

CO-OP STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Welcome to Cooperative Education at George Mason University!

The goal of the Cooperative Education Program (Co-op) is to establish a mutually beneficial relationship which includes the student, the employer, and George Mason University. Qualified students gain progressively responsible, paid, career-related work experience. The employer is assisted in the recruitment and development of outstanding employees. It is the intention of this program to increase direct cooperation between education industry for the development of an educated and trained work force.

We are extremely pleased that you have chosen to participate in the GMU Co-op Program. Your understanding of the Co-op Program policies and procedures that follow will help you to be optimally successful. We welcome you and wish you the very best!

Cooperative Education Work Agreement

The Cooperative Education Agreement is given to all students once they have verified their eligibility to participate in Co-op and have a Co-op offer. You and your supervisor must sign and date the form. Each of you should retain a copy. A Career Counselor/Consultant will sign the form during your enrollment meeting. This form:

- 1) Ensures that the Co-op student, supervisor, and counselor/consultant understand the rights and responsibilities of each participating party. The basic expectations are agreed to by all involved.
- 2) Helps all parties to plan project responsibilities and academic coursework in an organized way.

Student Position Description Form

The Student Position Description Form is given to all Co-op students once they have verified their eligibility to participate in Co-op and have a Co-op job offer. It must be completed and returned when students meet with a Career Counselor/Consultant for their enrollment meeting. This form serves two main purposes:

- 1) Assists in ensuring from the outset that the student is aware of his/her duties and responsibilities.
- 2) Provides information to be used by the Career Services staff in coordinating and planning phone or on-site visits.

Student Contact Form

During your meeting with a Career Counselor/Consultant, you will be given a green form called the “Student Contact Form.” It is your responsibility to return this form to Career Services one week of starting your Co-op position. This form contains student and employer contact information, your work hours, and directions to your Co-op site. The student contact form is used when setting up phone/site visits.

Phone/Site Visits

We want that Co-op position to be a successful learning experience. To gain a first-hand account of your work, development and supervision, a Mason Career Counselor/Consultant will arrange a visit (phone or on-site) with you and your supervisor toward the middle of the work period. Typically, those students who are working with an organization that is new to the Co-op program will receive an on-site visit by a career counselor/consultant. Those students who are continuing in the program with a “veteran” employer will typically be scheduled for a phone visit.

Employer and Student Evaluation Forms

Near the end of each semester, students and employers will be sent a web link to an on-line evaluation form. Although you are not required to discuss your evaluation forms with your employer, we encourage you to do so. Please answer all questions on the evaluation form completely.

Co-op Fees

Each semester students are required to pay a \$25 enrollment fee for the program. This fee covers the cost of program maintenance including processing student files, administering transcript notations, and communicating with students and employers on behalf of George Mason University.

Registration Procedures

Prior to enrolling in the Co-op program, students must verify their eligibility. To view the eligibility requirements, please visit our website at: <http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/coop.html>

If you need assistance finding Co-op positions, please schedule an appointment with your career counselor/consultant. The counselor/consultant can assist you with resources, critique your resume, provide interview tips, and help to clarify your learning goals. If you do not need assistance and have determined you meet the program eligibility requirements, you may begin your job search.

When you are offered a Co-op position, complete the Intent to Enroll form found on our website at: <http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/coop.html>. You must turn in 1) the Intent to Enroll form and 2) an unofficial transcript to the Co-op Program Assistant, Debbie Zuiker in Career Services, or SOM Career Consultant, Laura Williams in SOM Career Services. You will then receive a Work Agreement and Position Description form. Your supervisor must sign the Work Agreement and fill out the Position Description forms.

You must next schedule an appointment to meet with a Career Counselor/Consultant to sign your paperwork. For more specific instructions, visit the website: <http://careers.gmu.edu/students/getexperience/coop.html>.

U.S. Citizens/Permanent Residents*: Please bring:

- Signed Work Agreement
- Position Description
- \$25 enrollment fee

***Please note: U.S. Citizens,** if you have a Student Career Experience position (SCEP) with a federal agency, you must bring all SCEP Agreements to University Career Services to be signed by the Co-op Program Coordinator, Jennifer Antonini, or Program Assistant, Debbie Zuiker.

F-1 Visa Holders*: Please bring:

- Signed Work Agreement
- Position Description
- Original Offer letter from employer
- Signed Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form
- Academic Department Authorization letter
- \$25 enrollment fee
- For GRA/GTA, you must bring a faculty supervisor release letter

***Please note: F-1 Visa Holders,** before starting a Co-op position, you must complete the enrollment process, which may take from 3 to 5 days. You may not start work until you have obtained your work authorization from OIPS. Appointments with Career Services Counselors/Consultants and OIPS for the purpose of obtaining work authorization must be made in advance. Please plan ahead!

Academic Policies for Co-op Students

GPA Policy:

Students enrolled in the Cooperative Education program at Mason must maintain good academic standing as defined by the university. Undergraduates must have at least an overall 2.0 GPA and graduates must have at least an overall 3.0 GPA at the time of enrollment in the program. While participating in the Cooperative Education program, students GPA's can not go below this GPA requirement.

Students participating in the Cooperative Education program are encouraged to meet with his/her Career Consultant/Counselor to discuss academic progress and learning goals/objectives

***Please note:** good academic standing at George Mason University means a student cannot at any time be on academic warning, probation and suspension.

IN or IP Grade Policy:

Students that receive an IN during the academic semester which causes their GPA to fall below the minimum GPA requirement of the Co-op program will have until the university established deadline to convert the grade and bring their GPA up to meet the minimum eligible GPA requirement for the Co-op program. In the event that the minimum GPA requirement is not met, the student will be officially withdrawn from the Co-op program, the notation will be removed from the academic transcript and the employer will receive a letter rescinding the Cooperative Education Work Agreement. University Career Services will also notify both the student and employer immediately that the GPA requirement has not been met.

***Please note:** Students who receive an IP may continue in the Co-op program for the immediate semester following the IP grade providing that the minimum GPA requirements are still met.

Co-op Student Checklist

- ___ One week after starting work return **Student Work Description** (green) form
- ___ Participate in **phone/site visit** during your first work period
- ___ Complete **on-line evaluations** on time

***REMEMBER**, anything that impacts your work, studies or communication (such as change of address, phone number – work & home, or email) should be reported as soon as possible.

Good luck with your Co-op position! Please keep in touch with your Career Counselor/Consultant by phone, email, or by visiting our office: University Career Services, SUB I, Room 348, 703-993-2370 or SOM Career Services, Enterprise Hall, Room 008, 703-993-1880.