



Co-operative Education Employer's Reference Guide

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What is Co-operative Education?

“Co operative Education Program” means a program which alternates periods of academic study with periods of work experience in appropriate fields of business, industry, government, social services and the professions in accordance with the following criteria:

- (i)** each work situation is developed and/or approved by the co-operative educational institution as a suitable learning situation;
- (ii)** the co-operative student is engaged in productive work rather than merely observing;
- (iii)** the co-operative student receives remuneration for the work performed;
- (iv)** the co-operative student’s progress on the job is monitored by the co-operative educational institution;
- (v)** the co-operative student’s performance on the job is supervised and evaluated by the student’s co-operative employer;
- (vi)** the time spent in periods of work experience must be at least thirty per cent of the time spent in academic study.

Co-operative Education is a three-way partnership involving students, employers, and the college. Each party must be engaged in the process to fully benefit from the experience.

The growth of Co-operative Education programs in Canada, since their beginning in the late 1950s, is a clear indication that the benefits far outweigh the individual responsibilities. In the province of BC, 19 post-secondary institutions offer programs in the Co-operative Education model. Student placements in BC alone exceed 7,000 per year.

What is Co-operative Education? *(continued)*

North Island College (NIC) currently offers Co-operative Education in the following academic programs:

- Business Administration
- Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Adventure Tourism

North Island College programs have been designed to meet or exceed the regulations established by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE).

What are the benefits to employers?

Reduced recruitment and hiring costs

- Employers enjoy access to a pool of screened, motivated, temporary employees for special projects, peak periods, vacation relief, or maternity leave coverage without costly advertising and dozens of unsuitable resumes to wade through.
- Employers can select from a group of applicants who have already met high entrance requirements and have completed some post-secondary training as well as some preparation for operating effectively in the workplace.
- Employers can evaluate potential career employees without obligation or commitment to permanent employment.

Effective human resource management

- Co-op is a proven cost-effective method of meeting both immediate and long-range human resource needs.
- Employers have the ability to increase effective utilization of permanent employees and an opportunity for employee development in the area of (Co-op student) supervision.
- Co-op programs offer year-round access to students employing co-op students can reduce future recruiting costs --- co-op employment aids in the vetting of students for future hiring of motivated and skilled employees.

What are the benefits to employers? *(continued)*

Investing in our future

- Employers share in the training and development of students to help them become productive members of the work force.
- Employers are considered co-educators as they provide learning opportunities beyond the bounds of the classroom. Employers are invited to provide valuable feedback about course curricula and content.
- Co-operative Education provides the opportunity to become involved and to be an influence in the education process.
- Employment of co-op students gives a supervisor the opportunity to mentor bright and enthusiastic students, as well as the chance to take part in the training of their future colleagues.

What are your responsibilities as an employer?

- To assume the same responsibilities as those associated with hiring any short-term/temporary employee including supervision and evaluation.
- To prepare the student's co-workers and other staff for the arrival of the student.
- To provide students productive, supervised work and to provide the student a competitive rate of pay for their work. For your reference, the Co-op staff maintains an ongoing record of average salary rates.
- Benefits are the responsibility of the employer and must be provided under the terms of the Employment Standards Act; required % vacation pay, or time off in lieu, should be provided during the work term.
- To provide a supervisor for the Co-op student who will oversee the student's work and discuss expectations for the work term with the student, and to provide the student with feedback on their performance.
- To provide the student with an orientation to the workplace, including an overview of the organization, physical layout, relevant personnel, safety practices, and the duties and tasks expected during the work term.
- To provide increased responsibilities should students return to do another work term.
- To participate in a work-site visit by Co-op personnel and complete the student evaluation form prior to the end of the work term.
- To keep in contact with the Co-operative Education department at NIC during the work term, especially if any unforeseen circumstances arise during the work term.

What issues could arise?

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality issues should be discussed and agreed to prior to the job offer and acceptance. Student employees must comply with their employer's policies regarding confidentiality and recognize that the information they work with, including the results of any research undertaken, belong to the employer.

Lay-offs and strikes

- If employers foresee a lay-off or strike that will directly affect the Co-op student, they should notify the Co-op office as soon as possible.

Problems in the workplace

- Should any unusual circumstances arise during the work term, employers should contact the Co-op office who will help to facilitate a resolution. Should employers consider dismissing a Co-op student, they are urged to consult with the Co-op office as early as possible to discuss their concerns.

Union acceptance

- Many union agreements have clauses providing approval and guidelines for the hiring of Co-op students. Every effort is made to ensure that students are performing short-term, project-oriented work which does not replace the work of regular employees.

What are the responsibilities of the college and the Co-op department?

- To provide appropriate academic training to students in their chosen career field.
- To advise Co-op students on appropriate skills and attitudes for their work terms.
- To assist employers through all aspects of the Co-op process.
- To ensure the integrity of its Co-operative Education programs, including the fair and equitable treatment of students and employers through the placement process.
- To monitor the placements through a work-site visit (or via telecommunications), ensuring that both the employer's and the student's needs are being met.

How does NIC benefit?

- Co-op provides a unique opportunity to build closer ties with employers and the community.
- Student work placements provide opportunities to enhance program curriculum to ensure industry demands for trained personnel are being met.
- Co-operative Education programs attract motivated and enthusiastic students to the college.

What are the students' responsibilities?

- To conduct themselves in a professional manner through all steps in the Co-op process.
- To participate in on-site visits by the Co-operative Education staff.
- To work towards personal growth and building a positive reputation in the workplace.
- To achieve a satisfactory or better employer evaluation for each work term.
- To submit a written report by the completion of each work term.
- To satisfactorily complete the assigned number of work terms in order to qualify for graduation with a co-op designation.

How do students benefit?

Through their participation in Co-op, students will gain:

- A well-rounded education, enriched by the practical application of classroom learning.
- An opportunity to learn lifelong work search skills and techniques.
- An opportunity to test employment skills and gain a broader understanding of career options.
- A financial remuneration which helps to defray educational costs.
- A documented practical experience for resumes and/or portfolios and a network of contacts.
- An increased confidence in skills and abilities required by employers.

How do students prepare for work terms?

All students participating in Co-operative Education prepare for their work terms through a series of pre-employment seminars. The content of the seminars is based on information obtained from employers regarding what they expect from student employees.

Topics covered include: skill, value, and attitude assessments, resume and cover letter writing, interview preparation, and skills for succeeding in the workplace including professionalism, conflict resolution, goal setting and personal planning.

How are students' work terms evaluated?

- All students and their employers are contacted and visited at least once during each work term. The coordinator meets with both parties to discuss job duties and performance.
- At the end of each work term, the supervisor is asked to complete an employer evaluation form. The employer is expected to discuss this final evaluation with the student and then return the form to the Co-operative Education department where it will be incorporated into the student's file.
- Students must complete a written work report for submission to the Co-operative Education department where it will be graded. Employer participation in reviewing the report is encouraged, but not mandatory. After permission is granted by the student, these reports are filed for future reference by other Co-op students.

How do I hire a Co-op student?

7 Steps to Success

- 1 : Employers submit work requirements to the Co-op Education Office.
- 2 : Job descriptions are made available to the Co-op students.
- 3 : Students apply for jobs with covering letters and resumes which are forwarded to employers.
- 4 : Employers indicate which students they wish to interview.
- 5 : Interviews are scheduled and conducted on campus or at the work site.
- 6 : Employers select suitable candidates.
- 7 : Once a hiring decision has been made, the Co-op office will notify students of the outcome and the successful candidate will contact the employer to confirm employment.

For more information contact

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