

# Co-op Student Handbook

## Haskayne Co-operative Education Program

Questions? Email [coop@haskayne.ucalgary.ca](mailto:coop@haskayne.ucalgary.ca)

[haskayne.ucalgary.ca](http://haskayne.ucalgary.ca)

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# RESOURCES

## Your support team

The Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) team is your main contact for all matters related to the Co-op Program as it part of WIL. They can help with the application and admission process, program requirements, challenges during your work term, and other related topics. Additionally, the Career Development Specialists (CDS) team will support you throughout your job search. You are encouraged to have your application materials reviewed, discuss the job search process, prepare for interviews, and seek advice on workplace concerns as soon as you are accepted into the program.

## Who do I talk to?

1. [Email](#) the co-op team if you have questions related to the following subjects:
  - Application-related question
  - Academic question about the Co-op program (i.e., Sequencing with academics, course registration, fees, etc.)
  - Taking more than one course during a work term
  - Co-op Employment Verification Letter (only if required by the employer)
2. Email the course instructor if you have a question about your COOP 523 assignments.
  - Contact information is in the course outline on D2L
3. [Email](#) or [book an appointment](#) with a Career Development Specialist if you have questions related to the following subjects:
  - Using Elevate
  - Developing your résumé or cover letter
  - Questions about a job search
  - Questions about the interview process
  - An unpleasant interview or work experience
  - Wanting to do a practice interview
    - Your Career Development Specialist may also recommend VMock to practice one-way video interviewing. Request your access via:  
[hsb.studentservices@ucalgary.ca](mailto:hsb.studentservices@ucalgary.ca)

# FEES, UPASS, & FUNDING

## Co-op program fees

Once admitted to the Co-op Program, you will need to pay a one-time Co-op registration fee through your My UofC account (\$50.00). Please stay alert to your Student Centre for the addition of your fees (typically to the next semester's tuition/fees).

## Co-op course tuition and term fees

While on a Co-op Work Term, you will register in COOP 523.XX (15 units) and be considered a full-time student. You will be sent an email with instructions to register in COOP 523.XX once your registered work term has been approved; typically, students are given permission to register in COOP 523.XX within 1-3 weeks after their work term has been approved.

Breakdown of tuition/fees due for each work term are listed below; these tuition/fees are due by the usual fee deadline per term and payable through normal methods. You may opt out of health and dental insurance in the Fall and Winter sessions with proof of alternate coverage.

- Work terms 1 and 2 – you will pay the [Co-op course tuition](#) plus [term fees](#).
  - Note that you only need 2 work terms to complete the Co-op program; work terms 3 and 4 are optional.
- Work terms 3 and 4 – you will pay the [term fees](#) only.

## UPass

Co-op students must opt in to the [UPass program](#) with Enrolment Services by phone or in person if they are not also enrolled in an on-campus course. After opting in, it takes 24-48 hours to be reflected in the UPass system. Instructions for how to opt in are sent via email when registered work terms are approved and students are able to register in COOP 523.XX.

## Student loans, scholarships and awards

If you have or intend to apply for student loans, please contact the [Enrolment Services - Financial Aid](#) if you have any questions. If you are a scholarship recipient, we encourage you to contact [Enrolment Services - Awards](#) to confirm the status and requirements of your scholarship prior to accepting a work term.

Note that every year we offer a variety of [Co-op specific awards](#). Depending on the award eligibility, you will be automatically considered for these awards and no further action is required from you.

## REVIEW THE FINE PRINT

In addition to your admission letter and Co-op Student Agreement, it is important to review the [UCalgary Calendar Regulations](#) (under Program Details > Degree Options) for the Haskayne Co-op Program before you begin your job search to ensure you are aware of the program regulations.

## Rules and regulations overview

1. You must complete a minimum of two work terms (8 months) to complete the Co-operative Education Program. Each 4-month work term, typically completed over a period of 16 weeks, must include a minimum of 450 hours. One work term (4 months) must be during a Fall or Winter term. Sequencing work terms with academic sessions is a flexible process that depends on availability of positions, length of positions (four or eight months) and your academic requirements.
2. Before your first work term you must successfully complete at least 54 units towards your BComm Program before starting your first Co-op work term, including ACCT 217, MGST 217, SGMA 217, and ENTI 317. (It is recommended to complete a senior level commerce course relevant to the job before your first work term.)
3. You should begin your first work term within one year of being accepted into the Co-op Program. If you have not secured a work term by this time, please [book an appointment](#) with a CDS to review your job search strategies, resume, cover letter, and/or interview skills.
  - a. You will not be withdrawn from the Co-op program if you do not secure a work placement within one year of admission.

