



THOMPSON RIVERS  
UNIVERSITY

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Career Education Department

# Co-op Student Work Term Handbook

*Updated April 2015*

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## Introduction

A co-op work term provides an amazing opportunity to explore career options, utilize your education, learn valuable skills, and connects with individuals that will be influential in your career and to get a better understanding of the work involved in your discipline. This handbook is designed to help YOU maximize this experience, ensuring you get as much value out of the work term as possible.

## TRU Co-op Coordinator Contact List

**Career Education Department**  
**Thompson Rivers University**  
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**Marion Oke**

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## TRU Contact List

### Financial Aid and Awards

Phone: 250-828-5024

Fax: 250-371-5668

### Student Society:

Phone: 250-372-5882

### Security

Phone: 250-828-5033 (security has your co-op coordinator emergency numbers)

### Office of the Registrar

Phone: 250-828-5049

## Work Term To-Do List (of Dates and Activities)

Due Date	Activity To Be Completed	Estimated Time to Complete
<b>During the first week of your work term</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Term Learning Objectives, page 6 (to be e-mailed to Co-op Coordinator)	<b>20 minutes</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of current and possible future duties, compiled in conjunction with your supervisor (to be e-mailed to Co-op Coordinator)	<b>30 minutes</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Month</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Site visit, arranged by student, in conjunction with your Co-op Coordinator and Supervisor	<b>1-2 hours</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete questions for site visit and be prepared to discuss, pages 7-12	<b>30 minutes</b>
<b>Last two weeks of EACH Work Term</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure employer has completed your Evaluation (see appendix #4)	<b>30 minutes</b>
<b>At the Completion of Your Work Term</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Evaluation <sup>1</sup>	
	<input type="radio"/> Transferable skills worksheet (optional), page 15-16	<b>45 minutes</b>
	<input type="radio"/> Updated resume, see Moodle work term course	<b>1.5 hours</b>
	<input type="radio"/> List of at least 2 networking contacts and/or references, page 17	<b>10 minutes</b>
	<input type="radio"/> Identify two items to include in career portfolio if desired, page 18	<b>10 minutes</b>
	<input type="radio"/> Reflection on your career plans, page 19	<b>30 minutes</b>
	<input type="radio"/> Student Assessment of Work Term, page 20-21	<b>20 minutes</b>
	<b>Required for EACH Work Term:</b>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Work Term Report (see Appendix 5 and Work Term Report Guidelines, available on Web CT)	<b>6-8 hours</b>

<sup>1</sup> Much of this work can be done in the third and fourth month of your work term, distributing your work load more evenly.

## Tips for Maximizing Work Term Experience

- ☑ Ensure you clearly understand the employer's expectations of you
- ☑ Learn and follow the rules and regulations
- ☑ Within the first week, check to ensure you are meeting these expectations
- ☑ If at any time you are unsure of the work you are doing (eg. due to inexperience or lack of information) ask your supervisor
- ☑ If you are completing projects and work ahead of expectations, let your supervisor know. Consider making suggestions for additional work or projects.
- ☑ Look for opportunities to demonstrate your 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 on how you are doing, look for ways to improve your work
- ☑ Accept feedback and acknowledge it as a way to improve your skills
- ☑ Look for ways to develop positive and reciprocal professional relationships with co-workers, supervisors and managers – you never know how these will benefit both you and them in the future
- ☑ Avoid negative office 'politics'
- ☑ Use company resources for company work only. This includes not using the telephone, internet, or computer for personal use.

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I'm a great believer in  
luck and I find the  
harder I work, the more I  
have of it.

**Thomas Jefferson**

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## ***Work Term Learning Objectives***

Setting goals, or learning objectives, at the beginning of each work term, will help you maximize your work term experience (for more information refer to objectives on page 26). Setting objectives will help you define realistic targets for yourself such as learning new skills and applying your knowledge from your course of study. Your supervisor should be aware of your goals and if possible help you to develop them.

Your goals should be a combination of technical skills and knowledge, as well as more intangible items, such as an area of personal or professional growth you would like to develop during the work term. When developing your objectives remember to consider when, what, how, and your evaluation measurement. Please be as specific as you can when outlining your objectives, as this will make reaching and evaluating your objectives easier. Also, include dates for anticipated completion.

