



**Co-operative
Education**
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Workplace Success A Guide for Managers and Supervisors

**Courtesy of Co-operative Education,
Carleton University**

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1 Administration and Planning

- Prior to the start date, have student complete all other required documentation (security clearances and passes, confidentiality agreements and payroll information). Ensure that the student's workspace will be ready and provide him/her with any pre-work term reading you think would be relevant.
- Plan to have additional assignments available should the student complete work ahead of schedule.

2 Orientation and Learning

- Within the first few days provide student with an **orientation** of the work environment as well as what his/her responsibilities and deliverables will be.
- Discuss appropriate topics for the work term report with your student and consider implementing a **learning plan**.

3 Progress and Feedback

- On a regular basis, plan to have the student provide you with progress updates on assigned tasks and provide feedback on both strengths and areas needing improvement.
- You may wish to meet with the student mid-way through the work term to conduct a mid-point review. You will also be contacted by a Co-op staff member for a **site visit or email check-in**, and will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the student's performance to date.

4 Evaluations and Work Term Reports

- At the beginning of the final month of the work term, complete the students' [Work Term Evaluation](#) and **review** the student's work term report.

Please note: Work term reports are **NOT** to include any proprietary information. If you consider the content of the report to be confidential and cannot release the report, please email co-opprogram@carleton.ca to confirm this.

Congratulations on hiring your new co-op student! Included in these pages are suggestions intended to guide you through the co-op work term process. We hope this manual will also serve as an effective planning tool, enabling you to get the most out of your student while s/he is with your organization.

We encourage you to contact your [Co-op staff member](#) if you have any questions or concerns.

Co-operative Education Defined – the Role of the Employer

The benefits of hiring co-op students are numerous. Your organization is able to maximize its recruitment strategy by tapping into the best and the brightest students that universities have to offer. Extended periods of student availability will enable you to have students until the end of your project while assessing their potential as future employees.

As an academic program, co-operative education is unique in that its rotation of study and work terms permits for integrated learning between theory and practice from first to final year. Your opportunity provides students with invaluable insight into the world of work both in terms of specific content-area knowledge and the soft skills necessary to succeed in industry today. Students graduating with a co-op designation will not only have successfully achieved all of the academic requirements of their degree, but also have systematically assessed their contributions and performance in the workplace and consequently, their career objectives and direction. Your role as the student's lead while on a work term is to provide an environment for this learning to occur. This handbook is intended to assist you in creating this environment, thereby maximizing the productivity of your student and ensuring that s/he is given all opportunity to complete a successful and fulfilling term within your organization.

The Co-op Student: A Character Sketch

Co-op students are high achievers (required to maintain a minimum grade point average) and are committed to becoming superior performers in the labour force (have committed to a five-year degree program designed to enhance their educational experience and maximize their employability skills). This drive will also translate into their day to day activities. They are highly motivated to contribute to your bottom line, they like added responsibility and value every learning opportunity awarded them.

Along with these trademark characteristics, it is also important to note some key differences. The knowledge base of **junior students** on their first and second work terms will consist of the core principles and concepts defining their specific disciplines. They will have had the

opportunity to develop their understanding in these areas and communicate it both in written and oral form. Generally speaking, they may not have had experience working in a professional setting over an extended period of time, and would, therefore, gain greatly by being introduced to the numerous forms of communication employed in the work place. Some examples of this include observing and contributing in meetings where appropriate and presenting deliverables to work colleagues.

Senior students on their third or fourth work term will have moved beyond their foundation courses and will be studying in classes that are more complex and specialized in nature. Their knowledge and understanding of the workplace will also be more comprehensive. They will be familiar with the social norms governing interpersonal communication and hierarchy for example, and will want to hone these skills. Workplace learning opportunities appropriate for students at this level would include being regular contributors in meetings and collaborating in different groups on different projects.

Masters students, in particular, are most curious and interested in contributing at their highest possible level of function. Having completed an undergraduate degree, and now dedicated to becoming experts or “masters” in their field of study, their drive and motivation is paramount. Their primary goal is directed not only at providing your organization with the expertise and necessary dedication *required*, but also at providing *added value* to everything to which they have had the opportunity to contribute. Master’s level students value responsibility and work best when they are able to take ownership of their work. Contributing to the strategic thinking, evaluation and analysis of policy issues is a prime example of the work these students aim to do.

Having clarified some of the differences between co-op students, here are some suggestions for how to make the most of the time they will spend working within your organization.

