



COLLEGE OF
THE ROCKIES

College of the Rockies

Co-op Education Student Handbook



College of the Rockies

Co-op and Employment Services

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1. Introduction

1.1 Co-op Work Experience (Co-op)

Congratulations on participating in Co-op Work Experience! This is a wonderful opportunity for you to learn and grow your future career.

Co-op is a partnership between employers, students and learning institutions. Co-op provides a work-based learning experience. This work experience will further develop employability competencies and enforce the practices and skills gained during classroom studies. Furthermore, Co-op connects you with industry practitioners and establishes the foundations of your employment history.

An effective workplace environment supports you in developing skills which are essential to your future success. This meaningful learning experience adds tremendous value to your academic qualification, work expectations and life experiences.

1.2 College of the Rockies and the Co-op Option

As an educational leader in the Kootenay region, we are actively involved with our communities offering lifestyle and learning opportunities to match our spectacular setting. Our Main Campus and Gold Creek Campus are in Cranbrook. We also have regional campuses in Creston, Fernie, Golden, Invermere and Kimberley, which each offer unique programs and courses.

The mission at College of the Rockies is “to transform lives and enrich communities through the power of education”. Keeping in line with this, the College with the support of the local industries introduced the Co-op option as a means of giving students real work experience relating to their program.

1.3 Benefits for Co-op Employers

- 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.

1.4 Employer Responsibilities

Since Co-op is a partnership between the institution, student and employer there are responsibilities for all parties involved. The responsibilities for employers include:

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.

1.5 Benefits for Co-op Students

Co-op allows students to apply their classroom learnings to the workplace. The benefits to the students are as follows:

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

1.6 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

1.7 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.

1.8 Institutional Responsibilities

The educational institution also has responsibilities in the partnership. Some of these include:

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

1.9 Co-op and Employment Services Office Responsibilities

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.

2. Co-op Process

Students interested in taking the co-op option must meet the admission criteria as follows:

1. Be a student currently enrolled in their first year of two-year diploma, associate degree or four-year BBA program who will be completing 24 credits/year 1 of their credential prior to May.
2. Be in good academic standing
3. Submit a Request for information form: <https://forms.cotr.bc.ca/work-integrated-learning-student-info-request/>
4. Receive confirmation to enroll email from Co-op and Employment Services Office
5. Successfully complete COOP 100 prep course prior to the start of their co-op work term
6. Be available to work full time during the summer Co-op term (May through August During this time, the student is required to complete 500 hours of meaningful industry related work. The Co-op office strives to support the Co-op employer throughout the entire Co-op process.

Note: The co-op option does not replace any requisites of your program (outside of Tour 231 for students enrolled in the Tourism Management)

2.1 Finding a Job

Co-op is not a job placement service. We require you to actively search for and secure your Co-op placement. You are expected to reach out to employers if you are interested in working with them, however the employer and position must be approved by the Co-op and Employment Services Office before the job offer is accepted to determine mutual suitability. **It is important to note that Co-op faculty must approve all Co-op positions.** The Co-op and Employment Services may be able to provide a list of employers who may be interested in hiring a Co-op student, however this depends on whether employers from your program area have reached out to the college.

2.2 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 work term at least 2 weeks prior to the start 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 student Co-op assignments and experience.

2.3 Student Applications & Interviews

Students are expected to submit their Co-op work term job application like any other candidate. Students are expected to interview, for the Co-op position, like any other candidate and it is up to the employer if they wish to hire you or not. Your Co-op and Employment Services Office will help prepare you for the Co-op Work term by providing support around resume, cover letter, cover letter, and connecting you with an online portal of current co-op employment opportunities.

2.4 Offers & Acceptance

The employer may contact the Co-op Faculty Supervisor or the Co-op and Employment Services Coordinator to extend an offer or they may contact the student directly. Once you have received a job offer make sure to seek to approval of the offer from the Co-op Faculty Placement Supervisor. Students must obtain faculty approval prior to accepting any offers.

Students are required to respond to Co-op offers within three (3) business days. Students must not tentatively accept an offer while waiting to find out about another position. This could cause employers to question the responsibility and maturity of College of the Rockies students and possibly result in an employer withdrawing from the Co-op program.

3. During the Work Term

Co-op can be a busy time. In addition to working full-time you will have a variety of assessments/reflections to complete. It's important for you to balance the expectations of full-time work and Co-op assessment activities. The effort you put into your Co-op experience will dictate what you get out of it.

