



**THOMPSON  
RIVERS  
UNIVERSITY**

# **Co-op Student Handbook**

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## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Introduction: The Co-op Advantage

The TRU Co-op program is an opportunity for students to integrate academic study with practical experiences in various fields and explore different career options. Employers prefer to hire students, grads and alumni with experience and Co-op can be the key that helps prepare students for their dream job and career.

Students will receive Co-operative Education recognition on their Diploma or Degree if they successfully complete all of the required work terms for their program. Employers throughout Canada and around the world are recognizing the added value a graduate from a Co-op program can bring to an organization. They are looking for graduates with that Co-op recognition!

This Co-operative Education Student Handbook describes the Co-op Program requirements, regulations and procedures in place at TRU. Topics include regulations and procedures related to admission into Co-op, activities prior to a first Co-op work term, activities during a work term, following each work term, and work term evaluations.

*All Co-operative Education students are expected to read and follow TRU Co-op regulations and policies outlined in the Student Handbook and the TRU Calendar while participating in the Co-op option. Students must also sign and submit a copy of the TRU Co-op Requirements & Regulations Agreement (provided at the first COOP 1000 class).*

### What is Co-operative Education?

Co-operative Education (Co-op) at TRU follows national standards established by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE). The TRU Co-op model allows students to alternate between semester(s) of academic coursework with time in paid full-time employment, repeating this cycle several times until graduation. At TRU, students enter Co-op at various points in their education depending on program requirements. While the summer semester is the most common time to complete work-terms, students are required to complete work-terms in the fall and/or winter semesters to complete their Co-op designation. Co-op work-terms in the fall and winter semester provides students with additional experience they would not normally receive during the summer.

In accordance with CAFCE definitions, Co-op work terms are normally paid, monitored, supervised, and evaluated. The Co-op model includes school-based and work-based learning and includes activities such as a pre-employment non credit course, Coordinator worksite visits, work term reports, and performance evaluations. These activities help students connect work and learning.



Currently, over 300 students participate in the TRU Co-op programs. Students have the option to complete four, eight, or 12 month work terms during their studies. Normally students work on a full-time, paid basis. Work terms begin in September, January and May.

### **Co-op Programs at TRU**

The following Degree programs offer the Co-operative Education option:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA)-Except Journalism
- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
- Bachelor of Computing Science (BCS)
- Bachelor of Tourism Management (BTM)
- Bachelor of Natural Resource Sciences (BNRS)
- Bachelor of Science (Biology)
- Bachelor of Science (Chemical Biology)
- Bachelor of Science (Chemistry/Environmental Chemistry)
- Bachelor of Science (Computing Science)
- Bachelor of Science (Mathematics)
- Bachelor of Science (Physics)
- Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS)
- Engineering Transfer

The following Diploma programs offer the Co-operative Education option:

- Computing Science Diploma (Formerly CSOM)

### **Maximizing Opportunities in Co-op**

Co-op education is an academic program; it is not a job placement service. The labour market is competitive and employers decide if and who they will hire. Success in obtaining Co-op work terms depends on the effort made by the student. Students must compete for employment opportunities and TRU does not guarantee a work term.

The skills acquired before entering Co-op are important, as they often distinguish TRU students from other applicants. Co-op can assist students in presenting these skills. Students must make sure that their résumé and cover letters are carefully prepared and effectively develop solid interview skills. Co-op Coordinators assist with gaining these skills through COOP 1000 and through individual advising appointments.

The value of Co-op as a learning experience depends on the student. While in the Co-op Program at TRU, students should list the things they want to learn, the areas in which they want to gain experience and the personal qualities and abilities they want to improve. It is important to

discuss these career goals with a Co-op Coordinator. Co-op Coordinators are available to help students identify specific and general goals that they can focus on while working on in order to measure individual progress and return to TRU with more self-confidence and a sense of achievement.

Both students and employers have objectives and expectations. The work term is an opportunity for students to gain knowledge and experience. It is important to realize that each employer may view it somewhat differently. Employers want reliable, conscientious and experienced employees who are worth the salary paid.

### **Co-op for Credit**

TRU is the first and only university in BC to offer non-mandatory Co-op for credit.

Starting January 2011, all Co-op work terms will count for either elective or additive credit. Depending on the program, students can earn from 3 to 6 credits towards their graduation requirements.

Credit structure for Bachelor degree programs:

- **Arts** – with approval from the Faculty of Arts, 1 Co-op work term may be assigned 3 lower level elective credits outside of Arts & Sciences. Any additional Co-op work terms are assigned additive credit.
- **Business Administration** – The School of Business and Economics is currently determining the value of credits available for Co-op; however, potentially, 1 or 2 work terms may be used for up to 6 non-business elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.
- **Computing Science** – 1 work term can be used for 3 lower level elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.
- **Science**– 1 work term can be used for 3 lower level, non-science elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.
- **Natural Resource Science** - 1 work term can be used for 3 lower level elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.
- **Tourism Management** – 1 or 2 work terms can be used for up to 6 non-business elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.



- **Interdisciplinary Studies** – 1 or 2 work terms at the 3000 level can be used up to 6 elective credits. Any additional work terms are assigned additive credit.