During the site visit, your learning objectives will be discussed and evaluated with the following questions posed:

- Are you meeting your objectives (answer with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and provide explanation)?
- Is there additional learning happening on the work term that you did not anticipate?

**Complete the following statement and e-mail to your coordinator before you have completed the first month of your work term (see example below). The subject line in your e-mail should be: Learning Objectives.**

**The learning goals I have set for this work term include (minimum of 5):**

**Work term goals:**

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**I have discussed these objectives with my supervisor:    Yes    No (if no, please explain)**

**Sample work term goals for a Syncrude Chemistry Co-op student might include:**

- Ensure my use of the specific analyzers for carbon, hydrogen, sulphur and nitrogen is accurate by May 20
- Able to use Gas, Supercritical Fluid and High Performance Liquid Chromatographs (see their book on lab booklet on “Using Chromatographs”) by May 26
- Ask my supervisor for feedback on how my skills on routine analytical tests are progressing by May 26
- Attend one after-work function with colleagues to enhance networking opportunities, such as the golf fundraiser on June 6
- Talk to fellow lab employees (John and Jane) about their career paths and advice they have for an upcoming graduate, including career advice for working at Syncrude, by June 13

**I discussed these goals with my supervisor on May 15.**

# Site Visit

## Objectives of Site Visit

Around the mid-point in the work term, a Co-op Coordinator will schedule a visit at your work place. The purpose of the site visit is to meet with both you and your supervisor to assess and discuss:

- The responsibilities/tasks performed by the student and their progress to date
- Student's learning objectives and areas to develop
- Work and classroom relationship
- The Co-op program
- 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.

**Note:** Depending on your employment situation, what work term you are 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 yourself and the Co-op Coordinator, such as a phone conference.

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The highest compliment  
that you can pay me is to  
say that I work hard  
every day, that I never  
dog it.

**Wayne Gretzky**

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## Preparing For the Site Visit

- a. Bring paper and pen
- b. Be prepared to meet with the Co-op Coordinator for about **45-75 minutes**
- c. Review and bring copy of your **duties** with any changes. Discuss how your job duties have changed and what projects are planned for the remainder of your Work Term.
- d. Review and bring a copy of your **Work Term Learning Objectives** (page 6) with any changes to the meeting. Be prepared to discuss how you have met your goals, if any have changed, and any new goals for the remainder of the Work Term.
- e. Review and bring your answers to **Reflective Work Term Questions** (Page 9 ) to meeting
- f. Prepare for **questions** that the Co-op Coordinator will ask the students during site visit (Page 12 )
- g. Coordinator will share **employer's feedback** on student's progress to date (if available)
- h. Discuss **Work Term Report**
- i. Discuss housekeeping issues (ie your accommodations, are you paid regularly, etc.)
- j. Tour and pictures (if time)

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Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger. If you do the little jobs well, the big ones will tend to take care of themselves.

*Dale Carnegie*

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**REFLECTIVE WORK TERM QUESTIONS\***  
**Co-operative Education**  
**Work Term Site Visit**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Term No: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Term:     Jan – Apr     May – Aug     Sept – Dec    Year: 20\_\_\_\_\_

Position Title \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_



1. What skills and knowledge have you acquired in this position? Example(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How are you making use of the knowledge and skills acquired in your program of study?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**\*Must be completed prior to the site visit. Please bring two copies to the meeting, one for you and one for the Co-op Coordinator. Thank you.**

3. How will you be able to use your experience and skills acquired on the work term when you return to school? Future Work Terms?

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4. Rate this work experience on a scale of 1 to 10, adding comments 1 = poor, 10 = excellent:

4.1. **Challenge Rating:** \_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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4.2. **Development of Skills Rating:** \_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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4.3. **Your Interest Rating:** \_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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4.4. **Relevance to Your Program of Study Rating:** \_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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4.5. What Can YOU Do to Improve These Ratings?

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the best thing about this position/experience?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the worst part of this position/experience and what can you change about it?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How has this co-op experience impacted your future career goals, and the direction of your studies?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Other Comments?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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People who never do any more than they get paid  
for, never get paid for any more than they do.

*Elbert Hubbard*

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**Questions the Co-op Coordinator Will Ask You During the Site Visit:**

a. Describe the training you have received to date.

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b. How do you get feedback from your supervisor to ensure that you are meeting their expectations and confirm you 'are on the right track'?

