, please contact us. We welcome input and appreciate any support you would like to give.





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