

CO-OP SURVIVAL GUIDE 2013-2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on joining the University of Ottawa’s CO-OP Programs! The CO-OP Student Association (CSA), comprised of active CO-OP students, helps enhance your CO-OP experience and get the most from the opportunities your program offers. CSA provides orientation, helps with faculty and departmental issues and organizes social events such as the CO-OP graduation and pub nights. CSA works with the CO-OP Office to ensure that your expectations are met and your concerns are addressed. This survival guide is designed to help you get the most out of your CO-OP experience.

2. FINDING A JOB

Q: OTTAWA IS A “GOVERNMENT TOWN.” DOES THIS MEAN THE CO-OP OFFICE POSTS MAINLY GOVERNMENT JOBS?

A: It depends on your program, but for the most part, yes. When searching for jobs in the COOP Navigator, expect to see many government agencies or crown corporations located in Ottawa. Other jobs (private or otherwise) certainly do exist, with a few located outside the National Capital Region (Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, etc.). Government employers must favour the hiring of Canadian citizens. Therefore, students with permanent resident status or student a visa will need to apply for more jobs, especially outside the public sector, and be willing to move in order to secure employment. Get a sense of the employment market by watching the Realities of the Job Market videos online through [Blackboard Learn](#).

Q: CAN I FIND MY OWN JOB? WHAT’S THE PROCESS INVOLVED?

A: Yes. However, we recommend that you start your job search well before your work term is scheduled to begin (at least six months ahead of time) since you’ll be responsible for both finding the job and arranging interviews. It’s important for you to tell the CO-OP Office that you’re looking for a job yourself. If you do decide to search for your own job, you can take part in the standard CO-OP application process as well. Expect to be very busy, though! A job you find on your own must be approved by the CO-OP Office, and your employer has to provide us with a job description. A great resource is the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP). You can also refer to [Finding My Own Job](#) on the CO-OP website. But of course, the CO OP Office can still support you in your search.

Q: ARE THERE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

If you’re an international student, you don’t need a work permit to work on campus; however, you must apply for an off-campus work permit at least six months prior to applying for the CO-OP program (visit the International Office website to get eligibility information). Also, be sure to get a criminal record excerpt before leaving your current country of residence if this country is not your home country (where you have citizenship status). For example, if you were born in Nigeria and lived in Germany for five years prior to beginning your studies in Canada, you must request the excerpt in Germany. The excerpt is also required when you apply for Government of Canada reliability security clearance if you’ve lived in Canada for more than five years. The excerpt is essentially confirmation of good conduct or absence of criminal record.

Q: HOW MANY JOBS SHOULD I APPLY FOR?

A: Follow the guidelines given in the **Applying for CO-OP Jobs** online workshop through [Blackboard Learn](#). For the first work term, you'll want to apply for as many jobs as possible. Essentially, for your first work term, remember this: Apply! Apply! Apply! But for subsequent work terms, you can be more selective as you progress through your CO-OP terms because you continue to gain more experience with each work placement. Applying for more jobs does mean more interviews, which also means you have to put more time aside for learning about the employer and their market or field as well as going to interviews. Attending many interviews can become overwhelming, though. If you're offered quite a few interviews while you still have jobs pending, usually someone in the CO-OP Office will contact you to ask if you'd like the rest of your pending jobs cancelled, in case you're finding the possibility of even more interviews too stressful. But keep in mind that if you decide to have your pending jobs cancelled, they will all be cancelled. You can't cancel only select jobs. It's all or nothing. For more information about applying to jobs, be sure to have a look at the CO-OP Office's [Applying for CO-OP Jobs](#) workbook.

Q: WHAT IF THE JOB DESCRIPTION IS VAGUE AND DOESN'T FULLY DESCRIBE THE JOB? SHOULD I STILL APPLY?

A: Don't rule out applying for a job just because it has a vague or short job description. If it seems interesting to you, apply for it. And if you're called for an interview, you'll find out more about the job then. In the meantime, you can always ask the CO-OP coordinator for your program if they can tell you more about that particular job. It might also be a good idea to check out the department you'd be working in on the company's web site to get a better idea of the kind of work they do and that you would be doing there.

Q: WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MY RESUMÉ?

A: Danielle Morin, Linda Orrell and Nicole Miller are the "resume experts" at the CO-OP Office. You can contact the CO-OP Office to make an appointment or for answers to any questions you may have at 613-562-5741 or coop@uOttawa.ca. Remember, this service is available throughout the entire time you're in a CO-OP program, so don't hesitate to book an appointment.

3. CO-OP INTERVIEWS

Q: WHEN ARE INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED?