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c. If you are unsure of an assignment, or have a situation you can't solve on your own, what do you do?

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d. Who are your mentors and key supports in this position?

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e. Has this work term met your expectations so far?

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f. Have you considered your plans for the next work term? If yes, what are they?

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## **Tips For the Last Two Weeks of Your Work Term**

**You have almost completed your work term - congratulations! Make the most of the remaining time by considering:**

### **Projects & Assignments:**

- Have you allotted enough time to successfully complete all of your projects and assignments?
- Is overtime required?
- If you are unable to complete everything, ensure you have met with your supervisor to prioritize your remaining time and work assignments.

### **Work Term Report:**

- Is this a project that is for your employer? Or one that may need some resources you may not have access to upon your return to campus?
- Make sure you budget enough time to do an "excellent job" on your report.
- Make sure your supervisor reviews your report or outline of your project.
- Is it confidential to the company?
- Ensure that you have permission to share it with your Co-op Coordinator. If not, your supervisor will be asked to evaluate your report.

### **Your Next Work Term:**

- Do you want to return to this employer?
- Have you talked to your supervisor about returning/not returning?
- Is there another area that you would like to return to?
- During the last week, you should drop by and say goodbye to everyone you have worked with. This is a great time to collect business cards and other contact information for the future.

### **Network:**

- Imagine if on each work term you collected 5 contact names. Over the course of three work terms that would be 15 solid contacts upon graduation. What an advantage! Most university students can spend up to a year developing this kind of network.

### **Employer Evaluation:**

- Ensure that your immediate supervisor completes this form (see appendix 4).
- Get some solid feedback that you can build on for your next work term and future career success.

## EVALUATION OF WORK TERM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Term #: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Term(s):     Jan – Apr     May – Aug     Sept – Dec    Year: 20\_\_\_\_\_

Position Title \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Are the following items completed and attached where necessary?

- Transferable skills worksheet
- Updated resume (attach to this Student Evaluation Package)
- List at least 2 networking contacts and/or references including how these contacts may be useful in your career goals
- Identify two items to include in career portfolio
- Identify your career plans
- Student Assessment of the Work Term

**Submit to Co-op Coordinator no later than first week following the end of your work term (varies by program).**  
**Students on back-to-back work terms submit these items following the last work term.**  
**Remember: one work term report and an employer evaluation are required for every work term.**

## Transferable Skills Worksheet

In 2000 the Conference Board of Canada<sup>2</sup> published a booklet entitled **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS 2000+**. This booklet highlights key skills **YOU need** to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work. The booklet lists the employability skills, attitudes and behaviors that are needed to be an active and engaged participant in the employment market. Understanding and applying these skills can be a key ingredient to the success of your career.

Read the following list, identifying and reflecting on how you have enhanced these skills during your work term. How can you reflect some of these skills in your work search documents (resume, cover letter, career portfolio) and in conversations (interviews, networking, etc.)?

Communication:

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Managing Information:

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Using Numbers:

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Thinking and Solving Problems:

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Demonstrating Positive Attitudes and Behaviours:

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<sup>2</sup> The Conference Board of Canada is a nonprofit, independent applied research organization helping its members anticipate and respond to the changing global economy. [www.conferenceboard.ca](http://www.conferenceboard.ca)

Being Responsible:

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Being Adaptable:

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Self-Directed Learning:

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Working Safely:

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Working with Others:

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Participating in Projects and Tasks:

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## Networking Contacts, Mentors, and/or References

List **two** potential contacts for networking with, mentors, and/or references that you have made on this work term. Consider fellow employees, supervisors and managers.

#1 Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

How can this person be an important contact for you?

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#2 Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

How can this person be an important contact for you?

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**Career Portfolio Items (optional)**

From your current work term give consideration to what tangible items you have as proof or evidence of the work you have completed. In addition to **telling** potential employers about this in your resume, **show** them in your career portfolio. Identify two items to include in your career portfolio, and what these items say about your work. Actual portfolio items DO NOT have to be attached.

Read the following list as a means to begin brainstorming thoughts on career portfolio items to include **if** two items don't immediately come to mind:

- Letters of reference
- List of projects completed
- Reports synopsis
- Work samples
- Presentation list and/or extracts from
- Newspaper clippings
- Writing samples
- Computer skill list
- Project completed list
- Photographs of you in the field
- Notes of commendation, appraisal or accolades

**Portfolio Item:** \_\_\_\_\_

What these items say about my work:

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**Portfolio Item:** \_\_\_\_\_

What these items say about my work:

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Leaders aren't born they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that's the price we'll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal.

