

CO-OP STAFF MEMBERS

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WEBSITE

[http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/
coop.html](http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/coop.html)

**FREQUENTLY
ASKED
CO-OP
QUESTIONS
FOR F-1 VISA HOLDERS**

In this guide:

- Definition of Cooperative Education (Co-op)
- Co-op Requirements
- Differences between Co-op and internships
- Determining eligibility
- Finding Co-op positions

FREQUENTLY ASKED CO-OP QUESTIONS FOR F-1 VISA HOLDERS

What is Cooperative Education (Co-op)?

George Mason University's Cooperative Education is a university-wide program through which students who meet specific eligibility requirements gain **paid, professional level work experience** related to their **major and career plans**. The Cooperative Education program is managed by University Career Services in cooperation with the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) to allow students on an F-1 Visa to obtain work authorization for Co-op.

What are the requirements for Co-op?

A Co-op experience must be a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks during an academic semester. In addition, there are specific deadlines for starting a Co-op each semester. There are no exceptions made to these deadlines. Fall and Spring semester deadlines are linked to the "Last day to drop with no tuition penalty" on the university's academic calendar. Summer deadlines will vary. Students must pay a \$25 enrollment fee for each academic term and will receive a transcript notation for every semester you of enrollment.

What is the difference between Cooperative Education and an internship?

Co-op

Co-op is a structured program through which eligible students gain paid, professional-level work experience. A minimum of 12 weeks with work the same organization is required. Both part-time and full-time work schedules are available. Students enrolled in the Co-op program must

agree to follow university requirements. A Career Counselor is assigned to each student to monitor work/learning progress by conducting a Co-op evaluation with the and employment supervisor. Students and supervisors must also complete an on-line evaluation at the end of each work period. Co-op positions are renewable each semester based on Co-op eligibility employer needs.

Internships

Internships are work experiences, often project-oriented, that provide students with practical knowledge and firsthand experience in a particular career field or area of study. An internship may or may not relate to a student's field of study. Some internships are paid and others are unpaid. Some internships can be credit-bearing. The student and employer agree on the work schedule. Students work with their academic department and Office of International Programs and Services to coordinate an internship.

Can my internship offer be converted to a Co-op position?

Once you have determined your eligibility for the Co-op program, you may be able to convert an internship to a Co-op position. The employer must agree to pay a competitive wage and the position must last 12 consecutive weeks during the academic year. Additionally, the employer must agree to sign the *Co-op Work Agreement*.

How do I know if I am eligible for Co-op?

To find more detailed information, please refer to the eligibility requirements on our website at <http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/coop.html>

How can I find a Co-op position?

- Meet with your **career counselor**; bring a hard copy of your **PatriotJobWeb** resume and an updated copy of your transcript to your appointment. Your counselor may offer suggestions to help improve the effectiveness of your resume. There are many methods to find Co-op opportunities. Be sure to discuss job search strategies.
- To look at Co-op jobs, log on to **PatriotJob-Web**, select the "Jobs" tab, choose among "Position Types" including "Co-ops," "Paid Internships," or "Part-time Jobs", use the "Keyword" function to find positions related to your interests, and select "Search."
- Contact the employer directly to apply for a position. Send your resume and a cover letter indicating your interest in a specific position.
- Attend the annual **Internship and Job Fair**, sponsored by University Career Services, to talk with employers about Co-op opportunities.

Develop strong **interviewing skills** by attending an "Effective Interviewing" workshop. View our current **workshop schedule**: <http://careers.gmu.edu/calendar> to see when this workshop is offered.

How can I make the most of my Co-op experience?

The Mason Co-op program encourages you to develop **learning goals** for each semester. This will help you decide what type of experience will suit you. Create a list of items and skills you would like to learn at your Co-op and strategies for accomplishing these goals. Your career counselor can help you to develop your learning goals.



University Career Services