Diploma Programs credit structure:

- **Computing Science Diploma** – All Co-op work terms are assigned additive credit.

For students who do not need or want Co-op to count for elective credit, their work terms will be assigned additive credit and not count towards their graduation requirements.



## ADMISSION, CONTINUATION, AND WITHDRAWAL

### Admission to the Co-op Program

Admission requirements vary by discipline and program of study in the TRU Co-op Program. Please refer to the Co-operative Education Requirements and Regulations section of the TRU calendar for admission requirements: <http://www.tru.ca/calendar.html> (Select General Information then go to the Co-operative Education section).

### Continuation in the Co-op Program

All students accepted into Co-operative Education must participate in the *Co-op Course 1000*. This is a one credit course that serves as a pre-requisite prior to a student securing their first Co-op work term. Attendance and all course requirements are mandatory.

In addition, all Co-op students who return to campus following a work term and who wish to continue in the Co-op option must submit a completed **Work Term Notification Form** (available from the Career Education Department office) by the appropriate deadline.

The Co-operative (Co-op) Education Coordinator(s) will make every reasonable effort to obtain suitable program-related work placements; however, application and acceptance for Co-op work term participation is not a guarantee of placement. The job search will be conducted by both the student and the Co-op Coordinator.

It is the student's responsibility to maintain close contact with their Co-op Coordinator and to check daily for new job postings, for interview schedules and for notices from the Co-op office.

Co-op tuition will apply to all Co-op positions secured with assistance from the Co-op office including: back to back work terms with the same employer, subsequent extensions with the same employer and students returning to the same employers. **Co-op tuition will also apply to students who find their own Co-op work-term(s).**

Students are expected to accept a job offer once it has been extended. Students wanting to withdraw from a Co-op competition must do so by contacting their Co-op Coordinator no later than immediately following the interview with the employer.

Job offers must be accepted or rejected within 24 hours.

To successfully complete a work term, students must complete all required elements for their program area.

Co-op students must complete their last semester in academic on-campus classes. Co-op students are not eligible to graduate on a work term. At this time the Co-op option is only





available to TRU students that attend on campus classes at the Kamloops campus. Students enrolled as a TRU open learning student are not eligible for the Co-op program

In addition, all continuing Co-op students must submit an updated copy of their résumé to their Co-op Coordinator. Students who sign a Work Term Notification Form for the next term and find “their own job” or choose to return to a former Co-op employer will have that experience count as a Co-op work term and the TRU Co-op tuition will be applied.

### **Withdrawing from the Co-op Program**

There is a one-time admission and withdrawal policy for Co-op programs. When a student withdraws from Co-op after partially completing the required number of Co-op terms, they cannot apply for re-admission to Co-op at a later date.



## ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO A WORK TERM

### COOP 1000

All students accepted into the Co-op program are required to complete a 13-week one credit *Co-op Course (COOP 1000)* before their first work term.

- COOP 1000 is a prerequisite to obtaining credit for the first Co-op work term.
- Students take this course once during their Co-op program.
- Several sections are offered each fall and a limited number in the winter and summer semesters.
- Registration takes place through the Career Education Department (once accepted into the Co-op Program).
- COOP 1000 is 1.5 hours/week for 13 weeks.
- TRU attendance policy will apply.

Successful completion of *COOP 1000* is a requirement for Co-op eligibility. Student performance in the course is based on an evaluation of attendance and participation, résumé and cover letter writing skills, and class assignments. Students must receive a “complete” for COOP 1000 in order to maintain Co-op eligibility.

The *COOP 1000* will cover topics such as:

- Résumé writing and cover letters
- Interview skills
- Career management strategies
- Professionalism and communication in the workplace
- Labour market information
- Work term expectations and requirements

The course may also include a panel discussion with students and employers who will provide feedback on past student experiences and information on what employers expect from Co-op students. Assignments and required readings are a part of COOP 1000.

### Posting and Competition Process

The Co-op Coordinator will work to generate suitable Co-op employment postings for all students. However, TRU does not guarantee anyone a Co-op job. Students are required to participate fully in the competition process and to start working with their Co-op Coordinator early each semester.

Co-op opportunities are typically posted online through a password protected website. In some cases, students work with their Coordinator to conduct a self-directed job search by approaching

specific employers through networking and targeted marketing. Co-op postings and COOP 1000 information is only accessible to registered Co-op students.

Co-op students have a number of responsibilities:

- Checking email regularly for program updates, interview shortlists and other important information.
- Reading each job description carefully, noting details of the position and the job number.
- Consulting the Co-op Coordinator if additional information is required.
- Applying for all positions that match their discipline and interest area.
- Following the application instructions outlined in the job posting carefully and submitting a complete application by the posted deadline.

Once the employer has received the applications, they normally will notify our office which student(s) they wish to interview. It is up to each student to secure a position through a competitive posting and interview process. Many of the postings given to the TRU Co-op office are also posted at other institutions; therefore, the competition is much larger than simply within a given TRU program or class. Seeking support and feedback from a Co-op Coordinator throughout this process is strongly encouraged.