**Vince Lombardi**

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## Career Plans

You are at the perfect time and place in your life to take an active role in your career. Be proactive, give some thought to what it is you really want to do and then plan the steps to get there. Answer the following questions, with your education and career goals in mind.

Three to six months after my work term I will:

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Upon graduation I will:

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In five years from now I would like to be:

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Additional Career Plans and/or Goals to include:

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### Sample Career Plan:

Three months after my work term I will: ***Volunteer for a non-profit environment group***

Upon graduation I will: ***be looking for work with the Ministry of Environment or Ducks Unlimited***

In five years from now I would like to be: ***Working in a mid-management level for Ducks Unlimited or the Ministry of Environment, have 2-3 research articles published and be exploring grad school options.***

Additional Career Plans and/or Goals to include: ***Complete my Master degree and work in a third world country, perhaps in South America***

**Student Assessment of Work Term**

Please answer the following questions including rating the work experience on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = weakest, 10 = strongest). Please add comments.

**On-the-Job Training Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenge of Work Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Amount of Work Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Amount of Supervision Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Over-All Job Satisfaction Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Was the job what you thought it would be? If not, what adjustments did you make to get the most out of this opportunity?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How suitable was the level and quantity of work in relation to your academic level and your level of experience?**

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**What did you learn during this work experience?**

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**How could you have improved your Co-op work term?**

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**What advice would you give to the next Co-op student?**

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**Finally, if you were a Co-op Coordinator what would you do to make improvements to the program?**

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**Additional Comments:**

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**Do we have your permission to share this information with your employer?**

**Please circle:**      **Yes**      **No**      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### **Questions Co-op Coordinator Will Ask Employer/Supervisor During Site Visit**

1. Please give a brief overview of the student's job description, duties, projects completed to date, and upcoming projects.
2. How is the student progressing? Consider skills, knowledge, strengths, and attitudes. Are they learning and contributing at the rate you were expecting?
3. What do you think has been their most significant contribution during the work term?
4. How do you give the student feedback on their performance and how does the student receive this feedback?
5. How would you rate the student's performance to date? (on a scale of 1-10) Any comments?
6. Are there any areas where the student is particularly strong?
7. Are there areas that need improvement?
8. What do you recommend the student work on to improve their performance for the rest of the work term? And/or is there an action plan in place to improve these areas?
9. Are there additional opportunities for learning and/or other duties the student will do for the remainder of the work term? Please describe.
10. Would you consider hiring this student again?
11. Other comments?

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I studied the lives of great men and famous women, and I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work.

***Harry S. Truman***

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## Appendix 2

### Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE), Learning Objectives, Maximizing the Learning on a Workterm<sup>3</sup>

#### *Co-op Tips & Techniques*

#### **Learning Objectives - Maximizing the Learning on a Workterm**

**Date: 1997-06-01**

**By: Audrey McFarlane, University of Victoria**

If a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? If students learn on a workterm, but they don't know what they have learned, has learning occurred?

To ensure the learning that occurs on a students workterm is recognized by all the stakeholders, UVic has incorporated having students write and evaluate learning objectives in our Employer/Student Evaluation forms. This process provides a number of benefits:

- Employers who have worked with students who use learning objectives appreciate the organization and direction that it provides for the co-op student. It shows that students are serious about learning during the workterm.
- Learning objectives can give direction to what students learn during their workterm. They can help students get more out of their co-op experience and allow students to focus on their career goals.
- Learning objectives provide students with a listing (a portfolio) of documented learning outcomes resulting from their workterm experience. This also helps give their Co-op experience more academic integrity by providing documentation of learning outcomes.

#### ***What are learning objectives?***

A learning objective is a written statement describing measurable achievements students hope to accomplish during their workterm experience. For example:

'By July 4th, I will devise, print and post a safety check sheet, following Federal Government guidelines, which will make safety information readily available to all staff members. I will have this safety check sheet evaluated by my supervisor for accuracy prior to posting.'

