



Co-op Employer Guide



College of the Rockies

Co-op and Employment Services

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INTRODUCTION

What is Co-op Education?

Co-op is a partnership between employers, students', and post-Secondary learning institutions. Co-op provides a work-based learning experience to students. This work experience will further develop employability competencies and integrates the practices and skills gained during classroom studies. Furthermore, Co-op connects the student with industry practitioners and establishes the foundations of the student's employment skills. A Co-op work term is an employer paid progressive work opportunity of 16 weeks/500 hours. The Co-op experience is monitored by the College, supervised, and evaluated by the employer.

Co-op education alternates full-time study terms with full time work terms throughout the academic program. Traditionally, co-op work terms run May through August each year (with some program exceptions).

An effective workplace environment supports students in developing skills which are essential to their future success. This meaningful experience adds tremendous value to the student's academic qualification, work expectations and life experiences

What qualifies as a Co-op Work Experience?

A paid, full-time position consisting of approximately 16 weeks/ minimum 500 hours that takes place between May and August. The position engages the employee in productive work and learning opportunities relevant to their program of study. Work should be progressive in nature.

Key points about Co-op

- Employer paid Work placement of 500 hours
- Integrates a student's academic studies with work experience
- Co-op experience is monitored by the College, supervised and evaluated by the employer
- Co-op increases employability skills and education goals of students
- It is not a requirement of their program, it is an option
- Employers interested in employing a Co-op student are not guaranteed one, Co-op placements are dependent on availability of an appropriate co-op student
- Runs May through August full time
- The co-op option is open to students completing their 1st year of a two- year diploma or associative degree program, or 4-year BBA program
- Co-op students must complete a co-op preparatory course "COOP 100" prior to entering a COOP placement.
- For more information on WIL – Work Integrated Learning visit: [Employer Home \(cewilcanada.ca\)](http://Employer Home (cewilcanada.ca))

Which programs at College of the Rockies are co-op eligible?

Accounting Diploma	General Management Diploma
Adventure Tourism Business Operations Diploma	Kinesiology Diploma
Associate of Arts	Marketing Diploma
Associate of Science	Post-Degree Diploma in Sustainable Business Practices
Associate of Science – Environmental Science	Recreation Management Diploma
Bachelor of Business Administration: Sustainable Business Practices	Social Work Pre-Major
Biology and Medicine Pre-Major	Tourism Management Diploma
Criminal and Social Justice Diploma	

Which students can apply for the Co-op Option?

- Students in good academic standing
- Completed or will be completing 24 credits/year 1 of two-year program or first year of a 4-year BBA program by the end of Winter Semester
- Must successfully complete COOP 100 Preparatory course prior to co-op work term
- Be available May through August for co-op Work Term

What are the benefits of hiring a co-op student?

- Access to highly motivated and capable students from many disciplines to perform specific tasks/projects.
- Co-op education students could potentially be future employees.
- Reduced recruitment and hiring costs. Wage subsidies may be available to cover a portion of the employee's wage and/or training costs: [Where to get funding | ACE-WIL | Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning BC/Yukon \(acewilbc.ca\)](#)
- Receive support from the COTR Co-op and Employment Services Office during the hiring process.
- Employers can select from a group of students who already have met the academic requirements.
- Employers can meet short-term needs.
- Permanent employees at the hiring organization may have the opportunity for gaining co-op student supervision skills, mentoring a co-op student.
- Co-op students bring enthusiasm and a host of new ideas and approaches which can have a positive effect in the workplace.
- Employer's feedback influences the educational process, their suggestions help to improve the pre-employment training received by students.
- Ongoing support/consultation from College Faculty Placement Supervisor.

Employer Responsibilities

1. Co-op work experiences must focus on learning, be meaningful and show continued career progression.
2. The co-op student is legally treated like any other seasonal, temporary, or paid employee under the Canadian Employment Standards Act.
3. Employers must provide a safe workplace for the Co-op student.
4. The co-op student should follow the expected guidelines as indicated in an employee guide and training.
5. Employers need to provide orientation (including safety and equipment orientation) during the start of the co-op work term.
6. Employers must assign a supervisor to mentor and provide support to the Co-op student, including formal evaluations and feedback.
7. Employers are expected to assist the co-op student to achieve their individual co-op learning goals and objectives.
8. Employers must cooperate with the institution during the co-op work term, including being available for site visits and regular communication.
9. Employers are expected to participate in scheduled evaluations of the co-op student. A structured evaluation report format document will be provided.
10. The employer shall be responsible for maintaining comprehensive general liability insurance with respect to the liability of the company and of the student worker under the Co-op work experience.