4. You need to end your Co-operative Education Program with a full-time academic term (minimum of 3 academic courses or 9 units). In order to meet this regulation, we strongly recommend that you begin your first work term **before** you have 90 units towards your BComm Program.
  - a. If you have questions about completing work terms and are close to graduation, please [email](#) the co-op team for guidance.
  - b. Note: for Spring/Summer completion, students are permitted to take 6 units in one of Spring/Summer, and 3 units in the other; you are not required to take 9 units in a single Spring term. The term maximum for Spring and Summer is 12 units each.
5. Co-operative Education courses (COOP 523.xx) are in addition to the academic requirements for your degree (IE they cannot be used towards your BComm degree requirements).
6. You will maintain full-time student status while on a registered Co-op work term.
  - a. Failure to register your work term and/or enroll in COOP 523.XX may impact your program status.
7. If you are required to withdraw from the Haskayne School of Business or are placed on probation, you will be required to withdraw from the Co-operative Education Program. If you are withdrawn (or choose to withdraw) from the Co-op Program and have already accepted a position, we will advise your employer that you are no longer part of the Co-op Program. Termination of your employment will be at the employer's discretion.
8. If you receive a grade of Fail (F) on a work term, you will be required to withdraw from the Co-operative Education Program. If you are currently employed at the time of being withdrawn from Co-op, your employer will be notified that you are no longer part of the Co-op program; termination of your employment will be at the employer's discretion.
9. You may register for a maximum of one academic course during a Co-op work term.
10. You may transfer only one Co-op work term for credit from other faculties within the University of Calgary or from other approved institutions.

## Withdrawal policies

The Co-op Program strongly values the commitment between students and Employers. Our withdrawal policies are designed to encourage students to be accountable for their commitments.

Students **cannot** withdraw from COOP 523.XX or terminate employment early without permission from both the Co-op program office and the faculty. **If you are in a situation and cannot continue with your employment, [email](#) the co-op team immediately to schedule an appointment.** Examples of situations which may lead to students withdrawing from COOP 523.XX and/or terminating employment include (but not limited to) cases of serious illness, domestic affliction, academic issues, serious employment concerns.

**If your place of employment is unsafe physically and/or psychologically, do not return to your place of employment; [email](#) the co-op team for assistance during regular business hours, and call 911 if urgent or life-threatening.** Other resources for support can be found on our [website](#).

Students who receive permission to withdraw will receive credit for completed course/work terms. They will be withdrawn from the current registered course/work term.

Students who leave a work term (IE terminate employment) without permission will be assigned a grade of "F" on the course and will be dropped from subsequent courses. In addition, students will be required to withdraw from the Co-op program.

If you have received a co-op offer for more than 8 months, you must commit to completing the entire contractual term under the co-op program. You will not be allowed to cancel or not record the term outlined in the contract just because you have already completed the required 8 months.

The importance of adaptability and commitment during early career experiences is emphasized throughout the Co-op Program. While not every role may align perfectly with expectations, significant professional and personal growth often results from navigating discomfort and building resilience. A 4- to 8-month co-op position is not intended to define a student's career path but to provide valuable experience, increase self-awareness, and support the development of essential workplace skills.

## PREPARE FOR CO-OP & FIRST WORK TERM

### Co-op orientation and getting started

Students must attend a Co-op orientation before starting their job search. After submitting the signed admission letter and student agreement, they must register on Elevate and choose an orientation date. Once they complete the Co-op orientation with a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Specialist, they will be activated in the program and gain access to the Co-op job board.

Please refer to the [Getting Started](#) document on our [website](#) for other important next steps.

Schedule time to work on your job search and stay committed to your plan. Remember to start early as regular Co-op employers advertise early to ensure an optimal selection of candidates.

Make use of the resources on Elevate to review your résumé and cover letter and practice your interview skills. If you need more in-depth assistance with any of these, book an appointment with a Career Development Specialist.

### SGMA/MGST 303: Personal Career Strategies

This personal career strategies course is highly recommended for students seeking admission into the Co-op program but can also be completed after being admitted. The course focuses on workplace skill development through experiential learning. It will help make the connection between skills, interests, values, strategies, and habits that contribute to professional success.

### Your concentration and jobs

If you are in the process of changing your concentration, or your concentration on Elevate does not match your declared concentration, you can simply [email](#) the co-op team to update Elevate.

