

Title:	Cooperative Education Policies and Procedures
Type:	Academic
Policy #:	AC100-21
Responsibility:	Academic Policy Committee
Approved by:	Board of Governors, December 2005
Effective date:	
Revised:	
Review date:	

1. Definition of Co-op Education

According to the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, Co-operative Education is: "a program that formally integrates a student's academic studies with work experience with participating employers. The usual plan is for the student to alternate periods of experience in appropriate fields of business, industry, government, social services and the professions in accordance with the following criteria:

- 1.1 each work situation is developed and/or approved by the co-operative educational department as a suitable learning situation;
- 1.2 the co-operative student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing;
- 1.3 the co-operative student receives remuneration for the work performed;
- 1.4 the co-operative student's progress on the job is monitored by the co-operative educational department;
- 1.5 the co-operative student's performance on the job is supervised and evaluated by the student's co-operative employer;
- 1.6 time spent in periods of work experience must be at least thirty percent of the time spent in academic study.

This approach to education relies upon a three-way partnership: the student, the institution and the employer. Success depends upon the co-operative efforts of each party. [...]"¹

Finally, please note that under unique circumstances Centennial College may recognize an unpaid volunteer work term.

2. Administration of Co-op Program

Centennial's Co-operative Program focuses on learning, not earning. It is more than a job placement program. The Co-operative Education program shows how classroom material is used in the "real world". Students will graduate with a one-year related work experience which prepares them for continuous learning through the integration of classroom and applied work-based learning.

¹ CAFCE *Co-operative Education Manual page 1*, Co-operative Education Manual
A Guide to Planning and Implementing Co-operative Education Programs in Post-Secondary Institutions, 2000

Through our co-op placement process, students will work with an approved employer in their field of study. The co-op education administrators work with students to ensure that they have a worthwhile work experience, and help them to:

- 2.1 prepare their résumé;
- 2.2 develop interviewing skills;
- 2.3 learn job-search techniques;
- 2.4 define on-the-job expectations;
- 2.5 set and achieve objectives;
- 2.6 develop their academic and career potential through counselling and guidance;
- 2.7 assist in the development of students' problem-solving skills and conflict-management skills.

Students will gain valuable on-the-job experience, feedback from professionals, and industry contacts that can lead to career opportunities after graduation.

Experiential learning doesn't just mean that our programs are overseen by industry experts - it means we put students out there to see, hear, and learn for themselves.

3. Element of a Co-op Program

The mandate of the Co-operative Education & Employment resources department includes:

- 3.1 Developing and delivering programs to prepare students for their job search and their work experience.
- 3.2 Finding placements and assisting students in finding placements.
- 3.3 Coordinating a screening, interviewing and job offer process to efficiently and fairly match students and employers.
- 3.4 Providing students and employers with information regarding typical salary ranges for various programs and placements.
- 3.5 Ensuring that employers provide an accurate coherent evaluation of each student that provides useful guidance and advice to the student and sufficient information for grading purposes.
- 3.6 Ensuring that students provide an accurate, objective, and useful evaluation of their work experience to assist the support group in working with the employer to improve the experience.
- 3.7 Based on the employer and student evaluations, providing program coordinators and teaching staff with suggestions on maintaining or changing elements of the learning experience in the classroom and/or in the work place.

- 3.8 Developing and maintaining College, Employer and Community relationships in accordance with CAFCE guidelines
- 3.9 Ongoing evaluation and assessment of employers in accordance with CAFCE guidelines.
- 3.10 Providing counselling, guidance, and assistance to students on placement as needed.

4. Responsibilities of Participants

4.1 Responsibilities of Co-op Administrators

- 4.1.1 Provide in-class direction to prepare students for interviews and the expectations of the work place;
- 4.1.2 Seek out and obtain jobs applicable to the specific disciplines;
- 4.1.3 Provide individual counselling and assistance, if necessary;
- 4.1.4 Visit students on the job and be available on campus to discuss any of the students' questions or concerns including any special needs or the need for accommodation.