Benefits of Co-op for the Institution

There are tremendous benefits for all parties involved with Co-op which is why institutions dedicate significant resources to Co-op programs. Some of the benefits for institutions offering Co-op programs are:

1. Co-op programs are attractive to prospective students.
2. Co-op enriches student learning across the campus as students share experiences.
3. The institution has a larger role in the community.
4. Employers provide feedback on the relevance of the curricula.
5. Employers and institutions can collaborate on a variety of projects.

Institutional Responsibilities

The educational institution also has responsibilities in the partnership.

1. Provides a relevant curriculum that addresses employer needs, with the aim to provide job ready graduates.
2. Provides resources to the Co-op Office, which in return supports the employers and students.
3. Listens to the employer and student needs to continually enhance the program's success.
4. Maintains the integrity of the Co-op program, its educational value and relevance to the institution.

Benefits for Students

1. Enhances a well-rounded education
2. Gains relevant employment skills & realistic expectations of the work force
3. Broadens understanding of career options
4. Increases maturity and self-esteem
5. Provides documented practical experience
6. Increases job search skills & networking opportunities
7. Provides financial remuneration to help with educational costs

Student Responsibilities

The co-op student must take ownership of their own learning during Co-op term. Co-op is an opportunity to grow and learn from industry professionals.

1. Completes a pre-employment training program (COOP 100) (receive 1 credit)
2. Secures co-op employment opportunity (with support of Coop & Employment Services Office)
3. Registers and pays tuition for (COOP 150 – Coop Work Term)
4. Completes 500 paid employment hours
5. Complies to all the conditions and rules that apply to employees in the organization
6. Exercises ethical workplace conduct
7. Sets goals for learning
8. Works on enhancing their academic, professional, and personal skills
9. Maintains employer confidentiality
10. Accepts feedback, suggestions for improvement in a positive manner
11. Participates in work-site visits
12. Works in a professional manner
13. Advises employer and their coordinator of any concerns or problems with their work assignment or environment as soon as an issue arises
14. Keeps in contact with their Co-op and Employment Services Office

How the Co-op and Employment Services Office can assist you

The Co-op and Employment Services Office is the linking pin between the employer and student. The Co-op Office's roles include:

1. Develops a working relationship between the employer, student, and institution.
2. Prepares students and employers for the co-op work term.
3. Provides guidance to employers and students throughout the hiring process.
4. Monitors student placements to ensure all parties' needs are being met.
5. Works with the employer and student to resolve any challenges should they arise.
6. Treats students and employers equitably through the placement process.

How do I hire a Co-op student?

You have two options:

- 1) **Student seeks you out** – Connect with Coop & Employment Services at College of the Rockies to discuss next steps. These generally include:
 - Student – Seeking out co-op employment opportunity
 - Employer/student determines if opportunity exists
 - Employer – interviews the student to ensure they are a good fit
 - Employer –Offers of a Co-op Employment opportunity and student accepts the position. A copy of offer must be sent to Co-op and Employment Services Office to ensure the position meets the needs of a Co-op placement.
 - Employer, Co-op Faculty Supervisor, and student connect to complete pre-employment package and to discuss co-op evaluation, and site visit activities.

- 2) **Employer looks for a co-op student** – Connect with Co-op & Employment Services Office at College of the Rockies to discuss next steps. These generally include
 - Employer works with the College to create a Co-op Placement Posting
 - Employer posts position on online Co-op Board
 - Students apply for co-op opportunity
 - Employer – interviews the student to ensure they are a good fit
 - Employer – The offers co-op Employment opportunity and the student accepts position. A copy of the offer must be sent to Co-op and Employment Services Office to review to ensure the position meets the needs of a co-op placement.
 - Employer, Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor, and student connect to complete pre-employment package, and to discuss co-op evaluations, and site visit activities.
 - Student completes co-op work term with the support of College Faculty Co-op supervisor and Employer Supervisor.