Further, Co-op students are not restricted to positions within their concentration. Are you a finance major who would like to give a marketing job a try? No problem! If you have the minimum course requirements, you can apply for Co-op jobs in any area. That is one of the great things about the Co-op Program - it gives you an opportunity to test the waters before jumping in. Keep in mind that you should have a relevant senior level commerce course finished before starting your first work term to help give you foundational knowledge.

### International student requirements

All international students **must** apply for their Co-op work permit as soon as they are admitted into the Co-op Program. Please review the information from [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#) to get started. After returning your signed admission letter and student agreement, you will automatically receive a

letter confirming admission to Co-op to use for your Co-op work permit application. If you have any questions about the Co-op work permit, you should consult with the [International Student Services Office](#) to discuss obtaining a Co-op work permit.

**Note: you should not begin your job search for placements between September to April until you have confirmed your co-op work permit will be or is approved.**

## Academic courses

You are **required** to complete the following courses before you begin your first work term. These courses will help you prepare for working in a professional environment.

- ACCT 217
- MGST 217
- SGMA 217
- ENTI 317 (email co-op if you were not able to complete this course)

In addition to the above requirements, we strongly recommend that you also complete a senior level commerce course(s) related to any work you intend to apply for. For example, if you intend to apply for a finance job, be sure to take FNCE 317 before the start of your work term.

## THE JOB SEARCH

### What to include on your résumé and cover letter

When applying for Co-op work terms, you will need to note your Co-op status and availability to employers. Add a line to your résumé that indicates your availability. You should update your résumé and cover letter each term to include the additional skills and knowledge gained as you progress through your academic semesters and work terms. A sample of how to include this information is available on Elevate.

### Confirm your Elevate work/study sequence

Once admitted into the Co-op program and attended a Co-op Orientation session, you are given access to the Co-op job board on Elevate and assigned a work/study sequence. To access Co-op Work Term opportunities online, you must be set up for a work term for the dates you are looking for work; if you need to have your sequence changed for any reason, please [email](#) the Co-op team.

### Work terms – quick tips

- You must complete two work terms (8 months) for the Co-op program but can complete up to four work terms (16 months) in total.
  - One work term is typically 4 months, but the contract can be 8, 12, or 16 months.
  - Work term start dates must be in September – Fall term, January – Winter term, or May – Summer term (IE align with academic calendar).
  - You must complete at least one work term in either a Fall or Winter term.
- Summer (May start date) is the most competitive work term; don't ignore Fall and Winter work terms, which often have fewer people applying for positions.
- Winter term (January to May) is a busier quarter for many companies – you may find numerous positions available for Winter term because of this.

## Searching for a job

As a student in the Co-op program, you have been given access to the Co-op job board on Elevate, in addition to the Haskayne job board for all BComm students. You may also search for summer or contract positions and postings from job search engines. If you receive an offer from a posting that was not through our Co-op job board, you need to have the job description reviewed by a WIL Specialist to ensure it is eligible for a Co-op work term **before** accepting the position. In addition, you will need to provide a copy of your offer letter, official job description, start date, length, and salary details.

As you search and apply for jobs, things to keep in mind:

- Advise the employer you are a Co-op student prior to accepting the offer of employment. The employer may contact a WIL Specialist if they have any questions.
- Many employers post Co-op positions early to ensure a large pool of candidates. Summer positions are often posted as early as September! Make sure you start your search early to ensure that you do not miss opportunities.
- Keep in mind some companies will start interviewing candidates before the posting end date, so apply early! You may miss some opportunities if you wait until the day the posting closes.
- Check job boards frequently for short deadline postings. Postings may have short deadlines - sometimes as little as five days. Deadlines may be shorter closer to finals and the work term start date. Check the job board frequently to ensure you do not miss any opportunities.
- Remember to **save a copy of the job postings** (print to PDF, don't just save the URL as it may expire) that you applied to so you can refer to them during the interview stage and you will need it to record the work term on Elevate.
- If you have little or no relevant experience, expect to apply to many job postings (20+) to secure a work term.
- Apply to all BComm opportunities that you are genuinely interested in and relevant contract or summer postings from other faculties' job boards.
- It is an unfortunate reality that some jobs do get cancelled, so submit enough applications to take this into account.

### *Apply through the Co-op job board*

Job opportunities on the Co-op job board will indicate how the employer wants you to apply, and which application materials are required. Most job postings require a targeted cover letter, and some ask for a copy of your most recent transcripts or other requirements. If you transferred from another educational institution, you may need to provide transcripts from both the University of Calgary and from your previous institution. Apply by uploading the required documents into your account.