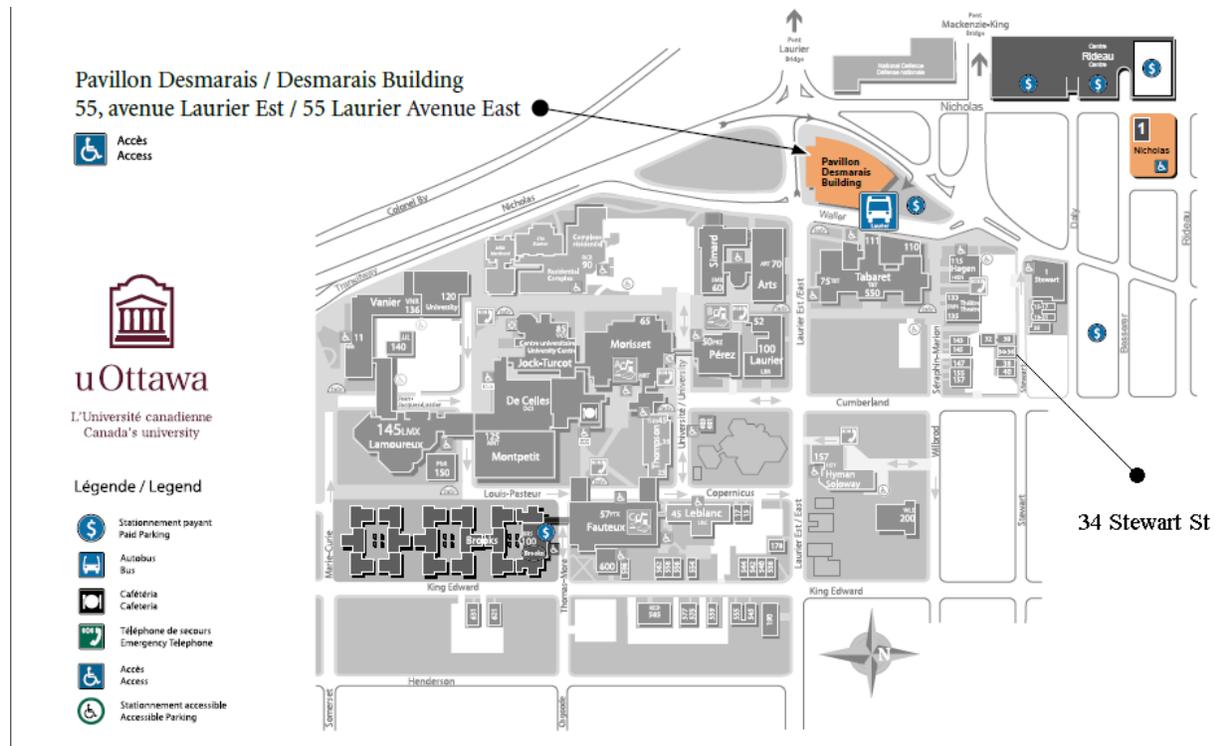
A: Anytime during the regular workday (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), sometimes with very short notice. You may have to miss a class to accommodate an employer's interview schedule. If you have a conflict between a mid-term exam or test and an interview, notify the CO-OP Office staff immediately, and they'll do their best to change your interview time. The CO-OP Office will not set up interviews that cause a conflict. During the second round of interviews, you may need to be available for interviews during reading week. You can find out when second round starts for your program by going on the [CO-OP Programs](#) website, under **Upcoming Key Dates** on the right-hand side.

Q: WHERE DO INTERVIEWS TAKE PLACE?

A: First-round interviews take place either on the third floor of Desmarais near the CO-OP Office (55 Laurier Avenue East) or at 34 Stewart Street. Second-round interviews are usually at the employer's location, so be sure to check the location for every interview. You must arrange your own transportation to second-round interviews.

Make sure you arrive at least 15 minutes early for all your interviews—you won't have time to collect your thoughts before game time if you're rushing in at the last minute!

Figure 1: CO-OP interview locations



Q: SHOULD I EXPECT A LOT OF INTERVIEWS FOR MY FIRST WORK TERM?

A: You'll be competing with students who are on their last work term, so apply to as many jobs as possible to increase your chances. Don't worry if you don't get many interviews in the first round—this is usual for students in their first year. Just stay positive and keep applying!

Q: HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS?

A: One of the first things you can do is research the company. Find out the organization's mission or mandate, what current projects are under way, how it operates, etc. Arriving at an interview without knowing anything about the employer is not very professional. Be ready to answer their questions if they ask you what you know about their company or business activities.

Another thing you can do is to go through the list of responsibilities and qualifications for the job and match your skills and experience to them. This will help you a lot when you're answering questions, particularly questions about why you think you're a good candidate for the position.