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.cafce.ca/pages/cooptips.php?id=6> accessed April 24, 2006



## Why use learning objectives?

The student's goal for each workterm should be to maximize the opportunity and then be able to document what they have learned as a result of their participation in the Co-op program. To assist students in accomplishing this goal, it is recommended that students develop specific and measurable learning objectives for each of their Co-op workterms. By preparing learning objectives students are declaring their intentions to document their learning outcomes for the workterm and to accomplish these objectives in a satisfactory manner.

Some workterm assignments may lend themselves to easily written objectives, but learning objectives can be written for every workterm. The major idea behind setting objectives is not to control every moment of the Co-op experience, but to set a direction or agenda for the workterm.

## How do you implement learning objectives?

The easiest way to incorporate learning objectives into the co-op workterm is to incorporate them into the employer/student evaluation form.

The Employer/Student Evaluation Form should have 3 sections:

**Section 1:** With the supervisor, during the first week of the workterm, the student develops the learning objectives for the workterm, following the model described later in this report. The learning objectives which students develop should:

- relate directly to their job assignment, and
- represent the job functions and duties students will be performing during their co-op workterm.

**Section 2:** With the supervisor, midway through the workterm, the student evaluates the learning objectives, documenting any factors that may affect the achievement of the objectives. If needed, the objectives may be revised or updated. Coordinators normally review the objectives during the work site visit.

**Section 3:** With the supervisor, during the last week of the workterm, the student evaluates the learning objectives against the set measurable goals. Again, any factors that affected the achievement of the objectives is documented.

These evaluations are returned to the Co-op office for review by the co-op coordinator.

The learning objectives that students develop for each Co-op workterm should be realistic and achievable within the time frame of their workterm assignment. Also, the objectives should be as specific as possible, so that they can be measured at the end of the workterm experience. There is no magic number of learning objectives that should be developed for each workterm, but a good guideline would be for students to develop from 5 to 8 objectives for each

workterm.

### ***How do you write learning objectives?***

Writing SMART learning objectives is relatively easy. Smart objectives are:

S   pecific  
 M   easurable  
 A   chievable  
 R   ealistic, and  
 T   ruthful.

For each learning objective students have, make sure it answers the following four questions:

What is the task to be accomplished?  
 How will it be accomplished?  
 How will it be measured/evaluated and by whom?  
 When will it be completed?

**Learning Objective - Bad Form:** "I will learn to use a word processor."

**Learning Objective - Good Form:** "By August 15th, I will be able to execute Microsoft Word on a Macintosh computer incorporating advanced editing capabilities. I will attend a 2-day seminar on Microsoft Word and complete my workterm report using the program for evaluation by my coordinator."

### ***What are the types of learning objectives?***

Learning objectives fall into two main categories:

**Personal** - include developing or improving interpersonal, communication or other social skills that allow students to work more effectively. For example:

'By the end of my workterm (**when**), I will develop better listening skills (**what**) by practicing reflective questioning techniques (**how**) and I will submit a diary of these experiences to my supervisor for his/her evaluation (**evaluation**).'

**Professional** - include objectives aimed at practicing or improving a skill, learning a new task, solving a specific problem with measurable results or other professional objectives that would enable students to improve their work performance. For example:

'By July 1st (**when**), I will give a presentation to a group of at least ten people using a microphone and overheads (**what**). I will follow the guidelines outlined in the manual "Effective Presentations" (**how**) and will ask each participant to

evaluate the presentation for clarity, style and message (**evaluation**).

**Reprinted from the "Practical Hints, Tips and Information for Co-operative Education Students", 1997**

## Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE), Getting the Most out of Your Work Experience<sup>4</sup>

### *Co-op Tips & Techniques*

#### **Getting the Most out of Your Work Experience**

**Date: 2002-06-01**

**By: Quentin O'Mahony, University College of the Fraser Valley**

As we enter a new millennium the role of education and the work force is in the midst of great change. No longer is the primary function of post secondary education to challenge and expand our way of looking at the world around us. Today, the world of higher learning is preparing 'a ready-made employee' for the labour market. My own university experience has shown me this first hand.

Had it not been for that fateful day in the second year of my Bachelor of Arts degree at the University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) in Abbotsford, British Columbia, I may not be writing this article today. As a result of a classroom visit by the Co-operative Education Arts Coordinator, I was introduced to the world of Co-operative Education and have not looked back since.