### *Apply through a company website*

Postings may request that you apply through a company website. Save your cover letter and résumé as one pdf file (with a page break in between) and save the file with your name as the file name (i.e., John Smith) to make it easy for the recruiter to find your résumé among all the applications.

### *Referrals by the Career Development Centre*

The Career Development Centre may forward student résumés to employers without first advertising the job on the job board. This recruiting generally occurs near the end of the semester when students are writing exams (or after) and there is little time to advertise. Stay connected with the Career Development Centre and the Career Development Specialists to ensure you do not miss out on any of these opportunities.

At the end of the term, a résumé book may be made available for you to upload your résumé. These books are shared with employers who are seeking a “last minute” hire for the next term. Contact a Career Development Specialist if you have any questions.

## Visible jobs

Resources that can help you locate visible jobs are career fairs, company websites, online job banks, and trade journals.

### *Career fairs*

Career fairs are a great way to see who is hiring now. Companies may distribute job descriptions and company merchandise with the hope of enticing the strongest candidates to their organization. Take your résumé along and distribute it to companies that interest you.

### *Company websites*

Many companies post summer and contract opportunities on their own sites. If you are interested in a particular company, check their website regularly for opportunities. Larger companies may also accept applications at any time to keep in a database for future use. It is a good idea to submit your information for future opportunities but remember to continue to check back for specific job postings.

### *Online job boards*

The Career Development Centre has a list of web links and recommended job bank sites. The ones we recommend can save you time as they search the internet, including any available job sites and company web postings. The trick is to know what type of keywords to use. For more support on locating key words, speak to your Career Development Specialist.

## Job descriptions

Job descriptions come in a variety of styles – some are very detailed and while others are very general. Consider the company and the industry as much as the position responsibilities when making your decision about applying. Read all responsibilities. If you are unsure about any terms or concepts, take the time to research them or book an appointment with a CDS for clarification.

Sometimes there are other positions available within large corporations and many Co-op opportunities will change with each student depending on student ability and initiative. Contact a CDS if you have questions as previous Co-op students may have been at the company and there may be additional information available.

## International work terms

If you are interested in an international position, please discuss this with a Career Development Specialist. You must have citizenship or a work visa to work in other countries. It can take four to six months to develop a position and process the paperwork. Fluency in other languages is often required. Before leaving for an international work term, it is important to register with the University of Calgary, Risk Management department ([riskmgmt@ucalgary.ca](mailto:riskmgmt@ucalgary.ca) or 403-210-9502) and you will need to complete a pre-departure orientation.

## Develop your own opportunity

Students are advised to take initiative by leveraging their personal and professional networks to explore potential Co-op opportunities. Reaching out directly to organizations of interest, whether through email, LinkedIn, or by requesting informal coffee chats, is a proactive way to discover roles that may not be publicly posted. Let your contacts know that you are a Co-op student seeking a formal work term as part of your academic program. Career Development Specialists (CDSs) are available to support you with outreach strategies and communication tips. Information for employers about the Co-op Program is available through our website [HireHaskayne.ca](https://www.haskayne.ca/co-op) to assist you in finding your own Co-op position. Approval is required for student-found Co-op opportunities to ensure that the term will:

- Offer productive work.
- Have an office environment with four or more co-workers.
- Be supervised so your performance can be evaluated.
- Work within a stable organization.
- Startups can be acceptable under certain regulations.
- Guarantee a minimum of 35 hours each week for a period of at least 13 weeks.
- Receive a salary (minimum wage or more).

To register a student-found Co-op position you need to enter the job information in a Work Term Record on Elevate. You will need to provide the job description, offer letter, start date, length of work term, and salary details. Your Co-op position must be registered on Elevate prior to your start date.

## Persistence pays off

Finding a Co-op work term can be challenging. If you are not getting interviews or not getting offers, meet with a CDS to review your job search process. In the past, 50% of the offers have occurred less than six weeks prior to the start of the work term (higher for some concentrations).

## INTERVIEWS

When chosen for an interview, you will hear from the employer directly via e-mail or phone. Be sure to check your @ucalgary e-mail account daily. Since employers may contact you directly, ensure that your e-mail address and voice mail message are professional. If you receive an e-mail interview request from the Career Development Centre, you will also receive instructions to sign-up online through Elevate. You must accept an interview request until you have accepted another position. Please notify the Career Development Centre immediately if you need to decline an interview.