You can also schedule a mock interview with staff at the CO-OP Office. This is a great way to practice, and it can really boost your confidence. Mock interviews prepare you for all types of questions, and you'll have the opportunity to get feedback on your interview strengths and weaknesses.

Another important point is to dress professionally. You may feel overdressed, but employers see your attire as a measure of how seriously you take the job interview...and the job. It also shows respect towards the employer and creates a good first impression.

Last but not least—relax! Most employers fully understand what it's like to be a student looking for employment. Most people will quickly try to make you feel as comfortable as possible. Skills are only part of getting a job; employers are also looking for individuals who make good co-workers. Remember that they are selling themselves to you just as much as you're selling yourself to them, so be confident and act naturally.

Q: WHAT TYPES OF QUESTIONS WILL I BE ASKED DURING MY CO-OP INTERVIEWS?

A: Although CO-OP interviews can vary, the general structure tends to be similar. For example, most interviews start with a brief overview of the department, company or organization. The interviewer will then ask a number of questions, usually up to 10 questions. Finally, interviews usually conclude with the interviewer asking you if you have any questions (make sure you do...it shows you're well prepared and shows your interest in the job). There are many different types of questions—including technical, background information and scenario questions, and interviewers usually ask several different kinds. Some examples are outlined below.

What do you know about our organization? This question serves to inform the interviewer whether you took the time to prepare for the interview, and can also indicate to them how interested you are in working for their company. It is important that you review the job description, website and other sources prior to the interview to ensure that you have some background information to draw from in order to answer this question effectively.

Can you tell us a little about yourself? This question serves as an icebreaker for the interviewer to learn a little about you. As the interviewee, you can use this opportunity to mention attributes or activities that aren't included in your resume that may be related to the job description. For example, if you're an athletic person, you could mention that you enjoy playing sports, which has taught you to be a team player. In general, try to respond with information about yourself that relates back to the skills and qualities the employer stated in the job description.

Why should we hire you? What makes you the best candidate for this position? Employers also want to know why YOU think you would be good for the job. This is your chance to shine above the competition. This question also helps the interviewer determine how interested you are in the job. Make sure you take the time to prepare a good answer for this question.

What is your greatest weakness? This is a question that is often asked in interviews. The key to answering it is to first state a weakness, such as sometimes becoming overwhelmed with a busy schedule. Then, follow up with a number of ways that you've been able to overcome this weakness. For example, you could state that you're capable of organizing your tasks and in order focus on the project at hand. As a result, even though you may feel overwhelmed with multiple priorities, through your strong organization skills and commitment, you're able to overcome this weakness. Finally, never say that your greatest weakness is that you're a perfectionist. This is very cliché.

How would you handle multiple priorities with conflicting deadlines? This type of question will involve something like a scenario where you've been asked to organize a meeting for your team, prepare a short summary for your supervisor and work on a research project. Then you'll be asked something like, "How would you ensure that everything is completed on time?" Your answer demonstrates your time management and prioritization skills. You must first show the interviewer that you can identify which tasks are the most important and then demonstrate

how you would complete the tasks. To support your answer, draw on personal experience, such as how you created a schedule during exams to complete all papers on time.

How would you deal with a difficult team member? Again, this will involve a scenario such as one where you've been assigned a project with your team, but you have one team member who is often difficult to work with and rarely contributes to a project. How would you address the situation? The point of a question like this is to show the interviewer that you have problem-solving skills as well as people skills. One of the most effective ways to address these types of questions is to draw on personal experience. For example, make reference to a group project for a class in which you had to deal with a difficult person. Finally, focus on how you were successful in solving the problem.

For more information on typical (and unusual!) interview questions, check out the CO-OP Office's [CO-OP Interviews](#) workbook—it's full of different interview questions students have been asked over the years.

Q: HOW SHOULD I RANK MY CO-OP JOBS?

A: Ranking CO-OP jobs isn't always easy because you may be the number "1" choice for more than one organization. A match for a position is certain if an organization has ranked you number "1" and you have ranked that organization number "1." We strongly recommend you rank an organization as number "1" if that's how they've ranked you, since this will lead to a guaranteed job offer. If several organizations have ranked you number "1," rank your preferred organization as "1." You can use this rank for only one organization although you can rank multiple organization as "2," "3," etc. When you're ranking organizations, rank them based on your interest in the job and on how you feel the interview went. You also have the option of ranking **one** organization as "X" if you do **not** want to work at that organization. However, reserve this ranking for situations where you are very strongly opposed to working for the employer.

Q: WHAT IF I DON'T FIND A POSITION?