4.2 Responsibilities of Students

- 4.2.1 Maintain a supply of resumes at the Co-op office;
- 4.2.2 Apply only for jobs that they are interested in and which are in locations that they can get to;
- 4.2.3 Attend all scheduled interviews (and reschedule any interview that conflicts with an exam in advance in concert with the co-op department);
- 4.2.4 Accept the position that is offered them (students have the option to refuse only one job offer per term and must make a decision within 48 hours of the offer being made);
- 4.2.5 Conduct themselves in a professional manner during interviews and at their place of work;
- 4.2.6 Attend all appointments with Co-op Administrators;
- 4.2.7 Fulfill both work term and academic requirements;
- 4.2.8 Communicate any problems or concerns including any special needs or the need for accommodation to Co-op Administrators before any action is taken.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Employer

- 4.3.1 Only offer a position to a student when it is expected that full-time work will be available for the entire work term;

- 4.3.2 Hire the student as a full-time, temporary employee at whatever rate of pay the employer deems appropriate for the position;
- 4.3.3 Provide appropriate training and support for the student as a typical new employee;
- 4.3.4 Provide the student with productive work assignments related to his/her major;
- 4.3.5 Complete a brief, formal evaluation of the student's performance at the end of the work term. This evaluation is provided by the college;
- 4.3.6 Have the student's Supervisor meet briefly with the student and a College Co-op Administrator at their convenience once during the work term.

5. Recruiting Ethics

The successful recruitment of co-operative education students depends upon the collective activities of three parties: the interested employer, the co-op student, and the associated educational institution. All participants must adhere to Provincial and Federal legislation in their recruitment and employment practices. However, the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education supports additional guidelines concerning recruiting ethics that support the development of a mutually beneficial and fair process for all concerned.

5.1 Employer Ethics

- 5.1.1 Provide accurate job posting information including salary and location.
- 5.1.2 Provide reasonable notice of candidates to be interviewed and of interview cancellations.
- 5.1.3 Respect an institution's schedule regarding job postings, interview arrangements, job offers, etc., and heed the co-operative education policies and procedures of an institution.
- 5.1.4 Not discuss job offers or rankings with candidates before, during, or following an interview.
- 5.1.5 Not seek a candidate's assessment of another candidate.
- 5.1.6 Not make multiple job rankings or offers unless prepared to accept multiple candidates.
- 5.1.7 Honour all matches, and not rescind offers of employment.
- 5.1.8 Confirm all job offers in writing.
- 5.1.9 Not translate a co-op assignment into a full-time position encouraging a student to settle for less education.

5.2 Student Ethics

- 5.2.1 Abide by the co-op policies of their institution.

- 5.2.2 Ensure that employers have accurate information regarding their qualifications.
- 5.2.3 Notify the co-op office, well in advance, if interviews must be rescheduled or cancelled.
- 5.2.4 Not discuss or mislead employers about their ranking or job acceptance intentions, and not provide information to employers on other students or employers.
- 5.2.5 Honour their acceptance of employment as a contractual agreement with the employer.”²

5.3 Institution Ethics

- 5.3.1 Inform students, employers, and other interested parties of institutional policies and procedures.
- 5.3.2 Provide equal services to all students and employers.
- 5.3.3 Accommodate employers' reasonable requests for job postings, interview space, and presentation facilities.
- 5.3.4 Provide students with accurate information on all recruiting employers.
- 5.3.5 Notify the employer of any hiring limitations prior to them conducting interviews [..].”³

a) Harassment/Discrimination/Safety

Government Human Rights Codes and Labour Codes govern the workplaces in which co-op students find employment”. The [..] [College] has a commitment to its students that they, while engaged in [..][College]-related activities on and off campus, shall be free from harassment or discrimination. If either situation occurs in a co-op workplace, students should contact their [Workplace Supervisor and also the Co-op Administrator] [..].”⁴ Further, the College has a commitment to accommodate students to the point of undue hardship as provided for in the Ontario Human Rights Code and the college’s Policies and Procedures. “Similarly, issues of safety or expectations to engage in any behaviour that may pose a risk to the student's well-being should be brought to the attention of the student's [Workplace Supervisor and the Co-op Administrator immediately. All incidents /complaints/ reports/requests will be recorded and filed appropriately.] [..].”⁵

6. Students’ Acceptance into the Program and Admission Standards

² Canadian Association for Co-operative Education

³ Canadian Association for Co-operative Education

^{4, 5} Appendix A: Regulations and Procedures for Co-operative Programs, Copyright © 2003, University of Waterloo, Co-operative Education & Career Services, p. 7.

Students are accepted into the co-op program when they apply for semester 1 and meet the College academic requirements for admission to the program.

For fast track programs, students are accepted into the co-op program when they apply for semester 3 and meet the College academic requirements for admission. In addition students must complete English 160 or equivalent before semester 3. Note English 170/171 requirement below.

College Diploma Students must qualify to participate in the co-op process prior to the start of the academic semester preceding the first scheduled work term. To qualify, students must satisfy the following requirements:

- a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50 for the School of Engineering Technology and Applied Science, and the School of Business;
- successful completion of at least 80% of Model Route courses to this point;
- a minimum grade of C in ENGL 170/171 or equivalent.