Up and until that momentous day my time at university had been fairly enjoyable. My degree was well under way and I had a typical student life - student by day, waiter by night. However, I was beginning to worry about career options after graduation and felt my restaurant experience would not assist me in getting the most out of my degree. The Co-operative Education coordinator immediately struck a cord in me when it was mentioned during the class visit that co-operative education was all about gaining practical experience in a student's field of study.

Although I was earning a Bachelor Degree in History, my goal was not exactly to work in a museum. I had a life long dream of an international career, perhaps with the Foreign Service and I felt that enrolling in a co-operative education program might take me closer to my dreams. Although I quickly found out that the Co-operative Education Program at UCFV was very dynamic, as it presented me with a variety of first work term possibilities, I couldn't have imagined how far co-operative education was to take me.

My first work term in April 1996 was with the British Columbia provincial government as a Student Administrator for the Student Summer Works '96 employment program. I was responsible, along with two other co-op students, to allocate almost half a million dollars to find summer employment opportunities for over 250 students in the Fraser Valley region. This work term put me in contact with a number of employers in the region and taught me valuable administrative and office skills. I ended up staying on for a second four-month co-op term in September, in order to wrap up the employment

<sup>4</sup> Source: <http://www.cafce.ca/pages/cooptips.php?id=24> accessed April 24, 2006

program. During this time, I compiled and submitted a comprehensive report on the program outcomes to the then Provincial Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. This report later won UCFV's 1997 Co-operative Education Writing Award for the Faculty of Arts.

Before my next co-op term the following summer, a unique opportunity presented itself to me through a contact I made on my first work term. I had worked with the International Education Department at UCFV when they hired a couple of students through the summer employment program. The department was now looking for applicants to go to Japan for a semester to study at UCFV's sister institution in Hokkaido. I jumped at the opportunity to apply, and was successful in representing UCFV in Japan for an academic semester during the spring of 1997. This opportunity was absolutely amazing as I saw my international goals beginning to become a reality.

When I returned to Abbotsford I set about looking for my third co-op term when a truly outstanding opportunity presented itself. The Centre for Co-operative Education and Employment Services was looking to fill a new position - Program Administrator for a Youth International Internship Program. My previous co-op experience coupled with my Japanese experience gave me a competitive advantage and helped me secure a position for my third and fourth co-op terms.

This was a dream opportunity - and I was ready for it. I needed to put all of my previous skills and experiences to work to allocate a program budget of over \$300,000. When all was said and done, the program was successful: 26 interns working in 12 different countries on every continent, except Antarctica. This included two interns going to work in the Japanese city where I had studied the previous year. The position required that I visit countries from Mexico to South Africa and many points in between. The places and events of my history, political science and economic textbooks came to life each and every time I explored a potential country for a potential internship. I spent a total of six weeks of my two work terms literally "on the road", traveling and meeting with international companies, embassies and some of the interns at their work sites.

The eight months I spent administering the Youth International Internship Program gave me experiences beyond my imagination. I explored ancient ruins in Korea, caught the subway between meetings in Singapore and arranged for the safe departure of two interns from Indonesia when that country experienced political instability in the spring of 1998. It was a fast-paced, exciting position that had me communicating all over the globe through faxes, e-mails and telephone calls at all hours of the day. I was sorry to say goodbye to the international program when my co-op term ended and I graduated with my bachelor degree in June of 1998.

So as a new graduate what was I to do? How could I put my co-op experience to use to find meaningful employment? Well I explored internship opportunities for recent grads and came across a great opportunity through UCFV's Employment Services office.

The British Columbia Legislative Assembly hired seven graduates each year to

be legislative interns in Victoria. The process was competitive and many of the top graduates from B.C.'s universities applied. I was successful and became UCFV's first grad to have the opportunity. When I met with the other new interns and discussed with the internship organizers what made for a successful candidate, it came down to one large factor in my case B my co-operative education experience.

As an intern I spent some time with the Ministry of the Attorney General and put my office and networking skills to use to secure a meeting with the attorney general himself. I rubbed shoulders regularly with leading politicians, including the premier. It was another fast-paced and exciting work environment that enhanced the skills I had acquired throughout my degree.

With the current political climate in British Columbia being very divided and confrontational, I soon found myself exploring other career options. It was not long before I returned to my roots, so to speak, and was hired on by the Centre for Co-operative Education and Employment Services at UCFV to run the day-to-day operations in Employment Services. I was now working for my Alma Mater, assisting students to find employment opportunities and sharing the many employment tips I had picked up along the way. This was the latest development in a great relationship with the University College of the Fraser Valley's Centre for Co-operative Education and Employment Services.