1-Prior to Start Date

Administration

- As soon as possible after you have hired the student, contact him/her directly to confirm in writing the details of the job offer including the start and end date, specified location, salary, specifics of health coverage and to acquire any information necessary to complete a background check and/or security clearance (if necessary).
- Advise the student about issues of confidentiality and arrange for any nondisclosure agreements to be signed.
- Have the student documented with your Human Resources department including completing any necessary payroll information.
- Workplace Insurance: Students on a co-op work term are considered employees of your organization and need to be covered by your Workplace Insurance.
- Ensure the workspace is ready, including computer and phone set-up, network access, keys, security passes, stationary and any reference manuals or directories they may need.
- Inform the student's co-workers and other staff members about the student's arrival.
- Inquire about any necessary accommodation with respect to visible or non-visible disabilities.
- Offer the student some pre-work term reading to help him/her to adapt and integrate more easily.

Planning and Preparation

- Do not underestimate the ability of your student to ‘get up to speed’ quickly. Plan to have additional projects that your student can work on, should s/he complete allotted work ahead of schedule.
- Think about the additional skills students would need to work in your industry that they may not have the opportunity to develop in their courses at university. For example, bring students to meetings in order to help them develop professional communication and networking skills and learn about meeting dynamics. Arrange for written and/or oral presentations, and elaborate on the importance of corporate culture and individual fit.
- The student will need to submit a **work term report** at the end of the term, and will likely approach you to discuss the report. Students must follow the report guidelines outlined on Carleton’s CULearn site.
- View yourself as a mentor, or appoint someone, who can provide students with practical advice on their long term career objectives including skills development, membership in professional associations and current industry trends.
- Depending on your student’s work/study sequence, there is a possibility that s/he will be job-searching and interviewing for his/her next work term during the work term with your organization. Students are required to attend all interviews to which they are invited; however, they are expected to manage their job search and interview activities with their commitment to your organization. Please contact our office if your student’s job-search activities are interfering with their ability to do their work.

2- Within the First Week***Student Orientation***

Provide an orientation to your organization. This orientation should include physical layout, an introduction to the team, the student’s supervisor (if other than you) and who will assign work. It would be appropriate for students to also be aware of any other key contacts within the organization including other co-op students, and be provided with an overview of relevant regulations, expectations and procedures such as:

- The reporting structure within the team and procedure for the notification of any absences from work;
- Work hours, breaks, lunch, overtime, and flexibility in start/end time; dress code;
- Review all appropriate health and safety policies/issues; and
- Have the student complete all necessary payroll information (if not already completed).

Overview of Student Responsibilities and Deliverables

Provide the student with a copy of their job description along with any performance targets that you may have. Set clear expectations regarding performance, responsibilities and priorities.

In your discussions of the work/responsibilities assigned, be sure to frame these within the context of your unit's objectives, as this will help students to understand their role and how their work fits into the broader picture of your organizational goals. Teach about the necessity of being flexible – business needs may change, and these changes could impact the work that they do. Articulate the importance of asking questions and clarifying any priorities and deadlines, and provide training on any in-house software/technology the student may be required to use throughout the work term.

Define Learning Objectives

Although not a program requirement, defining learning objectives with your student will assist in maximizing performance by ensuring his/her goals are in line with the work you expect him/her to perform. Having gained insight into the student's work term objectives, you may also be able to adjust aspects of the role so that it further enhances the student's key abilities and interests. See **Appendix -A** for further information on work term learning objectives.

The Work Term Report

In order to complete the academic component of their work term and receive credit, students must submit a work term report to their academic department for evaluation at the end of their work term. One essential employment skill is the ability to communicate one's work to others in the form of report writing, and the work term report is intended to provide students with this opportunity. A work term report has a dual purpose: it is intended to present the relevant aspects of the student's work and contributions, as well as have students relate and reflect upon their academic courses to their current experience.

Writing the work term report is solely the student's responsibility; however, as the supervisor, you will need to provide the student with guidance early in the work term, if applicable, so as to exclude any confidential information. In addition, any constructive feedback you have on the quality of the completed report as it relates to your field would also be of benefit to the student.

In the last month of the work term, you will need to review the student's work term report before it is submitted to the University and release it to the University for grading. Work term reports are to be written so as to not include any proprietary information. Please see #5 for guidelines around this process.