## **Interviews**

The employer will develop a short list of applicants for interviewing. The Co-op Coordinator will help arrange a location, time and date for the interview. Some interviews occur on campus, some by telephone, and sometimes at the employer's place of business.

Students selected for an interview will be notified by e-mail. It is the students' responsibility to check their e-mail regularly and to confirm with the Co-op office that they are available for the interview. In some cases, an employer may contact students directly. It is important to inform the Co-op office immediately when this happens.

Students are expected to attend all interviews scheduled with an employer and to be prepared for each one. If a student anticipates missing an interview for a legitimate reason, contact the Co-op office immediately. Failure to attend an interview without a valid reason, or failure to advise the Co-op office in advance may result in the student being excluded from that work term and future work terms.

Employer feedback on students' interview performance is encouraged. This feedback will be shared with each student through their Co-op Coordinator.



## Job Offers

Employers generally make their offer to a student through the Co-op Coordinator. Occasionally, an employer will contact a student directly. If this happens, the student must contact the Co-op office immediately as to the nature of the offer and their decision.

## Accepting a Job

Co-op job offers must be accepted or rejected within 24 hours. Job offers are formally accepted or rejected through the completion of the ***Acceptance of Co-op Work Term Employment Form*** which will be provided by the Co-op office.

When the employer makes a job offer, students make a firm commitment to the employer by completing this form. Just as employers do not make firm offers hoping to find someone better later on, students are expected to commit to an employer and not apply for other positions once placed. Failure to honour a commitment will lead to withdrawal from the Co-op program. Extenuating circumstances must be handled through the Co-op office.

## Rejecting a Job

Students should consider all aspects of a Co-op job opportunity **before** applying. However, if a student interviews for a job, and then decides it may not be the best fit for them for whatever reason, they must discuss the situation with their Co-op Coordinator immediately before any job offers are extended.

Normally, students are expected to accept job offers. Students that reject offers of employment without discussion and approval by their Co-op Coordinator will no longer be eligible to continue in the Co-op program.

## Returning to the Same Employer

Although it is quite common for employers to ask successful student employees to return to work in subsequent work terms, students should consider what is best for their career development and discuss the opportunity with their Co-op Coordinator.

If a student returns to a previous employer, TRU expects that the employer will offer more responsibility and a varied experience.



## Developing Your Own Co-op Work Term

It is important that students develop job search skills before graduation. Conducting a job search process within the "safe" confines of a Co-op program provides students with a legitimate framework for approaching potential employers. Co-op Coordinators can assist with this self-directed process.

The TRU Co-op office has direct contact with many companies and government offices in the BC interior, throughout the lower mainland, and across Canada. To avoid confusing employers, students who are attempting to develop their own work term **must consult** with their Co-op Coordinator.

Students that are successful in securing their own position must bring in the details of the position to the Co-op Coordinator for approval before accepting any offer of employment. If accepted, students must adhere to all the regular Co-op requirements as stated elsewhere in this document.

## Work Term Registration and Tuition

Once a student has accepted a position, the Co-op office will register the student for the appropriate work term(s) through the TRU Registrars office.

Domestic Co-op students pay \$344.55 tuition + \$169.94 in ancillary and student society fees for each full or partial work term upon receipt of an invoice from the Registrar confirming the work placement. (Student working out of town can contact TRUSU for a refund of the UPASS fee).

International Co-op students pay a \$1380 tuition + 227.89 in ancillary fees (ISAP is extra to domestic). prior to the start of each Co-op work term. (International students working out of town can contact TRUSU for a refund of the UPASS fee).

NOTE: Tuition fees are subject to increases every Fall (above fees will change)

It is the students' responsibility to inform the Registrar's office (250-828-5036) every time they move during their participation in the Co-op program. Outstanding tuition may prevent students from registering in subsequent academic semesters.

All Co-op positions secured with assistance from the TRU Co-op office, including back-to-back work terms, extensions, returning to a previous employer or an **independently acquired position** will be subject to the TRU Co-op tuition and ancillary fees.



## **WORK TERM EXPECTATIONS**

### **Communication with the Co-op Office**

Students are responsible for contacting the Co-op department with the name of their supervisor, their new address and phone number within three weeks of starting a work term. Students should also contact their Coordinator at any time regarding questions or concerns that they may have about their Co-op experience. Students may call the Co-op office collect if necessary.

### **Failure to Report**

Students that fail to report for their work term after accepting a Co-op job may be excluded from future Co-op work terms and withdrawn from the Co-op program.

### **Transportation and Accommodation**

Transportation to and from the workplace and arrangements for living accommodations are typically the student's responsibility. The Co-op office may be able to assist with accessing resources listing housing options; and in some cases, Co-op employers may provide relocation assistance. The Association for Co-operative Education BC does maintain a provincial housing list that you can find short term accommodations for and search for roommates in other communities. Students can contact their Co-op Coordinator regarding how to register for this service.

### **On the Job**

Students should expect to be treated at work as a regular employee and should observe all the rules and regulations of their employer.