Earning a university degree is no longer a guarantee of a job. So, for today's post-secondary students gaining the skills to make yourself more employable has become all the more important. Co-operative education and graduate internship programs provide post-secondary students the opportunity to follow their dreams while turning them into the skilled and sought after graduate labour force of the next millennium. Explore the co-operative education opportunities at your institution – you can only imagine where it might take you.

**Reprinted from the "Practical Hints, Tips and Information for Co-operative Education Students", 2002**

**Appendix 4**

## Employer Evaluation of Co-op Student

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Direct Line:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Web Page Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Company:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester:** Winter (Jan.-Apr.)  Summer (May-Aug.)  Fall (Sept.-Dec.)

**Co-op Program:**

Bachelor of Science in:		Bachelor of Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biological Sciences	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor of Business Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemical Biology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor of Natural Resource Science	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemistry/Environmental Chemistry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelor of Tourism Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer Systems: Operations & Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Architectural and Engineering Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computing Science	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Bachelor of Computing Science	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**TO THE EMPLOYER AND SUPERVISOR OF STUDENT**

- ◇ We encourage you to discuss your evaluation with the student before s/he leaves the Work Term. Our students welcome feedback on their job performance and see constructive criticism as part of the learning process.
- ◇ TRU also welcomes feedback on our programs. Please use the box on the last page to record your comments.
- ◇ Please complete this form before the end of the Work Term and return it to the address below.

Thank you for playing a key role in making the TRU Co-operative Education Programs a success!

**PLEASE RETURN TO:** Career Education Department  
Thompson Rivers University  
Box 3010  
900 McGill Road  
Kamloops, BC V2C 5N3

Tel: 250.371.5627  
Fax: 250.828.5014  
Email: [careereducation@tru.ca](mailto:careereducation@tru.ca)  
Web: [www.tru.ca/careereducation](http://www.tru.ca/careereducation)

**Interest in Work**

- High interest in job. Very enthusiastic.
- More than average amount of interest and enthusiasm for job.
- Satisfactory amount of interest and enthusiasm for job.
- Interest spasmodic. Occasionally enthusiastic.
- Little interest or enthusiasm for job.

**Initiative**

- Self-starter. Looks for work to do. Asks for new jobs.
- Acts voluntarily in most matters.
- Acts voluntarily in routine matters.
- Relies on others. Must be told frequently what to do.
- Usually waits to be told what to do next.

**Organization/Planning**

- Does an excellent job of planning and organizing work.
- Very good job of organizing work.
- Does normal amount of planning and organizing.
- More often than not fails to organize and plan work effectively.
- Consistently fails to organize and plan work effectively.

**Ability to Learn**

- Exceptionally quick to learn.
- Quick to learn.
- Average.
- Slow to learn.
- Very slow to learn.

**Quality of Work**

- Very thorough in performing work. Errors very few if any.
- Good work. Thorough. Few errors.
- Work usually passes review. Has normal amount of errors.
- More than average amount of errors for a trainee.
- Work usually done in careless manner. Often makes errors.

**Quantity of Work**

- Highly productive.
- More than expected.
- Expected amount of productivity for a student.
- Less than expected.
- Very low.

**Judgement**

- Exceptionally good. Decisions based on thorough analysis of problem.
- Uses good common sense. Usually makes good decisions.
- Judgement usually good in routine situations.
- Judgement often unreliable.
- Poor judgement. Jumps to conclusions without sufficient knowledge.

**Dependability**

- Can always be depended upon in any situation.
- Can usually be depended upon in most situations.
- Can be depended upon in routine situations.
- Somewhat unreliable, needs above average checking.
- Unreliable.

**Interpersonal Skills**

- Always works in harmony with others. An excellent team worker.
- Congenial and helpful. Works well with associates.
- Most relations with others are harmonious under normal circumstances.
- Difficult to work with at times. Sometimes has difficulty with others.
- Frequently quarrelsome and causes friction.



### Leadership Qualities

- Excellent, promotes enthusiasm, can direct others.
- Above average. Has good leadership potential.
- Adequate. Can take on leadership role if required.
- Poor, unable to organize and motivate the work of others.
- Not approachable.