3- Throughout the Work Term

Progress Reports and Feedback

- Ask students to provide you with weekly status reports detailing their progress, and plan to meet with them regularly to discuss it along with their overall workload, learning objectives and performance. Be constructive, providing feedback on both strengths and areas where the students can improve. Clarify your expectations and what their deliverables should look like.

Additional Skills Development

- Include students in meetings and encourage their contributions when appropriate.
- Encourage students to recommend ways of approaching assigned projects and discuss the pros and cons of the students' recommendations.
- Encourage students to attend learning events such as brown bag lunches and training sessions.
- Assign additional responsibility as appropriate.

4- Mid-point of Work Term

Site Visit

- Approximately mid-way through the work term, a Co-op staff member will contact you and/or your student to arrange a site visit or check in via email. This is an opportunity to discuss the student's progress, provide feedback, and share any concerns.

- If you are thinking that you would like to extend your student for another term, the site visit/check-in would be an appropriate time to discuss this option with the student and the Co-op staff member.

5- In the Last Month

Work Term Report Release

Review the student's work term report before s/he submits it online for grading. The student will complete the [Work Term Report Release form](#) on your behalf, checking off the appropriate statement.

Please note: Work term reports are **NOT** to include any proprietary information. If you consider the content of the report to be confidential and cannot release the report, please email co-opprogram@carleton.ca to confirm this.

Work Term Evaluation

Complete an online [Work Term Evaluation](#) of the student's performance during the work term. Please discuss it with the student prior to submitting it online to the Co-op Office.

Administration

- Be sure to collect any company items from students including security pass, keys, and any electronic equipment they may have used.
- Students are at once valuable employees, on-campus ambassadors, sources for future student employees and important components of your marketing strategy. Conducting an exit interview with your students is a great way to obtain feedback on their experience and enhance future co-op work terms.

I'd like to rehire my student for another work term. What process should I follow?

First, connect with your student to verify if s/he is interested in being extended for another work term with you. The student will need to verify that his/her work term pattern allows for an extension of four months. If the student is available for another term and decides to accept your offer, simply have him/her notify his/her Co-op Student Advisor. The Co-op Office will send a confirmation letter to you shortly thereafter by email.

Our organization lost a large contract/is going out of business and we can't keep our student. What should we do?

If this situation arises, contact the Co-op Office immediately. Students must work a *minimum* of twelve, thirty-five hour weeks to achieve their co-op term credit. Several options may be available depending on the situation.

My organization has gone on strike. What will happen to my student?

It is each individual student's responsibility to decide whether or not to cross a picket line in the case of a strike. The role of the Co-op Student Advisor in this situation is to inform the student of the potential results of either decision.

Can I fire the student if s/he doesn't work out?

At the first sign of any unusual situation (poor performance, behaviour issues, extended absences), and/or if you are considering firing a co-op student, we ask that you contact the Co-op Office to discuss your concerns.

Appendix A - Learning Plan

Learning Objectives - Maximizing the Learning on a Workterm

By: Audrey McFarlane, University of Victoria

If a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? If students learn on a workterm, but they don't know what they have learned, has learning occurred?

To ensure the learning that occurs on a student's workterm is recognized by all the stakeholders, UVic has incorporated having students write and evaluate learning objectives in our Employer/Student Evaluation forms. This process provides a number of benefits:

- Employers who have worked with students who use learning objectives appreciate the organization and direction that it provides for the co-op student. It shows that students are serious about learning during the workterm.
- Learning objectives can give direction to what students learn during their workterm. They can help students get more out of their co-op experience and allow students to focus on their career goals.
- Learning objectives provide students with a listing (a portfolio) of documented learning outcomes resulting from their workterm experience. This also helps give their co-op experience more academic integrity by providing documentation of learning outcomes.

What are learning objectives?

A learning objective is a written statement describing measurable achievements students hope to accomplish during their workterm experience. For example:

'By July 4th, I will devise, print and post a safety check sheet, following Federal Government guidelines, which will make safety information readily available to all staff members. I will have this safety check sheet evaluated by my supervisor for accuracy prior to posting.'

Why use learning objectives?

The student's goal for each workterm should be to maximize the opportunity and then be able to document what they have learned as a result of their participation in the co-op program. To assist students in accomplishing this goal, it is recommended that students develop specific and measurable learning objectives for each of their co-op workterms. By preparing learning objectives students are declaring their intentions to document their learning outcomes for the workterm and to accomplish these objectives in a satisfactory manner.