Here are some tips to help students be successful during their Co-op work term:

- Take the time to clearly understand the employer's expectations
- Learn and follow the rules and regulations
- Within the first week, check to ensure these expectations are being met
- When unsure of the work or duties assigned (eg. due to inexperience or lack of information) ask a supervisor
- When completing projects and work ahead of expectations, update a supervisor know and consider making suggestions for additional work or projects.
- Look for opportunities to demonstrate a positive attitude, strong work ethic and initiative
- Ask questions and become an active participant in the organization
- Look for learning opportunities



- Show enthusiasm, be willing to take on challenges and mundane tasks
- Continue to ask for feedback and on ways to improve
- Accept feedback and acknowledge it as a way to develop skills
- Look for ways to develop positive and reciprocal professional relationships with co-workers, supervisors and managers
- Avoid negative office 'politics'
- Use company resources for company work only. This includes not using the telephone, internet, or computer for personal use.
- Don't try to cover up mistakes; everybody makes them.
- Be friendly and considerate.
- Be cautious about disagreeing with the way things are done – ask questions before criticizing. There may be good reasons for these methods.
- Don't get caught up in office or shop politics. People and organizations each have good and bad points. Concentrate on the good ones.

### **Learning Objectives**

Setting goals, or learning objectives, at the beginning of the work term, will help students maximize the work term experience. Learning objectives help define realistic targets for developing new skills and applying knowledge from coursework. Students are expected to develop learning objectives and discuss these goals with their supervisor at the beginning of each 4-month work term.

Learning objectives should be a combination of technical skills and knowledge, as well as more intangible items, such as an area of personal or professional growth that a student hopes to develop during the work term. When developing objectives students should consider when, what, how these goals will be accomplished. Being specific makes reaching and evaluating learning objectives easier.

Students are also required to submit the approved learning objectives to their Co-op Coordinator via email by the end of the first month on the job. During the site visit, a Co-op Coordinator will revisit these objectives with the student to assess whether they are meeting their goals and to determine what additional learning is occurring.

### **Vacations**

Due to the short time-frame of a work term, normally Co-op students do not request time off. However, students may be able to negotiate absences in advance, if necessary. This is done prior to accepting the position.

## Strikes

Whether to cross a picket line and work, or observe a picket line and not work, is a personal decision. The role of the Co-op Coordinator in this situation is to inform the student of potential results of either decision.

## Layoffs

Layoffs due to a shortage of work must be reported immediately to the Co-op Coordinator.

## Resignations

Students considering quitting a Co-op job before the end of a scheduled work term **must** consult their Co-op Coordinator prior to taking any action. Failure to consult may lead to withdrawal from the Co-op program and a “DNC” will be noted on the students’ transcript.

## Termination

Students that are terminated from a co-op position must notify the Co-op office immediately. Each termination will be reviewed with the student, the employer, and a Co-op Coordinator.

## Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

It is important that students be aware of any conflict of interest situation. A conflict of interest can arise if a students’ access to the employer or the information gathered at the work site could result in personal gain for the student or a relative. Students that find themselves in a potential conflict of interest situation, or are in any way concerned that such a situation might arise, **must** inform their supervisor and their Co-op Coordinator immediately.

Some employers may be concerned about disclosure of confidential information. Student employees must comply with their employer's policies in this respect as the information they are exposed to, including the results of their own research, belongs to the employer. Evaluation of co-op assignments that are deemed confidential by the employer may be conducted by the employer and not TRU.

The importance of these and other issues are covered in COOP 1000.





## WORK TERM EVALUATION

### What is Required to Successfully Complete a Work Term?

- Co-op student successfully obtains a work term.
- Co-op student must pay their work term tuition.
- Co-op student must complete the objectives of the work term as agreed by the student, the employer, and the Co-op office.
- Co-op student must submit learning objectives and participate in a mid-term site visit.
- Co-op student must facilitate and submit an **Employer Evaluation** (available on the Co-op website) upon completion of the work-term.
- Co-op student must submit a **Student Evaluation of the Work Term Form** (available on the Co-op website) upon completion of the work-term.
- Co-op student must submit a satisfactory Work Term Report by the due date.

### Co-op Work Term Site Visit

During each work term, TRU will conduct a midterm site visit with the student and their immediate supervisor(s) by a Co-op Coordinator or representative from TRU. Depending on the situation, what work term the student is in, and the schedule of the Co-op Coordinator, a face-to-face site visit will not always be possible. If this is the case an alternative arrangement will be coordinated between the student and the Co-op Coordinator, such as a phone conference.

The students' level of learning and understanding of the position and their overall professional development will be reviewed. This meeting is an opportunity for the student, the supervisor(s), and the Co-op Coordinator to assess and discuss:

- The responsibilities/tasks performed by the student and their progress to date.
- The student's learning objectives and areas for further development.
- The relationship between work and the classroom.
- The Co-op program and remaining requirements.
- Any other questions, comments or concerns.

In addition the Coordinator will:

- Offer support and guidance to student and employer.
- Discuss with employer the type of work and working conditions available.
- Explore additional employment opportunities for future Co-op students.