A: Even if you don't have a placement by the beginning of the work term, don't worry—students can be placed as late as halfway through the session for the work term. As long as you're making an effort (i.e. applying for a many jobs, booking mock interview sessions with the professional development specialists, etc.), the CO-OP Office will do its very best to ensure you have a placement for the summer. If in the end you're unable to find a position for your first term—and provided you participated actively in the placement process (e.g. applied to a significant number of jobs, attended all applicable CO-OP workshops, set up appointments with CO-OP specialists to improve your resumé and interview skills), the CO-OP Office will refund your fee for that work term. You can still participate in the process for the next work term.

Tip: If time is running out but you haven't been offered a job that you're very interested in, start considering jobs you find a little less interesting. No matter how boring you may find a job, you'll still gain professional experience and get a reference you can use during the next application round. All CO-OP job experiences look better on a resume than one at a fast-food restaurant!

4. WORK-TERM FAQs

Here are some answers to common questions from seasoned CO-OP students.

Q: HOW DOES THE PAY SYSTEM WORK?

A: Your supervisors usually handle pay. If they aren't in charge of pay, be sure to find out during your first week. Your supervisor or another employee will know who can answer your questions. If you're working for a government office or a large company, you'll likely find there is a Human Resources department that you can contact to sort out your payroll paperwork.

Q: NO ONE HAS TOLD ME WHAT TO DO YET. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A: Many CO-OP students find their first placement to be a big adjustment. No one tells you what you're supposed to be doing every minute, so sometimes you'll find yourself sitting around wondering just what you should be up to. The first week usually involves training and adjustment to the work setting. Don't worry about major projects or assignments at this point; things pick up soon after. Usually there's a lot of reading to do. If you're replacing a previous CO-OP student, look for a transition report from the previous student that may explain where ongoing projects have been left off and how to get started.

Q: WHAT DO I DO IF I AM NOT BUSY ENOUGH DURING A PLACEMENT?

A: Don't be afraid to tell your supervisor you need work. Even if they don't have anything to give you at that moment, they'll prepare something for you. They'll also be impressed by your initiative.

If your supervisor seems too busy to give you work or provide you with feedback on your progress, try suggesting short weekly meetings for updates on your progress. This is an opportunity to highlight what you've been working on, which can help you get a great evaluation.

Be sure to set work-term objectives for yourself and to discuss them with your supervisor. This helps you organize your work and evaluate your progress throughout the placement.

Take the initiative. For instance, read additional material or go the extra mile on a project. With the approval of your supervisor, you could re-organize some wayward files, create a database for the files on a shared directory or undertake a work-related project of your own. Finding ways to do common tasks more efficiently is always welcome. This often involves tasks that everyone is too busy to do, and your supervisor will appreciate the extra work you've put in. If the situation doesn't improve, contact the CO-OP Office.

If you've explored all options to no avail, consider beginning your CO-OP work-term report outline or even writing your report.

Q: WHAT CAN I DO IF MY JOB DOESN'T MATCH THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN BY THE EMPLOYER?

A: Unfortunately, job requirements often change in the real world. If your job is not what you expected, you can contact your supervisor or just adapt to the employer's needs. If real difficulties arise, contact the CO-OP Office. The staff will evaluate the situation and take the appropriate action.

Tip: Remember to always take initiative to get the most from your work-term experience. For example you could ask if it's possible to attend meetings even though they may not be directly related to your tasks, or ask if one of

your experienced colleagues can act as a mentor to you. This type of initiative will not only help you build a solid network but also greatly contribute to knowing how to succeed in your field.

5. FACULTY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

ARTS

Don't panic if you see only a few jobs available to people in your specific department. With fewer students registered in your program, there's a little less competition for the jobs posted. While many of the workshops you attend will seem geared toward larger faculties and schools like engineering or Telfer, be sure to ask questions. You need to voice your opinions in order to get feedback.

When applying for jobs, diversify! Look into related fields. Not only does this give you an opportunity to see what else is being offered outside your program but you also might find the perfect job!

SOCIAL SCIENCES

During your studies, you'll have acquired some highly transferable skills. Whatever field you're studying, you're learning how to think critically. You'll be amazed at how your coursework applies to the work you do outside of university. Be sure to try different jobs. You never know what you're going to like, and you may just stumble across something wonderful. If it turns out that you don't like your job, keep in mind that you'll only be there for four months and that you've just narrowed down your search for your future dream job. Rarely in a lifetime are you given the opportunity to switch jobs after such a short time.

If you're in international development or another highly specialized program, keep in mind that there may not be many placements available that are directly related to your field. So be open to jobs outside your discipline for your first work term and to positions that apply indirectly to your studies. Remember that as a future social scientist, you'll have developed keen analytical and organizational skills...so use them to your advantage! With each placement you complete, you'll be able to use that experience to sharpen your skills even more, which then improves your chances of finding a more pertinent CO-OP placement in the future.

