

Employer Co-op Handbook



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Welcome to the Cooperative Education Program at Mason!

The goal of the Cooperative Education Program (Co-op) is to establish communally beneficial relationships among students, employers and George Mason University.

While qualified students gain paid, career-related work experience, employers gain assistance in recruiting and developing outstanding employees. On a larger scale, the program increases cooperation between educational institutions and businesses resulting in a highly educated and trained work force which strengthens our nation's industries.

We are extremely pleased that you have chosen to participate in the Co-op Program at Mason. The policies and procedures that follow will assist you in being optimally successful. Welcome!

Enrollment Procedures

Once a co-op offer has been made, employers **MUST** complete the required enrollment forms and provide the student with a signed Co-op Work Agreement and Position Description. Additionally, international students on an F-1 visa **MUST** receive an offer letter printed on company letterhead that includes specific start and end dates, pay rate, work hours per week and a position description.

Cooperative Education Program Work Agreement

The Cooperative Education Work Agreement is given to the student once verification of their eligibility to participate in the co-op program is complete and a co-op job offer has been made. This form ensures that the student, employer supervisor and career counselor or consultant each understand the rights and responsibilities of the participating parties.

The agreement stipulates the basic expectations of the work experience and helps each party involved plan to balance work responsibilities and academic coursework in an organized way.

Employers and students must sign and date the form and retain their own copy. A career counselor or consultant will add their required signature during the enrollment meeting with the student.

Student Position Description Form

The Student Position Description Form is also given to the student once verification of their eligibility to participate in the Co-op Program is complete and a co-op job offer has been made.

This form serves two main purposes:

- It assists in ensuring from the outset that the student is aware of their duties and responsibilities.

- It provides information the University Career Services staff uses to coordinate phone or on-site visits.

The form must be returned when the student meets with a career counselor or consultant to enroll in the Co-op Program.



Hiring Non-U.S. Citizens

Permanent residents and students studying on a non-resident visa (F-1) **are** eligible to participate in the Co-op Program. Although there are specific deadlines and eligibility requirements involved in hiring, there are **no** additional fees or charges to employ these students. Please contact the Co-op Program assistant at 703-993-2365 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. or email coop@gmu.edu for more information.

Phone & Site Visits

In order to achieve a successful learning experience, communication among the student, the University and the employer is essential. For that reason, a Mason career counselor or consultant will arrange a visit by phone or on-site with the employer and their student around the halfway point of the work experience.

This visit will provide Career Services a first-hand account of the student's work, development and supervision and serve as an opportunity for all parties to assess the experience and make improvements as necessary.

Typically, students working for an organization new to the Co-op Program will receive an on-site visit. Those students who are continuing in the program with a veteran employer will likely receive a phone visit.

Employer & Student Evaluation Forms

Near the end of each semester, students and employers will be sent a link to an online evaluation form. While employers are not required to discuss their evaluation with the student, we encourage them to do so to enhance the learning process. Please answer all questions on the evaluation form completely.

Academic Policies for Co-op Students

Students enrolled in the Cooperative Education Program at Mason must maintain good academic standing as defined by the University. At the time of enrollment in the Co-op Program, they must also meet the following GPA requirements:

Undergraduate students must have a minimum overall GPA of 2.0.

Graduate students must have a minimum overall GPA of 3.0.

The listed GPAs must also be maintained throughout a student's participation in the Cooperative Education Program. Transfer students **MUST** complete one academic semester of studies in order that they may establish a Mason GPA.

During their time in the Co-op Program, students are encouraged to meet with their career counselor or consultant to discuss their academic progress and their learning goals and objectives .



Ensuring a Successful Co-op Experience

Quality supervision and mentoring are essential in order for you and your student to have a successful co-op experience. Please consider the following points:

- Place students with **carefully selected and trained supervisors**.
- Be sure that supervisors provide students with **detailed information** about the work they will be doing including specific tasks, relevant equipment and workflow.
- Encourage supervisors to **meet weekly** with students to address questions and provide feedback on their performance.
- Provide an **orientation to your organization** (by the supervisor or student program coordinator) so that students will learn about policies, benefits, the facility, etc. Consider putting together a handbook that is geared toward student workers. This has been found to be extremely helpful.
- Connect student employees with a **seasoned professional** in the organization to whom they can go to for advice and information.
- Have supervisors encourage students to participate in your **organization's training programs** if possible.

Contact

Thank you for participating in Mason's Cooperative Education Program! Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

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Co-op Web Site

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