Essentially, during the site visit students will present to their Co-op Coordinator information on their work, skills developed to date, and how this compares to their initial learning objectives.



### Preparing for the Site Visit

- Bring paper, a pen, and be prepared to meet with the Co-op Coordinator for about an hour to an hour and a half.
- Review and bring a copy of the job duties with any changes. Discuss how the job duties have changed and what projects are planned for the remainder of the Work Term.
- Review and bring a copy of the **Work Term Learning Objectives Form** (available on the Co-op website) with any changes to the meeting. Be prepared to discuss how these goals have been met, if any have changed, and any new goals for the remainder of the Work Term.
- Review and bring answers to the **Reflective Work Term Questions** (available on the Co-op website) to the meeting.
- Prepare for questions that the Co-op Coordinator will ask during site visit.
- Coordinator will share employer's feedback on student's progress to date (if available).
- Review the various options for the Work Term Report and plan to discuss these choices with the Co-op Coordinator and the supervisor.
- Conduct a tour and take pictures (if time).

### Employer Evaluation

At the end of each work term, the employer will be asked to complete a formal written evaluation of the students' performance. To successfully complete a work term, the student must receive at least a "satisfactory" rating from their employer. The employer/supervisor will be provided with this form directly from the Co-op office however, it is the students' responsibility to follow up and ensure the **Employer Evaluation** (available on the Co-op website) has been submitted by the deadline.

### Student Evaluation

The student will be required to complete and submit a **Student Evaluation of the Work Term Form** (available on the Co-op website) along with a work term report at the end of each 4-month term.



## WORK TERM REPORT

For each Co-op work term students will be required to complete and submit a Work Term Report to the Co-op office. Students should consult with their Co-op Coordinator regarding the intended submission format and follow the guidelines outlined in this Handbook.

Student should also discuss their plans with their work supervisor(s) to ensure that they have the opportunity to review the report for accuracy and confidentiality.

The Work Term Report is an essential ingredient in the Co-operative Education process. These reports serve a variety of purposes. They are designed to:

- stimulate the students thinking about the work experience and reflect on how it relates to their academic and professional development;
- increase understanding of the organization they are working for and their specific job;
- provide a forum for students to record the knowledge and skills they develop on the job;
- challenge students to develop their communication skills, both written, verbal and organizational;
- provide a tool by which the student, the employer, the Co-op Coordinators, and the University may evaluate their performance and measure learning;
- help the Co-op Coordinator evaluate the usefulness of the worksite and job in preparing future Co-op students for their work terms; and
- help future Co-op students prepare for interviews with that employer.

### Overview of Work Term Report Guidelines

General guidelines for submitting a Work Term Report are outlined below and will also be reviewed during COOP 1000. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they understand what is expected and submit all necessary requirements by the appropriate deadline.

Satisfactory completion of Work Term Reports is an academic requirement for graduation with Co-op designation. Evaluation of these reports is subject to the usual regulations regarding satisfactory demonstration of ability, submission of grades, and processing of appeals.

There are several types of work term reports available, and students are encouraged to try different formats.

- A **Career Portfolio** is a tool to showcase accomplishments in preparation for an effective Co-op and graduate work search. *Usually completed after the first or second work term.*



- A **General/Reflective Report** is an overview of the workplace and work term experience, and is most suitable for a first or second work term report. It must include a Co-op Title Page, Introduction, Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations. *Only ONE report should be in the general format.*
- A **Document Report** can be submitted if the Co-op employer required the student to complete a **document, manual, or report** as part of their work term duties. Students must discuss this option with their Co-op Coordinator **PRIOR** to the submission deadline, preferably during the site visit. A **summary** of the work term experience, including a discussion of the report, must accompany the document report, and must include a Co-op Title Page, Introduction, Summary of Work Term Duties, Conclusions and Recommendations.
- A **Technical Report** is written on one specific aspect of the work term. This report could be focused on a specific technology, project or other aspect of the experience. This report must also include a Co-op Title Page, Executive Summary, Introduction, Conclusion and Recommendations.
- An **Oral Presentation** can be made to an audience comprised of faculty, staff, and students. The presentation may also be presented to a different audience (i.e., work colleagues and managers), but this must first be approved by the Co-op Coordinator. Students must provide the Co-op Coordinator with an outline of the presentation by the submission deadline. A copy of the PowerPoint (including speaker notes) must be given to the Co-op Coordinator at least one week prior to the presentation.
- A **Reflection on Co-op Experiences** is a written report that allows students to reflect on all of their Co-op experiences, and how these experiences have shaped their career and academic goals. This type of report is suitable for students who have completed all of the minimum Co-op work terms required for the designation.
- **Other Options** may be possible with PRIOR approval from the Co-op Coordinator. These include a class field trip, a memorandum used to persuade management to implement a change or an improvement in the workplace, an interactive display for an on-campus event, a poster presentation, video presentation or web presentation.