Applied Degree Students must qualify to participate in the placement process by the start of the academic semester preceding the first scheduled work term. To qualify, students must satisfy the following requirements:

- a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.00;
- successful completion of at least 80% of Model Route courses to this point;
- a minimum grade of C in English 110 or equivalent.

NOTE: Preparatory courses, such as ENGL 160/161 or MATH 118 are not included in the course count or GPA calculation. The required cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is based only on model route courses.

7. Pre-Work Term Support

Qualified students will be scheduled in a co-op pre-placement course in the academic semester preceding their first co-op work term.

Successful completion of this course is a prerequisite for the first work term.

8. Work Term Defined

The work term is expected to provide 16-17 weeks of full-time paid employment for the student and the student should plan accordingly. If unforeseen problems arise, the work term must be at least 12 weeks in duration to be eligible to earn a course credit. The Co-op Administrator will endeavour to help the student with any problems that may arise.

In normal circumstances the student will alternate study and work terms subject to necessary accommodations as required under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

8.1 Volunteer (Unpaid) Co-op Work Terms

One of the long-standing and distinguishing features of Centennial College co-operative education programs is that participating employers pay students on a co-op work term at competitive, market-driven wage rates. There are a number of reasons why the College expects that co-op students will be paid, including:

- paid work term employment ensures a high degree of accountability on the job;
- students are expected to be performing productive work and “earning their keep” during the co-op work term;
- earning a competitive wage rate during each co-op work term is perceived as an important financial benefit by the student;
- co-op wage rates are generally less than what the employer would have to pay graduates or temporary staff sourced elsewhere.

Therefore Co-operative Education and Employment Resources staff do not generally promote volunteer work terms (including those which promise stipends or honorariums) and expect employers to remunerate students for their time and work effort.

However, it is recognized that some volunteer opportunities may be a good fit for certain students in pursuing their specific career plans. Hence, if a student chooses to pursue a volunteer work term, the Co-operative Education and Employment Resources department is prepared to accredit the work term under the following conditions:

- the position does not interfere with or eliminate an existing paid co-op position;
- the organization has sufficient staff and resources to provide adequate supervision and ensure a quality work experience for the student;
- the position provides the minimum number of hours required for work term credit (normally the equivalent of 12 weeks of full-time employment);
- the student stays in the position for the agreed-upon duration of the work term;
- the student advises the co-op office before the start of the work term that it is a volunteer work term and the College arranges appropriate private accident insurance (through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities - MTCU) and public liability insurance.

9. Placement Assistance

The Co-operative Education department promotes the co-op program to employers and provides jobs for students to apply to.

The Co-op department makes job offers to students on behalf of employers.

The Co-op department facilitates student application for jobs and arranges interviews between employers and students. This includes considering all realistic accommodative measures intended to meet the needs of students with disabilities, those with religious

needs and obligations, and those with other needs as provided for in the Ontario Human Rights Code, who may require adjustments or accommodations for their success.

Students with a documented learning disability, medical or mental health condition, or physical, visual, hearing or mobility impairment should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD). The service is free and confidential, but students should call well in advance of work term to allow time to arrange for help at the campus they will be attending. For more information, contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities.

Students requiring accommodation on religious or other grounds as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code should contact the Office of Equity for advice/assistance.

The goal at the CSD is to level the academic playing field. We want to ensure that students with disabilities have the same access and opportunities that non-disabled students at the college have. To that end, we have a number of resources available to assist the students in their studies and help them succeed.

Services Available:

- Adaptations in the physical environment to ensure access to employer facilities
- A full range of specialized equipment and assistive devices for student use
- Collaborative liaison with the Co-op department and employer to ensure appropriate accommodations
- Interpreters

10. Placement Assistance Conditions

All students are encouraged to discuss any questions and concerns about the job postings with a Co-op Administrator before or immediately after the interview.

Each student must find her or his own placement and WILL NOT have placement assistance from the Co-op office for a particular work term if the following occurs:

- The student misses an interview without adequate reason;
- The student does not accept a job arranged through the placement system within 48 hours (students are allowed to decline one position per semester);
- The student fails to act in a professional manner during the interview process;
- The student fails to honour the 2-work-term commitment to the employer;
- The student does not apply for positions advertised by the Co-op Department.

11. Job Acceptance Conditions

When a student has accepted a position with an employer it is the understanding of all concerned that it is the student's responsibility to complete the work term as outlined in the conditions of employment form.

If at any time between accepting the employment offer and completing the work term the student's work situation should change, under no circumstances should the student terminate the employment before communicating with the Co-op Administrator.

