

SCEP FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding
the **Student Career Experience Program**

SCEP FAQ's

1. What is a SCEP agreement?

The SCEP agreement is a three part agreement between George Mason University, the employing government agency, and the student. Generally, this agreement will outline the responsibilities of each party involved—the student, employer, and university. The responsibility of the university is to track the student's enrollment and academic standing during the course of the employment period. Any changes in required enrollment, major, or an academic warning are reported to the employing government agency.

2. Where do I get my SCEP agreement signed and who signs it?

SCEP agreements may be signed only by authorized persons in University Career Services office. Academic advisors in departments on campus and the Registrar's office are not authorized to sign SCEP agreements. Signing of the SCEP agreement is conditional upon the student's enrollment in Mason's Cooperative Education program.

3. I found my job on my own without any help from Career Services, so why do I need to enroll in George Mason's Co-op program?

Positions offered through the Student Career Experience Program are funded to employ actively enrolled students seeking a degree or certificate. George Mason University advertises SCEP positions in our job database, Patriot Job Web; however, many students find positions on government search engines and agency websites. Your enrollment in Mason's program provides assurance to the government that your student status is in effect while employed as a SCEP employee and maintains the integrity of the program.

4. Why is there a \$25 fee for co-op each semester?

The \$25 fee helps to cover the cost of operation and maintenance of the program.

5. Do I need to enroll each semester?

You should renew your co-op for each semester that you are working. Some co-ops are alternating semesters, however, most are parallel schedules where you work and attend school concurrently. Each semester a special registration is placed on your transcript acknowledging enrollment in the Co-op program. Grades and enrollment in courses are verified. Some government agencies request verification for the purpose of converting you to a permanent position.

6. Why do I need to enroll in co-op in the summer when I'm not taking any classes?

The transcript notation provides verification that you are continuing to work as a SCEP employee and still under a student status with the university. You must continue to be enrolled in the Co-op program even if you are not taking classes during the summer.

7. How do I know who is my career counselor, and what is the counselor's role in my co-op enrollment?

Career counselors are assigned to students according to their major. You may call the front desk in Career Services at 703-993-2370 to make an appointment with your career counselor. The career counselor will follow up with you and your site supervisor during your first semester of work by requesting a site visit or a phone conference. The counselor can also serve as a liaison between you and your employer and can assist you with evaluating the terms of a co-op or internship offer. Assistance is also provided if you need help in establishing or clarifying your learning goals for your co-op position.

8. What are learning goals?

Learning goals are a list of objectives which can help clarify and identify the learning outcomes you want to obtain from your co-op experience. The [Learning Objective Worksheet for Cooperative Education and Internships](#) is available on our website.

9. What is the site/phone visit? How often does the counselor follow up?

During your first semester of employment and after you have been employed at least 4 weeks, we will request a site visit or a follow up by phone. During the visit, the counselor will ask for specific feedback regarding your co-op position from both you and your supervisor. These sessions occur only during the first full semester of employment and by request during subsequent semesters.

10. I've accepted a co-op position and this is my last semester at Mason. I don't think I can work 640 hours for the government agency during my last semester. What should I do?

Talk with a representative in the human resources department of your employing government agency. Each agency may follow different guidelines regarding conversion to a permanent position, and you want to be certain you understand your employer's requirements.

11. I don't care if I have a co-op notation on my transcript. Why do I need it?

The notation provides proof of your enrollment in co-op should verification be needed by your employer.

12. Do you contact my employer every semester I'm enrolled in the program?

We do not contact your employer every semester. Your employer will be notified if you do not meet academic standards or drop your enrollment.

13. I received an online survey regarding my co-op experience. Do I need to complete the survey if I have had an evaluation with my counselor?

The counselor conducts an evaluation of the student to obtain individual feedback from the student, and supervisor regarding the student's performance. The survey asks a different set of questions and the information is used to gather statistical data regarding our program.

14. How do I find a SCEP position? Do you refer students to employers?

If you need help with searching for a SCEP position, please make an appointment with your career counselor or attend one of our workshops about finding a federal position. Counselors can assist you with resume critiques, interviewing skills, and job hunting resources.

15. What can I do if I'm not being challenged in my co-op position?

Set up an appointment with your career counselor to discuss your concerns. The counselor may be able to mediate with your supervisor in establishing new learning goals for your position.

16. How do I renew my co-op for the following semester?

Each semester you will receive an email with instructions regarding renewal. You will need to resubmit a new Student Contact form and pay the \$25 co-op fee. Contact Debbie Zuiker at coop@gmu.edu for more details. You may also renew your co-op through your career counselor by scheduling an appointment.

17. What's the policy regarding payment of the co-op fee? Do you take Mason Money?

We are not able to process Mason Money or credit cards. We can only accept cash, check or money orders. Checks should be made out to "George Mason University". Students will have a hold placed on their account for non-payment of the co-op fee.

18. I am a current student working as a SCEP employee, but have decided I do not want to renew my co-op. My employer has said it is my choice. What happens if I don't renew?

If you choose to continue working in your SCEP position while you are attending school but do not enroll in our co-op program, we will notify the employer that the SCEP agreement is no longer in effect and you will not receive co-op notations on your transcript. This decision may have consequences regarding your conversion and pay scale upon graduation. Please consult with your human resources department before making this decision.

19. Who do I contact to enroll in the Co-op program and have my SCEP agreement signed?

University Career Services: Jennifer Antonini or Debbie Zuiker at coop@gmu.edu

School of Management Career Services: Laura Rhoades for undergrads: lrhoadel@gmu.edu

Kerry Willigan for graduate students: kwilliga@gmu.edu

School of Public Policy: Duane Bradshaw, Career Development: dbradsha@gmu.edu

20. Is there a deadline for enrolling in the Co-op program?

There is not a deadline for initial enrollment into the Co-op/SCEP program. If there are less than 12 weeks remaining in the semester that you enroll, then your notation will be placed on your transcript for the subsequent semester. The deadline for Co-op renewals is the first add/drop deadline of the Spring or Fall semester. Summer deadlines vary—contact coop@gmu.edu for summer deadlines.