### Response to Supervision

- Expresses appreciation and takes prompt action on suggestions by supervisor. Very open-minded and confident.
- Willingly accepts suggestions and feedback by supervisor.
- Accepts suggestions by supervisor in a satisfactory manner.
- Reluctantly accepts suggestions and criticism by supervisor. Sometimes fails to recognize own limitations and need to ask for direction.
- Resents suggestions and criticism by supervisor or needs close supervision or has difficulty in accepting change.  
**(Underline appropriate phrase)**

### Written Communication

- Always clear, well organized, concise readable with few errors.
- Normally very clear, well organized and easily read.
- Satisfactory, occasionally encounters difficulty in writing clearly and concisely.
- Not clear to the extent that it causes confusion or interferes with the performance of work.
- Unsatisfactory written skills.
- N/A

### Listening Skills

- Excellent listening skills. Comprehends what is requested. Ensures there are no misunderstandings.
- Listens effectively. If misunderstandings occur, usually asks for clarification.
- Satisfactory listening skills.
- Poorer than expected. Too many misunderstandings. Does not repeat or clarify instructions.
- Unsatisfactory listening skills.

### Adaptation to Formal Organizations, Rules and Policies

- Excellent, adapted to and recognized formal organization structures, rules and policies.
- Has above average understanding of how organization operates.
- Adequate. Accepts own role within organization.
- Poor, refused to recognize formal procedures and rules.
- Even after direction from supervisor, refuses to follow rules.

### Use of Technology, Instruments, Tools and Information Systems

- Excellent knowledge and use of available technologies, tools etc.
- Above average knowledge and use of tools etc.
- Satisfactory knowledge and use of tools etc.
- Less than expected.
- Inadequate knowledge and use of tools etc.

### Troubleshooting/Problem Solving Skills

- Excellent, shows clear train of thought and logical steps followed.
- Very good. Shows a clear thought process. Is able to solve problems.
- Satisfactory troubleshooting and problem solving skills.
- Slow to determine source of problem and to determine viable solutions.
- Inadequate problem solving skills.

Attendance <input type="radio"/> Regular <input type="radio"/> Irregular	Punctuality <input type="radio"/> Regular <input type="radio"/> Irregular	Grooming <input type="radio"/> Appropriate <input type="radio"/> Inappropriate
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Areas of Strength 1. _____  2. _____	Areas for Improvement 1. _____  2. _____
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*Overall Performance*

+ Outstanding -	+ Very Good -	+ Average -	+ Margina -	Unsatisfactory

This Evaluation has been discussed with the student. <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Do you wish to have this student return next work term if employment is available? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
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Supervisor's Signature	Title	Department	Date
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Comments on Student's Overall Performance:

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Student's Comments:

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Employer comments on TRU Program (curriculum, pre-employment prep, co-op services, etc.)

## WORK TERM REPORT GUIDELINES

There are several types of work term reports available, and students are encouraged to try different formats. You are advised to consult the detailed Work Term Report Guidelines found on WebCT for specific requirements and other helpful information.

- 1) A **General Report** is an overview of your workplace and work term experience.
- 2) A **Document Report** may be written if your Co-op employer required that you complete a document, manual, or report as part of your job duties. If you choose to do a Document Report you must submit a Co-op Title Page, Introduction, Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.
- 3) A **Technical Report** is written on one specific aspect of your work term. This report could be focused on a specific technology, project or other aspect of your work term. This report must also include a Co-op Title Page, Introduction, Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.
- 4) A **Diary Report** describes one week on your work term. This report must also include a Co-op Title Page, Introduction, Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.
- 5) An **Oral Presentation** is made to an audience that may be comprised of Business faculty, staff, and students. You would choose a main theme and 4-6 key points that relate to the main theme.
- 6) A **Career Portfolio** is an opportunity for you to showcase your accomplishments in preparation for an effective graduate work search. **\*\*\*\*If you completed a career portfolio in Co-op 1000 you cannot use this option as a work term assignment\*\*\*\***
- 7) A **POSTER**-Discuss this option with your Co-op Coordinator for process and requirements
- 8) **Other Options** may be possible with the approval of your Co-op Coordinator.

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES

**A final assignment is required at the completion of every 4 month work term.**

**Due dates will be sent to you by your Co-op Coordinator.**

**It is your responsibility to understand all assignment due dates and submit your assignments on time.**