SCIENCE

Opting for the CO-OP stream in science provides you with an opportunity to gain invaluable experience in a laboratory, in an office setting applying your science knowledge or doing field work.

Be prepared to "go where the jobs are." Applying for jobs outside the National Capital Region is essential since an increasing number of job opportunities, especially in the private sector, are located elsewhere in Canada and in the U.S. Given the increasingly competitive nature of the job market, you'll need to apply for jobs posted on COOP Navigator AND search for jobs on your own. Be sure to take advantage the services we offer to help you develop and pursue a job-search strategy.

Prepare for the interview as you would for a test. Find out as much as you can about the employer and their market and be prepared to demonstrate how you would be an asset to the organization.

During an interview for a research position, you may have to answer questions on everything from the equipment and methods you'll be using to the research currently being done and lab safety.

Field courses are a great way to get experience, but you must be very careful to plan ahead. Be sure to get the employer's approval to change your start or end date in order to accommodate a field course. Be aware, however, that the employer is under no obligation to approve this. Check your contract start and end dates before signing any documents.

MANAGEMENT

CO-OP has many jobs available for business majors, most of which are at government departments in Ottawa. There are typically a few available with crown corporations (but not necessarily in Ottawa); however, even fewer are available with private-sector businesses. Management students must submit a proposal in addition to a work-term report. For information on the requirements, visit the CO-OP Office's [Work-Term and Report Guidelines and Examples](#) page. Another good resource for proposal and report hand-in instructions and guidelines is the [CO-OP section](#) of Doc-Depot

ENGINEERING

In the engineering field, you have more control over your work term than you might think. Both the private and public sectors give students considerable flexibility in taking charge of their work terms. If you push for more responsibility and show your employers that you can make things happen, you're more likely to be rewarded with long-term contacts (e.g. subsequent CO-OP terms, job offers after graduation), in addition to an incredible experience!

There's great potential for crossover in programs related to information technology (CSI, SEG, CEG and ELG). Many jobs are advertised to draw candidates from several (or all) of the IT programs. The job description might give you an idea about which program the work is traditionally associated with, but don't let this deter you if you're in one of the other programs. If you feel you have the skills required for the job and are interested in the work, you shouldn't hesitate to apply for it. The key is to make sure you highlight the skills on your resumé that the employer is seeking. The interview then becomes an opportunity for both you and the employer to gauge the fit between you, the employer and the job.

CSI and SEG: Jobs abound for students in software-oriented disciplines, both in the private and public sectors. Please note that while we receive more IT job placements than we do in other fields, students may still find it challenging to secure a summer placement due to the higher number of students looking for work at this time. Since fall and winter work terms have fewer candidates looking for positions, employer demand for students is typically greater at these times. IT-related work is becoming increasingly software-based; as a result, you shouldn't discount software jobs in fields that you may not intuitively associate with software and programming. Don't restrict yourself to only the companies known in the software business—there are lots of other interesting opportunities out there.

ELG and CEG: You likely won't start of designing hardware on a CO-OP work term; you might have to begin in a position that involves testing or technical support and work your way up. As was mentioned, however, software and programming positions are prevalent in "non-software" fields. Working in such a job is another way you can discover other companies that have positions or departments you may find interesting. In addition to having specialized knowledge, CEG and ELG students should maintain their basic programming skills in order to be considered a good overall candidate.

MCG, CHG and MGB: If you're specializing in the industrial sector, you'll find that the jobs you're interested in are typically located outside of the Ottawa area. Placements in Ottawa most often involve positions in offices. Many engineers become project managers working in an office setting, so a position in an Ottawa office can nonetheless give you valuable experience.

CIVIL LAW

Although law is a very competitive field, the majority of our students find rewarding and high-quality work placements in their discipline. Some law students decide to use their knowledge and experience in a field not directly related to law. By doing so, they can develop new skills in a field that offers a rewarding and varied career. Regardless of your career goals, you can be confident you're studying in a discipline with ample opportunities for a career in diverse fields.

GRADUATE STUDIES

Graduate studies provide you with advanced research and analytical skills as well as greater technical experience, which is the expertise that some employers are seeking. However, competition with undergraduate students for placements will be strong since some employers consider work experience to be a greater asset than a higher number of years of education. For these employers, an undergraduate student looking to complete a final placement may seem a better choice.

Please note that your placement will not necessarily be directly related to your thesis topic or research project.

M-MIS: This program is still relatively new to the University and to CO-OP. The job market has been pretty health ever since the program was introduced, with the majority of opportunities being with government departments in Ottawa and Gatineau. The number of M-MIS students admitted to CO-OP has averaged between eight and ten per year, and so all students have always been able to find placements relatively easily. Many of the available positions are on the information management side, so competition for the few library-related roles we receive is usually high. Any students eager to work at a library should search for their own job in addition to applying to those offered through the CO-OP Office.