Remember to be engaged in your work tasks and have fun!

3.1 Student Job Development

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

3.2 Evaluation/Grading/Employer Feedback

There will be various assessments (assignments/reflections) to be completed during the Co-op term. Although additional time will not be allowed for the completion of these assignments. For some assignments you may need guidance from your employer.

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

Faculty will evaluate your success based on:

- Your performance during the Co-op work term.
- Your employer's feedback.
- Your Co-op reports and reflections.

Evaluation of Co-op will appear on your transcript as either "COM" (completed as defined standard) or "NCG" (no credit granted)

COM – successful Co-op work term

- Minimum of a "satisfactory" rating on the employer feedback forms.
- Student completed all evaluation requirements (Co-op assignments, reports and any projects).
- The Coop Faculty Supervisor and the Coop Employer will have rubrics (or other methods) for determining the student's grade on assignments/reflections. The student will need a final grade of 50% to receive a COM grade.
- Debriefing session to review the field experience.

NCG – unsuccessful Co-op work term

- Student was terminated with just cause from the workplace.
- Evaluation reports were graded "below average" (Co-op assignments, reports, Co-op project, etc.).
- Student received "below average" or "unsatisfactory" rating on the employer feedback forms.
- Student missing a component and was given an extension (in exceptional cases).
 - If the components are not successfully completed or not submitted within the timeframe given.

3.3 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 your level of experience. Additional employee benefits are set by the employer, according to their own policies as well as the BC Employment

Standards Act. Know your rights! Make sure you have read and understood 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 supervisor should be notified as soon as possible.

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

If the employer terminates your Co-op prematurely, your Co-op Faculty Supervisor must be informed as soon as possible to review your status. This will be followed up within one week, by a meeting with you to discuss the situation.

Regardless of the situation, it is imperative to ensure that the Co-op faculty supervisor is aware, as soon as possible, of any challenges that might occur that prohibit you from completing the Co-op assignment.

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

3.4 Working during COVID-19

It is expected for students to follow Public Health Orders (PHO) and employer rules and regulations for general conduct and calling in sick. The Co-op Supervisor needs to be notified of any workplace absences. It is important for you take care of your health and the safety of your colleagues.

3.5 Tips to make the most of Co-op

Co-op is a great opportunity for you to enter the labour market while receiving the support of an employer and institution but can also mean in the first few weeks there is a lot for you to take in. Remember, it's normal to feel overwhelmed the first few weeks. It is okay to ask questions and important to articulate if you need more support while learning.

Before Co-op begins, ensure that there is a clearly defined job description. This will help you understand what is expected and what you need to highlight for the work assessments. Ensure it is clear who you support in the workplace and who you will be supported by during the Co-op term.

Remember, you are new to the organization; therefore, company orientation is essential to ensure understanding of your roles and responsibilities. If you are not sure of what additional tasks need to be done you are encouraged to ask your employer. It is important in the Canadian workplace to be proactive.

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

In the fast-paced work environment it's important to identify a mentor that can help you with tasks and questions. Your supervisor or manager can help you identify a mentor who can help you with your Co-op experience.

4. Mid-Term and Final Work Term Evaluations

4.1 Employer Mid-Term and Final Work Term Evaluation Reports

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 as well as 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 student's required competencies identified during the Co-op term.

An important part of the workplace relationship is obtaining references. References will help you get a future job. You can ask your employer if you can use them as a reference. If you have done a good job then your employer may agree to act as a reference. If you have not performed well then the employer will likely not agree to be a reference.

4.2 Student Mid-Term and Final Evaluations

One of the responsibilities of the student is to evaluate their Co-op experience throughout the Co-op term. The Co-op student must complete a midterm and final report on their growth and development during the Co-op term. A structured report format will be provided to assist in reporting on the Co-op term.

4.3 Post Co-op Debrief

The Co-op Faculty Supervisor will schedule a debriefing session with you immediately after completing the Co-op term. The purpose is to provide feedback on your experience and review the success of the Co-op experience with yourself.

5. After the Work Term

You are required to return to full-time studies after your Co-op term and continue your studies.

Students are expected to send a letter of thanks to their Co-op employer / supervisor. The letter and envelope must be reviewed by the Co-op Faculty Supervisor before it is submitted to the employer.

6. Policies & Procedures

You should be treated similar to the rest of the employees, which means you need to follow the employer's policies and procedures and be guided by the employer's employee handbook. In the event of disciplinary actions against the student, the Co-op faculty supervisor should be contacted immediately.