## Preparing for interviews

- Here are a few quick tips to help you prepare for an interview:
- Review the job description and your résumé. Identify your skills and experience that match the employer's requirements so you can easily discuss these in the interview.
- Review the interview preparation material online on Elevate and work on your answers for common behavioural interview questions.
- Look up the interview location in advance and plan to arrive five to ten minutes early.
- Remember that when you are interviewing, employers are looking for a student who not only matches the company's requirements but will also fit well in their corporate culture. Employers will hire individuals who show enthusiasm for the position. Take time to research the company; most employers today expect that you will have reviewed the company website at a minimum.

- The Business Library is a great resource for looking up recent articles on the company and reading up on industry trends.
- Prepare a few questions to ask the interviewer. Ask employers about job responsibilities, training offered, the work environment and culture, and about the company's experience with the Co-op Program.
  - Don't be afraid to ask your interviewer(s) questions! This helps you make informed employment decisions should you receive an offer.
- If during the interview you are asked a question you do not understand, ask for clarification or if it can be rephrased.

### *Dressing for interviews*

Your appearance will have a strong impact on the image you create with a recruiter, so make sure you are dressed appropriately. Walking into an interview in the wrong attire is like showing up to a black-tie event dressed for a day at the beach. It is very difficult to overcome a poor first impression, regardless of your knowledge or experience. Remember to dress for the position you want, not for the position you have (see section What to Wear for more tips).

### *After an interview*

Evaluate your interest in the position following each interview, so that if an offer comes you can decide quickly. If you decide the job no longer interests you, please contact a Career Development Specialist as soon as possible. Remember, you do not want to offend a recruiter, even if the position is not very interesting to you; the recruiter may someday end up being the interviewer for a position you really want. Always present a professional image and request contact information so that you can send a thank-you note to the recruiter. Not everyone sends thank-you notes, and this gesture may help you stand out from the crowd.

## RECEIVING JOB OFFERS

### Accepting an offer of Co-op employment

Upon receiving an offer, you should respond within 48 hours. Carefully consider job offers before accepting. The offer, verbal or written, is a contractual agreement between you and the employer. Career Development Specialists are available to discuss job offer questions with you prior to accepting a Co-op position. As soon as you accept a Co-op position, and create your work term record in Elevate, it is **registered** as a work term; generally you cannot withdraw from a registered work term without penalty – if you feel you must withdraw, [email](#) the co-op team to discuss prior to resigning from a position, withdrawing from COOP 523.xx, and/or cancelling a registered work term. Please review the [Rules and Regulations](#) section of this handbook for more details.

If you receive an offer of employment directly from an employer, please complete the work term registration in Elevate as soon as possible.

### Registering your work term

Follow the steps below to create your work term record in Elevate and formally register your employment for the co-op program:

1. Log in to <http://elevate.ucalgary.ca>
2. In the left-hand menu, navigate to Haskayne School of Business > Co-op & Internship Program
3. Click "Create Work Term Record" button – make sure you are registering it for the correct term! If there is no option to create a work term record for the term you need, please [email](#) the co-op

team to adjust your work term sequences.

4. Enter as much information as you can – all mandatory fields must be completed to submit. Optional fields, like your office contact details and supervisor name/info, can be added later. However, supervisor contact details, such as email, title, phone number must be updated within the first two weeks of your start date. This is a required deliverable.
  - a. Note: Job ID refers to the Elevate job board ID – if you did not find the job through the Elevate job board(s), you can leave this blank.
5. You must enter and keep your work-related information current in the Work Term Record section of your Elevate profile. This is a required deliverable that must be completed within the first two weeks of your start date. Failure to complete or maintain this information may result in a failed work term and could jeopardize your standing in the co-op program.

If you have trouble registering your work term, please [email](#) the co-op team. You must register your work term in order for us to review and approve it, and it must be approved before you can register in COOP 523.XX and receive credit for your work term.

## Refusing offers of Co-op employment

If you are unsure of a position, carefully weigh your options before you decide to decline an offer of Co-op employment. Refusing offers of employment may jeopardize prospects and it may leave a negative impression on employers. Please meet with a Career Development Specialist before refusing an offer.

## Extensions

Extensions are possible with Co-op opportunities. If you receive an additional work term with the same company, it will count as a subsequent Co-op work term, and you will need to create a new work term record on Elevate. You do not have to accept an offer of extension if you are interested in pursuing other opportunities. If you find yourself in this situation, discuss it with a Career Development Specialist.