M-CSI: Despite being in a master's program, students in this program often apply for the same positions as our undergraduate students—typically programming, testing and database-related positions. Master's students should not, however, expect employers to pay them a higher salary, because most salaries will be based on work experience. Any students specializing in a specific research area and who would like to find a CO-OP placement related to their research should search for their own job in addition to applying to those offered through the CO-OP Office.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

Students doing integrated degree programs, such as Biochemistry and Chemical Engineering (Biotechnology) or Chemical Engineering and Computing Technology, should be aware of specific information about their degree programs and CO-OP.

Since your CO-OP status is linked to only one of your degrees, you must remain in that degree program in order to stay in your CO-OP program. As a result, it's very important that you check with the CO-OP Office before making any changes to your degree program.

You can apply to jobs in any discipline if you think you have the qualifications, and be sure to apply for jobs in both of your degree fields. This will provide you with more options, especially helpful for your first work term when finding a placement can be tougher.

6. CO-OP MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM?

The CO-OP Mentorship Program encourages exchanges between CO-OP peers and helps improve student satisfaction and increase motivation. You can talk to your mentor about anything from campus services to long-term professional goal-planning. Mentoring can take place in person, by phone or email and on Facebook, BBM, MSN, etc...or any other avenue that works for you both. As a CO-OP mentee, you'll be involved with your mentor for about nine months. You'll be able to hear from your peers about the realities of the CO-OP experience. You'll get practical advice from a senior CO-OP student on things like the placement process, work terms and work-term reports. You can learn about the different services and types of support available from the CO-OP Office and on the University of Ottawa campus, get tips on how to prepare for work terms and receive pointers on how to succeed in CO-OP. No question is too big or too small...from how to answer certain interview questions to what to wear on your first day. A mentor can be a great resource for you!

WHAT IS A CO-OP MENTOR?

CO-OP mentors are student volunteers who are enrolled in a University of Ottawa CO-OP program and have completed at least one work term.

WHAT IS A CO-OP MENTEE?

CO-OP mentees are students who are enrolled in a University of Ottawa CO-OP program and would like to learn from more senior CO-OP students as they begin their CO-OP experience. Mentees are about to complete their first work term and are looking for some support and to learn from a more senior CO-OP student.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Students interested in being paired with a mentor can book an appointment with the mentorship program coordinator. During the appointment, the student will look over mentor profiles with the coordinator and choose a mentor they feel best suits them.
- The CO-OP coordinator contacts the mentor the student has chosen.
- The mentor then contacts the mentee and sets up a meeting in person.
- After the first meeting, mentor and mentee can meet in person or communicate by email or any other way that works for them. They'll continue up until the mentee's work-term report is submitted.
- The relationship, which typically lasts nine months, is an informal one suited to the mentee's needs.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Please contact Linda Orrell, the mentorship program coordinator, at linda.orrell@uOttawa.ca.

Note: If you're interested in becoming a CO-OP mentor or mentee for 2013-2014, please send an email to linda.orrell@uOttawa.ca.

7. TIPS FOR YOUR WORK-TERM REPORT

1. [General guidelines for writing reports](#) and a number of other documents are available online. Be sure to read them carefully.
2. Report requirements differ by faculty (particularly for Telfer students). [Sample reports](#) from previous years for some of the programs are available on the CO-OP website.
3. Be sure to have a look at [important CO-OP dates](#) so you're aware of key dates, like deadlines for submitting work-term reports.
4. Work-term reports are graded by a professor from your department. You can find the name of the [professor responsible for your program](#) on the CO-OP website.
5. Be sure to speak with your professor(s) if you're unsure exactly what to include in your report or unclear on how to write it. They can provide you with a general outline of what they're looking for. You can also discuss past work-term reports with your professors to receive additional feedback as you prepare your current work-term report.
6. The CO-OP Student's Association conducted a survey and found that many professors see the work-term report as a way for students to strengthen their writing skills and style and to reflect on what they've accomplished, for professors to evaluate the quality and relevance of a placement and to provide a connection between the student's placement and their academic program. Try to keep your report professional but include personal experiences to generate interest at the same time. Remember too that being creative can be a good thing.
7. You might want to approach your supervisor for help if you're stuck. Ensure your report is completed before the end of the work term in order to allow your supervisor enough time to review the report.
8. Try to start planning your report early in your work term so you avoid rushing at the end. And you might find it tougher to get hold of professors in the summer months!
9. The CO-OP Office has a mentoring program with experienced CO-OP students who can answer your questions. If you'd like to meet a mentor, contact the CO-OP Office so staff can make the arrangements for you.
10. Remember to **pick up your graded work-term report** from your department office. Professors like discussing work-term reports with their students and will provide you with comments to help you improve your next report. Reports are generally graded before the end of the study session following your work term. Unfortunately, students often forget to pick up their reports...which means they never get any of this valuable feedback. Don't be one of them!!