The co-op student should not be terminated from the co-op work term without the knowledge of the Co-op faculty supervisor.

7. Exceptional Circumstances

With the approval of the Co-op Program Coordinator, a student may be eligible to receive special permission in recognition of the exceptional circumstances outlined below:

7.1 Academic Review

Successful completion of all pre-requisite courses is normally required to qualify for a work placement. However, a student who does not meet this standard may be permitted to participate in their work placement provided the safety of the student and other parties are not at risk.

In these exceptional circumstances, the Co-op Program Coordinator will review the student's records and discuss academic plans to determine if the student is eligible for a work placement.

7.2 Incomplete Co-op Work Term

In some cases, due to circumstances beyond their control, students may not be able to complete the entire duration (i.e. 500 hours) of the work experience with a Co-op employer. In these cases, students may or may not be given credit for the work experience and are required to meet with the Co-op Faculty Supervisor.

7.3 Appeals

A "NCG" (no credit granted) grade is eligible for appeal. Work experience placements are typically completed off campus and due to the nature of the learning it may not be eligible for re-assessment. However, in some cases, it may be possible to repeat the work experience placement.

8. Contact Information

Co-op & Employment Services Coordinator

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9. Appendix 1

Industry Work (Co-op Work Experience) – COOP 150 Roles and Responsibilities

Guidelines for the conduct of the three parties involved in Co-operative education; employers, students and institutions, include but are not limited to the following:

Co-op Employers

- **Provide meaningful work** that is related to the students program of study/industry, similar in content to the work performed by full time employees.
- Provide **appropriate** remuneration, benefits, **working conditions**, supervision, training and evaluation to students during employment in order for the student to perform their tasks effectively and safely.
- Provide **orientation** to ensure the student is aware of the policies, procedures and guidelines as per the employee guide.
- Discuss **disciplinary actions** with the Co-op faculty member as soon as possible.
- Provide **ongoing support and evaluation** of the student's performance and provide feedback to the Co-op faculty member.
- Be **available for a meeting** during site visits by the Co-op faculty member.
- **Complete** formal one-week, mid-way and final **report evaluations** on the student's performance.
- Offer **feedback and suggestions** to the Co-op faculty member on student performance which will assist in maintaining relevant course curricula.

Co-op Schools

- **Coordinate** Co-op work experience **employment opportunities** with employers that understand and have the capabilities to fulfill the Co-op work experience requirements.
- **Maintain and enhance relationships** with existing employers.
- Provide **support** during the **Co-op recruitment process** to employers and students (e.g. job fair, job postings, interview facilities, etc).
- **Provide continuous support** during Co-op, to Co-op students and industry partners to ensure the successful completion of the Co-op work term.
- Ensure that any **relevant and required documentation** is provided to the student and the employer prior to the start of Co-op.
- **Maintain open communication** (site visits, e-mail or telephone correspondence) with students and employers during the Co-op work term.
- **Provide advice and support** to students and employers if difficulties arise during the Co-op work term.
- **Review and evaluate** all completed Co-op **assessment documents**.
- **Conduct post Co-op meetings** with students to review the success or failure of Co-op work experience.
- Provide a feedback report to the Co-op Committee.

Co-op Students

- **Be knowledgeable** about the requirements of the work assignment through a review of the Co-op work placement host, job descriptions, personal research, etc.
- Maintain **acceptable work standards** according to the policies, procedures and guidelines of the employee guide.
- Be **mindful of your actions**. You represent your own future, as well as the reputation of the College.
- You are assisting in the relationship between the College and the Co-op industry partner.
- **Accept feedback and suggestions** for the improvement of your personal and professional skills in a positive manner; remember you are part of a work environment.
- **Regular communication** with the Co-op faculty member is important. You will be required to check-in at least every second week.
- Work related **concerns** must be addressed with your Co-op workplace supervisor before it becomes a major concern.
- **Resolve problems** or issues that may arise, as soon as possible, in a professional manner.
- The Co-op faculty member will arrange for **site visits**. It is required that you are available during these visits.
- Various **assessments** will be used to evaluate your success. All documents must be completed and submitted according to the pre-set deadlines.
- Remember, you can fail Co-op. Co-op is a registered course. Your success will be **evaluated** through the Co-op workplace supervisor's reports and the submission of your Co-op assignments (graded by the Co-op Faculty Supervisor).