Co-op Job Assignment

To ensure that the Co-op student has a meaningful work experience, we do require a structured work assignment description for the Co-op term **at least 2 weeks prior** to the start date of the Co-op placement. This includes the following:

1. Job duties and responsibilities
2. Co-op training progression plan
3. Coordinator & supervisor name and contact details

It is important to note that the job assignment must include an element of job progression, self-growth and hands-on learning. The job assignment is a guiding piece in the student's Co-op assignments and experience.

Student Applications & Interviews

Students are expected to submit their Co-op job application like any other candidate you would hire. Students are expected to interview with you like any other candidate and it is up to you if you wish to hire the student or not.

Offers & Acceptance

Once you have decided to hire the Co-op student, the Co-op Office will ask both you and the student to complete the **Co-op Work Experience Memorandum of Understanding**. This document is part of the required student Co-op documents and does not replace the Co-op employer's internal employee contract. All co-op positions must be approved by College of the Rockies and will only be considered final once they have been approved and the employer and student have signed the Co-op Work Experience Memorandum of Understanding.

During the Work Term

Student Job Development

Students must be able to show they have developed in their assigned roles and have taken on additional responsibility during their Co-op term.

Evaluation/Grading/Employer Feedback

The student will have various assignments to be completed during the Co-op term. Although additional time should not be allowed for the completion of these assignments, the student might ask for additional guidance from the supervisor.

Employer evaluation and feedback are also part of the formal assessment process and are required to evaluate the student's success.

General Information and Workplace Issues

Co-op is a paid work placement with wages / salaries set by the employer. Salaries are expected to be fair in relation to current market conditions and the student's level of experience. Additional employee benefits are set by the employer, according to their own policies as well as the BC Employment Standards Act.

The student should be treated, according to company policies & procedures. The college will not interfere with general workplace operations. If there are any disciplinary actions against the student, the Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor must be notified as soon as possible.

The Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor will help facilitate a solution but will also honour the company's internal policies and procedures.

Regardless of the situation, it is imperative to ensure that the Co-op faculty member is aware, as soon as possible, of any challenges that might occur to prohibit the student to complete the Co-op assignment.

If there is a layoff or strike, the Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor needs to be informed as soon as possible.

Tips to make the most of Co-op

The Co-op student is excited to learn new industry relevant information during their Co-op term and often seems to be over eager to get involved in the day-to-day operations. Co-op is a great opportunity for the Co-op student to be supported in this new environment but can also mean the first few weeks there is a lot for them to take in and they might feel overwhelmed.

Before Co-op begins, ensure that there is a clearly defined job description. This will help the student understand what is expected and what he/she needs to highlight for the work assessments. Ensure it is clear to the Co-op student who they support and who will be supporting them during the Co-op term.

The Co-op student is new to your organization; therefore, company orientation is essential to ensure understanding of his/her roles and responsibilities. Please keep in mind the Co-op student may not be aware of what additional tasks need to be done to be part of the organizational operational team. Providing a list of tasks to complete when there is time or when a certain amount of task mastery has taken place will help the Co-op student progress.

Regular check-ins with the Co-op student helps provide feedback for both parties. Check-ins can be as simple as asking "how are you" or can be more structured, for example, a semi-monthly check in meetings. It's important to find what works best for you and the Co-op student.

In the fast-paced work environment it's important to identify a **mentor** that can help the Co-op student with tasks and questions. This mentor does not have to be a fellow manager; it can be a senior team member or supervisor.

The Work Term Report

One of the responsibilities of the employer is to evaluate the Co-op student's performance during the Co-op term. The Co-op student's direct supervisor is requested to complete a two-week, midterm and a final report on the student's growth and development during the Co-op term. A structured report format will be provided to assist in reporting on the required competencies identified during the Co-op term.

The students will also complete a report on their work experience during the Co-op term.

The Co-op student's employer could also indicate, to the student, if they are willing to act as a reference for future work applications.

After the Work Term

The students are required to return to full-time studies after their Co-op term and continue their studies. However, you can employ the student on a part-time basis, after the Co-op term is completed.

Policies & Procedures

The Co-op student should be treated similar to the rest of the employees, follow the employer's policies and procedures and be guided by the employee guide. In the event of disciplinary actions against the student, the Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor must be contacted immediately.

The Co-op student should not be terminated from the Co-op placement without the knowledge of the Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor.

For more great information for employers visit: [Getting Started | ACE-WIL | Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning BC/Yukon \(acewilbc.ca\)](#)

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