Good luck and have fun!

8. INTERNATIONAL WORK TERMS

Many students would like to work abroad during one or more of their CO-OP work terms. The University of Ottawa CO-OP Office supports this goal and has several resources available for students interested in working abroad. There are several professional development specialists (see **Contact Information** section at the end of this guide) who specialize in helping students find work terms abroad. They can recommend institutions that specialize in international placements and, of course, review your cover letters and resumes.

Finding an international placement can be more challenging, but students who have succeeded in landing one have found it to be a very worthwhile experience. Generally, you have to begin searching earlier than you would for a domestic placement—as much as eight months in advance—because it can take more time to find a position in another country and there may be additional paperwork to complete (visa applications, collecting personal references, etc.). Keep in mind, too, that salaries for international placements tend to be lower than those with domestic companies. Each academic session, the CO-OP Office holds meetings for interested students in order to provide them with help in their job search.

Q: WHAT THINGS MUST I DO TO SECURE A WORK TERM ABROAD?

A: You have to do most of the job searching and research yourself, so start looking for your job well before your work term begins. Take into account the visa and documentation needs of the countries involved and always keep the CO-OP Office up to date on where you're at with your job search.

You can also make an appointment with a professional development specialist from the CO-OP Office, who can help you develop a plan of action and provide you with more information about working abroad.

Q: HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M ELIGIBLE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CO-OP PLACEMENT?

You're eligible to do an international CO-OP placement if you've paid your CO-OP fees, spoken with a CO-OP professional development specialist, attended all necessary pre-departure workshops and have completed at least one CO-OP work term.

Q: HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD I PLAN FOR A WORKTERM ABROAD?

Begin planning at least six to nine months in advance. It's never too early to begin planning your work term abroad. The longer you put off planning, the more stressful the experience will be.

Q: HOW MANY INTERNATIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS ARE POSTED IN COOP NAVIGATOR?

The vast majority of jobs posted in COOP Navigator are in Canada. However, there are the odd ones available in countries such as France, Germany, Brazil, the Netherlands, Italy, Ghana and the U.S. Since these opportunities are rare, we recommend you do your job search yourself if you're really set on going abroad.

Q: HOW CAN I GET MONEY TO FINANCE MY PLACEMENT ABROAD?

The CO-OP Office grants mobility bursaries for work terms that are unpaid, while several departments provide international mobility bursaries. You can also research the availability of scholarships and bursaries offered by the University of Ottawa, federal and provincial governments and private organizations.

Q: WHO PAYS FOR MY WORK PERMIT OR VISA, PASSPORT AND HEALTH INSURANCE?

Sometimes the student is responsible and sometimes it's the employer. This information should be indicated in the job description. If the employer isn't covering these expenses, students are responsible for the cost of obtaining a passport or visa as well as health and life insurance. Visit the Government of Canada's [Voyage.gc.ca](https://www.voyage.gc.ca) site for more information. The CO-OP Office's [Working Abroad](#) page provides information on working abroad and answers to frequently asked questions.

9. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Q: WHAT FEES DO I HAVE TO PAY IN A CO-OP PROGRAM?

CO-OP fees

CO-OP students must pay a \$650 administrative fee starting with the session before the first work term and every subsequent work term, up to and including the last one.

Students who aren't placed for a particular work term must pay the CO-OP fee for the study session prior to that work term, if there was one, but don't pay the CO-OP fee for the work term during which they weren't placed.

CO-OP students must pay tuition fees for each of their academic sessions as well as the incidental fees that students in the corresponding regular degree program pay. CO-OP students also pay tuition fees for any extra courses they take during work terms.

Q: HOW DOES A CO-OP WORK TERM AFFECT MY GOVERNMENT LOANS AND BURSARIES?

A: You must apply for financial aid for each of your study terms and will receive your bursaries or loans for each of your study terms, instead of annually. In addition, because you earn income during your work terms, the amount of funding you receive for subsequent study terms will likely be lower.

Q: ARE THERE ANY FORMS I NEED TO FILL OUT FOR A WORK-TERM?

If you are an Ontario resident doing a work term and receiving OSAP, you must submit an [OSAP Supplement form](#) confirming your status as a full-time student to the Financial Aid and Awards office prior to each work term. [Deadlines for CO-OP](#) are available online.

Q: DO I KEEP MY UNIVERSITY PRIVILEGES (E.G. UPASS, LIBRARY ACCESS) DURING MY WORK TERMS?