Some workterm assignments may lend themselves to easily written objectives, but learning objectives can be written for every workterm. The major idea behind setting objectives is not to control every moment of the Co-op experience, but to set a direction or agenda for the workterm.

How do you implement learning objectives?

The easiest way to incorporate learning objectives into the co-op workterm is to incorporate them into the employer/student evaluation form.

The Employer/Student Evaluation Form should have 3 sections:

Section 1: With the supervisor, during the first week of the workterm, the student develops the learning objectives for the workterm, following the model described later in this report. The learning objectives which students develop should:

- Relate directly to their job assignment, and
- Represent the job functions and duties students will be performing during their co-op workterm.

Section 2: With the supervisor, midway through the workterm, the student evaluates the learning objectives, documenting any factors that may affect the achievement of the objectives. If needed, the objectives may be revised or updated. Coordinators normally review the objectives during the work site visit.

Section 3: With the supervisor, during the last week of the workterm, the student evaluates the learning objectives against the set measurable goals. Again, any factors that affected the achievement of the objectives is documented.

These evaluations are returned to the Co-op Office for review.

The learning objectives that students develop for each co-op workterm should be realistic and achievable within the time frame of their workterm assignment. Also, the objectives should be as specific as possible, so that they can be measured at the end of the workterm experience. There is no magic number of learning objectives that should be developed for each workterm, but a good guideline would be for students to develop from 5 to 8 objectives for each workterm.

How do you write learning objectives?

Writing SMART learning objectives is relatively easy. Smart objectives are:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic, and
Truthful

For each learning objective students have, make sure it answers the following four questions:

What is the task to be accomplished?
How will it be accomplished?
How will it be measured/evaluated and by whom?
When will it be completed?

- **Learning Objective - Bad Form:** “I will learn to use a word processor.”
- **Learning Objective - Good Form:** “By August 15th, I will be able to execute Microsoft Word on a Macintosh computer incorporating advanced editing capabilities. I will attend a 2-day seminar on Microsoft Word and complete my workterm report using the program for evaluation by my coordinator.”

What are the types of learning objectives?

Learning objectives fall into two main categories:

- **Personal** - include developing or improving interpersonal, communication or other social skills that allow students to work more effectively. For example:

‘By the end of my workterm (**when**), I will develop better listening skills (**what**) by practicing reflective questioning techniques (**how**) and I will submit a diary of these experiences to my supervisor for his/her evaluation (**evaluation**).’

- **Professional** - include objectives aimed at practicing or improving a skill, learning a new task, solving a specific problem with measurable results or other professional objectives that would enable students to improve their work performance. For example:

‘By July 1st (**when**), I will give a presentation to a group of at least ten people using a microphone and overheads (**what**). I will follow the guidelines outlined in the manual “Effective Presentations” (**how**) and will ask each participant to evaluate the presentation for clarity, style and message (**evaluation**).’

Appendix B - Treasury Board Secretariat Student Employment -Model Learning Plan

Student's name: _____

Supervisor's name: _____

Student's job title: _____

The student will develop or enhance the following employability skills:	Expectations		
	Not met	Met	Exceeded
Communication, thinking and learning skills			
- communicating effectively, using means and styles appropriate for the audience			
- developing and delivering training sessions to groups of students			
- collecting and analyzing data related to the student labour market			
- evaluating student needs and providing advice and guidance			
- using technology and information systems effectively			
Personal management skills			
- displaying positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g. self-confidence, integrity, initiative and willingness to learn)			
- ability to set goals and priorities			
- ability to plan and manage time and resources			
- recognizing and respecting workplace diversity and individual differences			
- generating innovative ideas and strategies for delivering programs			
- taking responsibility for actions and decisions			

- being adaptable to changing priorities and circumstances in the workplace			
Teamwork skills	Not met	Met	Exceeded
- planning the program activities of the office and making decisions in conjunction with others			
- understanding and contributing to organizational goals			
- understanding and working within the culture of the department			
- ability to co-operate with others to achieve set results			
- leading others, where appropriate (for team leaders only)			
- providing direction, co-ordinating and influencing the work of others (for team leaders only)			

Reviewed at the beginning of the student's assignment, in conjunction with the job description (attached)

_____	_____
Student's signature	Supervisor's signature
Date: _____	

Reviewed at the end of the student's assignment, in conjunction with the job description (attached)

_____	_____
Student's signature	Supervisor's signature
Date: _____	