*Refer to the specific instructions and academic guidelines outlined for each of these options in the following sections of the Handbook.*

### **Submission Deadlines**

Work Term Reports and oral presentation outlines are required at the completion of every work term. Specific submission deadline dates will be confirmed by the Co-op Coordinator for each



program; however, typically the Work Term Report must be submitted to the Co-op Office by the following dates: **(Note: some programs may have different deadlines-please consult with your coordinator to ensure you meet the deadline for your co-op program)**

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in September** by **4:00 p.m.** for May – August Work Term
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in January** by **4:00 p.m.** for September – December Work Term
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in May** by **4:00 p.m.** for January – April Work Term

### **Work Term Report Evaluation Procedures**

Students that fail to submit a report (or an outline), on or before the due date, will receive a grade of "NCG" for the work term. Late reports will be accepted only on medical, compassionate, or other such exceptional grounds, and ONLY with prior approval from the Co-op Coordinator.

Reports will be evaluated by selected members of the Co-op and instructional Departments. Reports will receive a grade of "Outstanding", "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory".

Unsatisfactory written reports must be revised and submitted for re-evaluation within two weeks. Students who receive an unsatisfactory evaluation for a verbal presentation will be given two weeks to submit a written report on the same topic. A grade of "Satisfactory" must be received before the Work Term will be recognized as complete.

If the report is confidential, three options will be considered. First, a specified Co-op faculty member will mark the report after agreeing to return the report to the employer once marked and not to disclose the information. Second, the employer will be asked to release an edited version of the report. The third option is to have the employer evaluate the report on behalf of TRU, using the Co-op evaluation form. In this case, the employer's evaluation will be used instead of a departmental evaluation when the overall Work Term performance is being assessed.

*Students should consult the evaluation forms used to assess the Work Term Reports, Oral Presentations, and Career Portfolio available the Co-op website for additional guidelines and grading criteria.*

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's words, data and even someone else's ideas as your own work. Whenever a student incorporates ideas or phrases from another writer into their work term report they need to indicate the source. This includes information found on the internet.

The TRU Calendar details policy and regulations on academic standards.



Submitting a Work Term Report that is plagiarized or contains plagiarized components can lead to removal from the Co-operative Education Program and further actions on the part of the University.

## CAREER PORTFOLIO

The Career Portfolio is intended to help students showcase the skills acquired during academic studies, Co-operative Education Work Term(s), and previous work and/or volunteer experience. A portfolio enables students to demonstrate and provide evidence of the skills, experience, and qualities a potential employer may be looking for in a prospective employee.

The Career Portfolio must contain certain required items (or artifacts) and adhere to a presentation style as outlined in the **Portfolio Evaluation Form** (available on the Co-op website). Students are encouraged to be creative, while maintaining a professional appearance and style, when assembling their Career Portfolios. Typical items found in a Career Portfolio include:

- Cover page
- Updated resume
- Transcript(s)
- Performance reviews, evaluation forms, and reference letters
- Sample correspondence or emails (non-confidential)
- Presentations and speaker notes
- Research papers and academic assignments
- Project examples or list
- Certificates, training, or awards
- Professional association memberships
- Letters of appreciation or volunteer recognition
- News paper clippings or recordings (on disc)
- Spreadsheets and statistical evidence or examples

The Career Portfolio is not limited to the required items, and students are encouraged to include items beyond what is listed. The Career Portfolio is an evolving document, and will change as students change and grow throughout their time in Co-op and at TRU.

The Career Portfolio can only count for ONE work term. Students who complete a Career Portfolio for their first work term while on an extended work term must submit another report for the second and subsequent work terms. Students should discuss the next report with their Co-op Coordinator.



## GENERAL REPORT

This report is suitable for a first or second work term report. Only ONE written report should be in the general format.

### ***Primary Purpose:***

The General Report is intended to help students reflect on their Co-op work experience and how it relates to their academic and professional development. These observations can be useful to other Co-op students considering a work term with this employer.

The report should be written in the third person, except for your personal observations. Avoid the use of “you”.

The report should be 6-8 pages, double-spaced, typed, NOT including title page, table of contents, appendices, footnotes or bibliography (if these are included).

### ***The General Report should include the following elements:***

1. **Co-op Title Page** - includes the name and address of the organization; students name, program, work term and student number; the date; and a title for the report.
2. **Table of Contents** – indicates by page number the position of the executive summary and all headings of the report. All topics and subheadings should be numbered or lettered both in the Table of Contents and throughout the report.
3. **Executive Summary** – this should be 150-200 words in length and have its own page. The summary is NOT a description of how the report is set up. It is a summary of the main points of all sections, including conclusions and recommendations. It provides a quick summary for those readers who do not have the time and/or technical background to read the report in full.
4. **Introduction** – prepares the reader for the discussion that follows. It indicates purpose, scope, order of presentation and any necessary background information.

### ***A discussion of the following topics:***

*The employer* - its mission, organizational structure, products and services, markets, customers, co-workers, size, ownership, history, culture, and so on. Include a description of the department, area or unit where the student worked and its major activities and its relationship to the overall organization.





*Work term duties* – a detailed description of the responsibilities (the job description as posted and as the student experienced it); routine duties; the knowledge and skills acquired by the student; projects assigned, and how they were analyzed and then carried through to completion. Diagrams, graphs, documents and/or photographs can be added to enhance this section.