A: Yes. You're still considered a full-time student, and these services remain available to you. However, be aware that your uPass is not valid during the summer session (May to August, inclusive) and that for income tax purposes, you aren't considered a full-time student during your work terms.

10. CO-OP STUDENT ASSOCIATION (CSA)

Q: WHAT IS THE CO-OP STUDENT ASSOCIATION?

The CO-OP Student Association (CSA) is made up of a group of current CO-OP students whose goal is to help you have the best CO-OP experience possible and to get the most from the opportunities your program offers. CSA provides orientation, helps with faculty and departmental issues and organizes social events such as the CO-OP graduation and pub nights.

Q: WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION CAN I CONTACT CSA MEMBERS ABOUT?

You can contact members of your association to ask questions about the CO-OP program and experience, requirements, financial issues, types of jobs, interviews and more. Simply send an email to the general CSA email address (aec-csa@uOttawa.ca). The association webpage also has contact information for all CSA members. This way you can contact the right person to answer your questions.

Q: HOW CAN I JOIN CSA?

The CO-OP Student Association seeks new members twice a year, during the months of September and March. You can join CSA as long as you're registered in a CO-OP program. You can get more information online about the [CO-OP Student Association](#) and about joining.

11. CO-OP FAQs

Q: HOW STRICT IS THE WORK-TERM SEQUENCE I'M SUPPOSED TO FOLLOW?

A: Some flexibility is possible in the work-study sequence in special cases. For example, a student may choose to do an eight-month or year-long placement instead of the typical four-month placement. However, if you wish to make any changes, you must first contact Josée Williams at the CO-OP Office (see **Contact Information** section) to get your changes approved.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CGPA FALLS BELOW THE MINIMUM REQUIRED FOR MY PROGRAM? DO I HAVE TO LEAVE CO-OP?

A: If your CGPA falls below the minimum required by your program (6.0 for most programs), you're given two academic sessions to bring your CGPA back up to where it needs to be. These two probationary sessions apply only after your admission to the CO-OP Program has been approved. Please see the list of programs offered on the CO-OP website for all requirements and regulations.

Q: WILL I HAVE MANY COURSE CHOICES DURING THE SUMMER SESSION?

A: Generally, you won't have as many course options in the summer. As a result, plan your courses accordingly and talk to an academic advisor to make sure you'll complete your degree requirements on time. Another option is to complete some courses at Carleton University during the summer.

Make a habit of regularly checking course availability for each session. You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you're in your last year only to find out that the one course you need to graduate isn't being offered again for a few more sessions.

Q: IS IT POSSIBLE I MAY NOT RECEIVE CREDIT FOR A WORK TERM?

A: It's possible that you will not receive credit for a work term, or in some cases, may be asked to withdraw from your CO-OP program. This may occur, for example, if you choose not to also actively search for a placement, as required under your agreement with the CO-OP Office. Similarly, if you don't submit a work-term report, you may not receive credit for your placement.

Q: DOES MY WORK-TERM GRADE AFFECT MY CGPA?

You receive a Pass or Fail grade for your CO-OP work term. A Pass grade doesn't have any effect on your CGPA. However, a Fail grade will negatively affect your CGPA.

Q: WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON THE CO-OP PROGRAMS?

A: Staff at the CO-OP Office are always ready to answer your questions or address any concerns you may have. However, when possible, check the CO-OP website first for answers to frequently asked questions before you contact the CO-OP Office.

NOTE: When doing a fall work term (typically your third work term), you don't automatically become enrolled in the annual student health insurance. This occurs because the insurance premiums are billed annually on fall tuition invoices, which you don't receive when you're doing a fall work-term placement. If you'd like your coverage to continue, contact the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO) office at the start of the session to apply for coverage.

“Don't expect your boss to tell you when it's time to leave at the end of the day. At all my non-CO-OP jobs, my boss told me when I could go home. At my CO-OP job, I once waited around for an extra hour before I finally approached my boss and asked if I could leave. He laughed, and told me I was old enough now to dismiss myself!”

12. CONTACT INFORMATION

CSA: aec-csa@uOttawa.ca or on [Facebook](#)

CO-OP Office: coop@uOttawa.ca or 613-562-5741

Program Manager, Admissions and Liaison: Chantal Clément
chantal.clement@uOttawa.ca

CO-OP Program Manager: Josée Williams
josee.williams@uOttawa.ca

Professional development specialists

Nicole Miller: nicole.miller@uOttawa.ca

Linda Orrell: linda.orrell@uOttawa.ca

Danielle Morin: danielle.morin@uOttawa.ca

SFUO: [sfuo@uOttawa.ca](mailto:sfu@uOttawa.ca), www.sfu.ca or 613-562-5966

If you have any questions or comments about this guide, we'd love to hear from you. Please send your feedback by email to CSA. Thanks!