

## Supporting Co-op Students Remotely

The recent COVID-19 outbreak has dramatically changed our workforce and the number of employees working from home has increased significantly. The great news is that business operations are continuing full speed ahead!

Carleton Co-op has been proactive in connecting with many of our employers and trusted partners during this time. Here are some tips and best practices that we are seeing within our employer community:

1. Define and communicate expectations with students:

Working from home can be a first for many students. Clearly communicating what is expected of students will be an essential part of the success of co-op work terms. Students may need clarification on their working hours and schedule, deadlines, expectations of working overtime, ways to attend meetings and how their work is being assessed. Ensuring that you have scheduled meetings with students to provide feedback, discuss performance evaluations and competencies will be integral to the student's success. Students are still required to complete and pass their required co-op work term deliverables. You can access more information regarding work term requirements [here](#).

2. Provide reliable technology:

Ensuring students have access to reliable Wi-Fi and equipment is essential. The great news is that students are incredibly tech-savvy and versatile! Most have had exposure and experience working with many different platforms and systems. We recognize that many companies require a VPN connection in order to remotely connect. Providing students with resources on how to remotely connect will be essential. **Here** are some additional factors to consider: Will your student be required to use their own personal equipment, or will they have access to company equipment? Is there a way that you can accommodate this or provide an alternate solution or provide the student with a means to access the equipment? Does your company have a reimbursement plan for expenses like data plans? Does your company use a platform like Zoom, Slack, Google Meetups or Skype? Check in frequently and have virtual meetings to walk through projects and work tasks.

3. Offer frequent virtual touchpoints:

Especially if this is a student's first work term, they may need some additional touchpoints throughout this time. How can you connect virtually on a regular basis with your student to ensure they are supported? Thankfully there are so many great platforms to use that enable us to be remotely connected. Consider implementing daily touchpoints to help students stay on track with deliverables for the day. Ensuring regular scheduled touch points and 1:1's with your student to discuss feedback and provide coaching opportunities are essential at this time. Be accessible to your co-op student- do they know how to reach you if they have questions? Providing this direction to students will help them feel supported. Virtual on-boarding and orientation are key (more on that below). Consider ways to connect the student to other employees so they can familiarize themselves with others and the company culture. We understand that managers are often very busy. Providing a mentor or a delegate to the student is a great way to provide a point of contact if they have questions throughout the day. Lastly, scheduling virtual coffee breaks together is a great way to stay connected with one another.

4. Provide a virtual on-boarding experience:

The first few days and weeks on a new job can be daunting for new students. As an employer, ensure you are providing students with information and resources to help them orient with your organization. Can you virtually provide them with new hire documents, resources to navigate through systems and processes? Students will want to know who they should contact in different departments (HR, IT support, who to contact in case of an urgent issue, etc...). Are there resources for technical skills that can help students further develop in their area? Being proactive and providing that information to students will ensure the transition is smooth.

5. Stay connected with campus partners:

While we are all navigating through uncharted waters, remote working has allowed us to be agile and maintain operations to the best of our ability. We want to extend our appreciation and thanks to all employer partners. Carleton Co-op is amazed to see how quickly everyone has adapted their processes and businesses and how so many employers have continued to support the co-op program. Should you have any questions regarding our co-op program, current hiring needs or any support, please do not hesitate to [reach out](#). We also encourage you to share any best practices that you may have, as well as any updates as the work terms unfold.

On a very last note, [here](#) is a helpful resource from Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL). We encourage you to check it out!