Students may not be allowed to continue in the co-op program at the decision of the Co-op Administrator if any of the following occurs:

- A student fails to report to work for a previously confirmed position;
- A student quits a position before discussing the problem with a Co-op Administrator;
- A student is terminated by an employer for cause.

12. Continuation Standards for Co-op

Students must maintain academic program continuation standards to continue in Co-op. As well, they must register and proceed in their studies without restrictions, except where prerequisite/graduation requirements have not been satisfied, as specified by program regulations.

Students shall not continue to the next work term unless they have completed 80% of prescribed courses.

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average equal to or above 2.50 in order to proceed to the next work term.

Participation in the co-op process cannot be deferred.

Entry into a subsequent work term is dependent upon successful completion of the previous one.

Students must also submit a work term report and receive an acceptable work performance evaluation in order to participate in the next scheduled work term.

13. Sequencing of Work Terms and Required Number of Work Term Credits

There are planned work terms scheduled in each Co-op program. In most programs it is intended that co-op work terms will alternate with academic semesters. However, students should see their School/Department for work term occurrence and specific regulations.

Students must complete their last work term before their last academic semester. In special circumstances the Co-op department may accept employment after completion of the academic program toward satisfying some of the work term requirement. However, students enrolled in their final full-time academic semester may not participate in the Co-op placement process.

Students in a three-year diploma program who have not completed a work term by the start of semester 5 are not eligible to participate in the co-op placement process.

Double work terms may be accommodated to satisfy both employer and student needs provided such an arrangement suits the availability of academic courses required by the student for satisfactory progression in the program.

Students are expected to complete all work terms to satisfy program requirements. Any deviation from the published pattern will be discussed with the Co-op Administrator.

When a student has completed at least 9 weeks of employment, and her or his performance was fully satisfactory, but where a verifiable medical condition prevents her/him from fulfilling the work term requirements, s/he will be credited an Aegrotat standing.

NOTE: The Co-op department may waive one work term requirement under either of the following conditions:

- There is demonstrable proof that the student tried hard to find employment and was unsuccessful (usually due to economic conditions).
- There is a verifiable medical condition or other situation that cannot be accommodated as required under the Ontario Human Rights Code that prevents the student from completing the work term requirements and medical documentation is provided.

Accommodation will be made with respect to a temporary disability or disabling condition and other needs based on prohibited grounds identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code (e.g. religion, family status, etc.)

14. Work Term Report

14.1 The Purpose of the Work Term Report

The work term report gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills to their work term employer. Students should seize this opportunity to make a favorable impression on the employer. A good work term report demonstrates planning, organization and presentation skills as well as written clarity, analytical criticism, and professionalism. Satisfactory evaluations are required for each work term report and a work report must be submitted at the end of every work term.

14.2 Selecting the Topic

Probably the most difficult task in writing a work report is deciding on the topic. Students should start searching early in their term for a suitable topic and gather information and background material. Often the supervisor or manager will suggest a topic that the company would like investigated.

The student's report must NOT merely be a "user guide", a technical description or an informational report. It must contain the student's own ideas and be a critical analysis of the topic. An ideal topic would allow the student to identify problems, provide analysis of those problems, offer alternative solutions to each problem, analyze each solution, and summarize the solution being recommended.

14.3 Confidential Reports

Students should try to find a topic that will allow their report to be submitted to the College for evaluation. In some circumstances, however, the employer will find that the report is CONFIDENTIAL and cannot leave company premises. In these cases students should notify their Co-op Administrator who will contact the employer and arrange to evaluate the report at the company.

15. Grading of Work Terms

Each work term appears as a course on the student's transcript (worth 10 quality points).

The grades for this course will be determined as follows:

- 60% weighting on the employer's evaluation of the student's performance, and
- 40% weighting on the College's grading of the student's work report.

The employer takes advantage of an evaluation form provided by the College to present its evaluation.

- The Co-op Administrator grades the work report.
- The Co-op Administrator processes the work term grade.
- Work term grades are included in the grade point average calculation.

16. Monitoring of Student Work Term Performance

Student work term performance is monitored by a Co-op Administrator to provide on-going in-person support of the student. This monitoring is unrelated to grading of the work term.

17. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Co-operative College Diploma⁶

Students can PLAR the preplacement course. They must meet the following requirements:

- Produce a good quality resume.
- Write the preplacement course final exam and receive a minimal grade of 70%.
- Document a job search conducted for professional employment.

Students can PLAR up to two (2) work terms. They must meet the following requirements:

- Produce a job description on company letterhead.
- Produce a company performance evaluation for each PLAR work term.
- Produce an example of a business report.