*Personal observations* – This section should be given careful attention and thought and should be positive and constructive. Observations can include:

- a reflection on how this work experience will contribute to both the students academic and professional development
- what influence the work term has had on the students career objectives
- what the student learned about their strengths, and areas needing improvement (technically and personally)
- what the student liked best and least about the work experience
- how the student changed as a person as a result of the work term
- the relevance of the students academic studies to the job noting areas where academic preparation was useful or inadequate.
- what the students wants to accomplish before their next work term to make it a more enriching experience

*Recommendations* – Recommendations offer suggestions for the employer (items requiring action), for future students coming to this organization, and for the TRU curriculum.

*Conclusions* – Conclusions are short and develop logically from the discussion contained in the report.

*References* – The TRU policy on Academic Dishonesty is detailed in the TRU Calendar. Co-op students are expected to adhere to this policy through the appropriate use of footnote references, quotation marks, acknowledgements of indebtedness and a complete listing of resources used in the writing of their work term report. References often include information provided by the company, resources describing technologies or processes used, Web sites, books, and sometimes individuals that provided information for the report.

*Appendices* – Appendices are for material that is too long to be inserted in the body of the report. Every section of the Appendix should be keyed to the text by a footnote or a direct reference in the text.

*Any supporting documentation from the organization where the student was working that will help the reader understand the work or duties may be included as appendices.*



## DOCUMENT REPORT

This is a report completed for the employer as part of the work term duties. It may be a technical report, manual, or an informative report intended for publication or public use. Students must have prior approval of BOTH the employer and the Co-op Coordinator before submitting the report. See below for additional requirements.

### ***Primary Purpose:***

Preparing a report for the employer enhances formal report writing skills, and solidifies the knowledge and skills acquired on the work term. As these reports are often intended for an audience, students will normally have a lot of input from the employer during the writing process.

A Summary of the Work Term MUST accompany the document report. The Summary will be similar to an abridged General Report, and should be 4 – 6 pages, NOT including Title Page, double spaced and typed.

### ***The following elements must be included in the Summary:***

1. **Co-op Title Page** – use the Co-op format discussed in the General Report.
2. **Introduction** – introduces the employer, the Co-op position in the organization, the duties and the background and reasons for the document report.

### ***Brief discussion of the following:***

*The employer* - Description of the employer, the organization, its mission statement and size.

*Work term duties* - Description of your position and your regular work term duties. Any additional special projects should also be discussed.

*The report* - This section provides information for your reader on the background behind the attached document report. This section should include a discussion of why the report was generated, how it related to your regular duties, and how much of your time was dedicated to generating the report eg. gathering data or information, and writing the report.

*Personal observations* - In this section, you should focus on the challenges and benefits of generating the report. What were the challenges you faced and how did you manage these? What were the highlights of working on the report, and what did you gain from this exercise? In addition, be sure to include any other observations about your work term duties and experience.



*Recommendations* - These could include recommendations for future students planning on working with this organization and/or suggestions for students planning to write a report for an employer.

*Conclusions* - Conclusions are short and develop logically from the discussion in the summary report. You may also want to discuss the conclusions generated by the document report.

The Summary and the Document Report must be submitted together, with the summary being the first part of the report, and the Document Report attached.

## TECHNICAL REPORT

The Technical Report should be written according to the following guidelines.

### ***Primary Purpose:***

The Technical Report is intended to help you develop your skills in producing an informative technical report (similar to an academic paper) which could be useful to an expert or professional working in this field, but which can also be understood by a reasonably informed general audience. The emphasis in this report should be on clearly explaining some aspect of your work, providing a comprehensive view of your project, or a description of your activities and the knowledge you have acquired.

The Technical Report should be 8-12 pages, double spaced, typed, NOT including title page, executive summary, table of contents, appendices, footnotes and bibliography.

The report must include a Co-op Title Page, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Introduction, Conclusion and Recommendations. (see General Report format for a discussion of these).

The technical report will focus on the following:

- a technical description of some aspect of your work, including work objectives or research, approach, activities, and conclusions or the results of your work. You should discuss your topic with your Co-op Coordinator to ensure its suitability.
- a glossary, if appropriate

*Any supporting documentation from the organization where you worked, that will help the reader understand the work you have done, may be included as appendices.*



## REFLECTION ON CO-OP EXPERIENCES

This report is suitable for students who have completed ALL of the required Co-op work terms.

### ***Primary Purpose:***

The Reflection on Co-op Experiences Report is intended to help you reflect on your present and past work experience and on how you will apply this learning in the development of your career. What general principles can you draw from what you have learned in each of your work terms? How have these work terms contributed to your academic and professional development? How have they shaped your views on *what* you intend to achieve after graduation and *how* you intend to develop your career?

The report should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced and typed, NOT including title page, executive summary, table of contents, and any illustrations, appendices, footnotes or bibliography (if these are included).

The report must have the proper Co-op Title Page, Table of Contents, an Executive Summary, Introduction and Conclusion (see General Report format for a description of these).