18. Co-op Fee Structure

For College diploma and applied degree programs the students are charged an administrative fee for each academic semester.

Co-op fees are not refundable except in extenuating circumstances.

19. Academic Appeals

⁶ N. B: Applied degree programs are excluded.

Students have the right to appeal any action or decision which may affect the ultimate evaluation of their performance in a course or program. Academic appeals are limited to matters affecting evaluation or decisions on Admission, Readmission, or Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition. The Academic Appeal Application form is available from any Registrar's Office. Refer to: Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedures, Section VII-Student Academic Evaluation Appeals.

20. Link To FAQ, Electronic and Published Material

FAQ

What can I do if I don't get a co-op job?

If you aren't placed for a work term you may choose to:

- (a) take the term off
- (b) accept unrelated work for the four month period OR
- (c) return to school to take more courses. However, good co-op positions often surface after the start of the work term.

Does a co-op job have to be full-time?

Yes! Usually 35 to 40 hours per week.

Can I find my own job?

Yes! If the job is full-time, provides work related to your major, and is paid employment. Feel free to discuss prospects with our co-op staff.

Why do I have to pay a co-op fee?

All co-op activities at Centennial including marketing of our programs to employers, providing personal assistance to students, teaching co-op pre-placement classes and visiting students on-the-job are paid for by co-op fees.

If I am offered a job, do I have to accept it?

If you are offered a position, you have 48 hours to accept or decline the offer. However, students may only decline ONE position per semester. If a student declines more than one offer, he/she will no longer be able to use the services of the Co-op Department.

What if the job postings are not exactly what I want to do?

We try very hard to get the variety of jobs that students would like, but we can't guarantee that there are jobs available in every specific area. A job is what you make it. A student may change the direction/responsibilities of a job after he/she has acquired it, on either the current or a future work term. Often, the actual job is better than how it appeared in the job description.

You can help by sourcing jobs in your area of interest.

You may think that you want to work in one area, but part of your career path should allow you to be flexible to try a variety of tasks. How can you be sure of your specific interest until you've tried a few? This is a learning process, as most of your career will be, and most jobs will provide you with at least some related experience.

What if a better job comes along later, after I have been placed?

All placements are final. Remember that we have a commitment to the employer. You must remember that even in the regular interviewing process (i.e. full-time employment) you never know if a better job will come up after you have accepted the first one. The idea is the same with this process. Our aim is to get all students a job in the field they are studying. To accomplish this, once you have a placement it must be yours so that we can concentrate on the students still to be placed.

If I don't like my co-op job what should I do?

Discuss your concerns with your supervisor or call our office.

Why are many jobs far away?

Good co-op jobs exist all around the GTA and beyond. The more willing and flexible you are to travel or relocate, the more co-op opportunities will be available to you.

Can I put off my work terms until the end of my program?

No! Co-op work terms should alternate with study terms as you progress through your program.

Do I have to complete all three work terms?

Yes! All work terms must be completed to achieve a co-op diploma unless special permission is obtained from the co-op department.

Are co-op employers likely to hire co-op graduates?

Yes! Many of our co-op students get hired full-time by their co-op employer after graduation, and employers consider co-op an excellent way to attract and assess potential future employees.

Is it likely that my employer will invite me back for my next work term?

Yes! If you do a good job, most employers will be happy to have you return. Both of you will benefit from the added experience you will bring with you to your next work assignment.

21. References

- 21.1 Appendix A: Regulations and Procedures for Co-operative Programs, University Of Waterloo, Co-operative Education & Career Services, <http://www.cecs.uwaterloo.ca/manual/index.htm>, Copyright © 2003, University of Waterloo, Co-operative Education & Career Services
- 21.2 Centennial College, Centre for Students with Disabilities-Resources.htm
- 21.3 Co-op At Centennial: Your Guide to Co-op Education And Future Employment, Produced by the Co-operative Education and Employment Resources Department of Centennial College, June 2002.
- 21.4 Co-operative Education Manual, A Guide to Planning and Implementing, Co-operative Education Programs in Post-Secondary Institutions, Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, 2000.
- 21.5 Coop Policies 2 - University of Waterloo Degree Programs
- 21.6 Employer Ethics, Canadian Association for Co-operative Education
- 21.7 Recruiting Ethics, Canadian Association for Co-operative Education, www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html
- 21.8 Students Ethics, Canadian Association for Co-operative Education
- 21.9 You Can Live your Dream, Centennial College
- 21.10 www.centennialcollege.ca/coop/
- 21.11 <http://www.centennialcollege.ca/csd/what.html>