The report will discuss:

- The nature of the work you are doing and have done on your Co-op work terms (the job descriptions as posted and as you experienced them);
- the knowledge and skills you are acquiring;
- a reflection on how this accumulated work experience will contribute to both your academic and professional development.

*You may wish to submit with your report any supporting documentation from your Co-op placements which will help the reader understand the work you have done.*

## ORAL PRESENTATION

The same range of topics available for written reports is available to you if you choose to do an oral presentation. You must discuss your topic with your Co-op Coordinator first, to ensure its suitability. You must also have an audience in mind, and permission from the instructor to deliver an oral presentation during class time, or permission from another organization to deliver an appropriate presentation for them.

You should submit and deliver:

- A 2-page overview of your presentation along with copies of your visual aids to your Co-op Coordinator by the usual deadline for a written report.
- A 20 minute verbal presentation. You must use visual aids such as a PowerPoint presentation or overhead transparencies. You may refer to your notes but you must not read your speech.

You must notify your Co-op Coordinator of the date, time and location of your oral presentation at least ONE month prior to the presentation. Overheads or a PowerPoint printout of your presentation must be submitted at this time.

Students should also consult the ***Oral Presentation Evaluation Form*** (available on the Co-op website) for additional assessment criteria and guidelines.

*Remember to have fun with this Work Term Report option. You are among the brave few who see this option as an opportunity to challenge yourself and hone an incredibly valuable skill as a public speaker!*



## CO-OP GRADING SYSTEM & OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Once a Co-op job has been confirmed, the student will be registered in that work term by the TRU Co-op Program through the Registrars office. The work term becomes a permanent entry on the students transcript. Upon completion of the work term, the Co-op department, like all other academic departments, submits grades for the work term to the Registrar. This grade appears on the students official transcript.

The Co-op Program uses the following grading system:

**COM** - To receive credit, students must meet specific criteria which are evaluated by a Co-op Coordinator in consultation with the Co-op employer. Details of the evaluation process can be found at [www.tru.ca/careereducation/coop](http://www.tru.ca/careereducation/coop).

**NCG** - Students who fail to complete all requirements for successful completion of a Co-op work term will receive a NCG. Situations resulting in dismissal of a Co-op student by their Co-op employer will be reviewed by the Co-op Coordinator and a NCG may be applied. Students who leave a Co-op work term before the end date on their signed Acceptance Form without the knowledge and consent of their Co-op Coordinator may receive a NCG. Students who receive a NCG may be withdrawn from the TRU Co-op Program.

**Withdraw (W)** - Only with the knowledge and consent of their Co-op Coordinator will students be permitted to withdraw from a Co-op work term. Students who withdraw from Co-op may be discontinued from the Co-op program. Students who are laid off from their Co-op work term may receive a W. TRU Co-op tuition is non-refundable without approval from the Career Education Department Chairperson.

Students that complete the required number of work terms for their program area will have Co-op recognition noted on their diploma or degree.



## **FAILURE OF A WORK TERM**

Students that fail a work term may be prohibited from continuing any further with the Co-op program and will receive an "unsatisfactory" mark of NCG (no credit given) on their transcript for that term. It is possible to fail a work term if a student:

- receives a less than "satisfactory" evaluation from their employer;
- fails to complete a work term report and all the evaluations by the due date;
- is terminated from their position due to unacceptable behaviour or other valid reasons given by the employer;
- breaches the trust of the employer and betrays the principle of confidentiality.

Students that have issues or concerns about their work environment or co-op requirements should speak to their Co-op Coordinator.





## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. *What is elective and additive credit?* Elective credit means a student can count a Co-op work term towards their graduation requirements. Additive credit means students will graduate with more credits than required because some of their Co-op work terms will not count as electives and not reduce the number of credits they need to graduate.

Q. *What is a Co-op work-term?* The Co-op work term is a credit course that students are enrolled in when they accept an employment offer from a Co-op employer. Work terms are typically paid and last for 4 months. Each 4 month work term is considered one 3 credit Co-op course. Students can combine two or three work terms for a total of 8 or 12 months. Students must obtain and successfully complete a work term to be awarded elective/additive credit.

Q. *What are Co-op wages?* Co-op wages vary depending on the employer, the student's level of experience and year of study. Wages vary between \$10 and \$24 an hour.

Q. *How do students find a Co-op work term or job?* Co-op work terms are found several ways. TRU Co-op Coordinators identify many Co-op positions and students are expected to apply for those jobs that related to their interests and career goals. Many students find their own Co-op positions and request approval from their Co-op Coordinator to count them for Co-op credit. Sometimes students on a 2nd or 3rd Co-op semester will return to the same Co-op employer for another experience.

Q. *What if I complete COOP 1000 and do not obtain a Co-op job?* Students keep trying with the help of their Co-op Coordinator. Persistence is important to succeed and it might take a while to secure a first Co-op work term.

Q. *Do I have to pay the tuition if I find my own Co-op position?* Yes.

Q. *I am a current Co-op student and have completed two work terms already prior to Jan 2011. Can those work terms count for elective credit?* No, elective credit for work terms will be granted starting in January 2011. Credit cannot be backdated-PLAR is also not available to Co-op Students at TRU.