## Recruitment ethics

You want to make a positive impression on recruiters throughout your job search process. To ensure you do not make mistakes you are not even aware you are making, review the guidelines below.

### *Student ethics*

As a student in the Co-op program, your responsibilities include:

- Abiding by the Co-op policies and procedures at the Haskayne School of Business.
- Ensuring that employers are provided with accurate and appropriate information regarding your qualifications and interests.
- Applying only for jobs in which you have a genuine interest.
- Notifying the employer immediately if an interview must be cancelled or rescheduled.
- Preparing well for interviews.
- Not providing information to employers on other students/employers.
- Honouring your acceptance of a position as a contractual agreement with the employer.
- Honouring your employer's relocation policy (if applicable).
- Respecting the policies of employers regarding confidential/proprietary information.

### *Employer ethics*

Employer responsibilities include:

- Providing reasonable notice of candidates to be interviewed and of interview cancellations.
- Being informed of and adhering to the Co-operative Education policies and procedures.
- Not providing candidates with information on other companies or applicants.
- Not seeking a candidate's assessment of another candidate.
- Not submitting multiple job offers unless prepared to accept multiple acceptances.
- Honouring all job offers and not reneging on accepted offers nor rescinding offers of employment.
- Confirming all job offers in writing.
- Not translating a Co-op assignment into a full-time position encouraging a student to settle for less education.
- Complying with all provincial and federal freedom of information, human rights and employment legislation.

### *Institutional ethics*

It is the Co-op office's responsibility to:

- Inform students, employers, and other interested parties of their policies and procedures.
- Provide equal services to all students and employers.
- Provide students with accurate and approved information (including promotion materials and salary/benefits), on all recruiting employers.
- Follow ethical and legal guidelines in providing student information to employers.
- Notify the employer of any hiring limitations prior to them conducting interviews.
- Notify any employers of any students who, after being hired, do not achieve an academic level high enough to allow them to continue in the program.
- Comply with all provincial and federal freedom of information, human rights and employment legislation.

## WORK TERM EXPECTATIONS

### **Training**

Different employers manage student training differently. You may receive a formal orientation and/or training program, or you may learn the job under the direction of another employee or supervisor. It is important for you to understand both your employer's expectations and company policy from the start of the term. You need to seek out this information if it is not provided.

Employers expect you to take the initiative to learn about the company and its business on your own. Research can be undertaken before you start the job.

### **Salary and benefits**

Each employer sets the terms of your employment (salary, benefits, and hours of work). Wages and pay periods vary with organization, industry sector, and geographic location. Ask your employer questions so you understand your pay cheque.

Holiday pay is based on the labour code of the province where the job is located. Please review the labour code for your province of employment.

## Setting realistic expectations

Your experience will be different from the experiences of other Co-op students, as each position and organization are different. Just as each student has different strengths and interests, your attitude and performance in your first couple of weeks on the job can have a strong impact on the work assignments you are given. Focus on gaining a strong understanding of the company while developing organizational and communication skills during this period. Take the initiative to discuss your progress with your supervisor and seek out opportunities to take on projects in your areas of special interest.

Many work terms start with basic responsibilities while you become familiar with the company and industry. It is very important for you to gain an in-depth understanding of the company before you can contribute in a meaningful way, and often this will occur through administrative tasks and research.

Maintain a positive attitude during your initial orientation period and focus on learning as much as you can. Let your supervisor know when you are ready for more challenges in your area of interest. As your supervisor gains confidence in your abilities, you can expect the work to progress to a more challenging level.

Other work terms will have you jump right in and learn as you go. The industry language (lingo) may seem like a foreign language, and you may feel as though you are in over your head and everyone around you is busy all the time. It is very helpful to prepare yourself by researching the company, industry, competitors, and industry terms before your work term begins. It is also important to ask a lot of questions (often you will feel you are asking too many questions, but your supervisor will likely say you do not ask enough). Do the best you can, as tasks will get easier as you learn.

Use your work term as a career exploration tool and be open to new experiences outside of your initial expectations. Take the initiative to develop a network of contacts for the future. Understand how your academic knowledge applies to the business setting but remember you are a student-in-training, not a manager – your attitude is very important.

## Time Off: Vacation, Sick Leave, and Other Absences

Students should be aware that time off during a co-op work term (e.g., vacation, personal days, or sick leave) is at the discretion of the employer and subject to their internal policies. This includes statutory holidays, paid or unpaid time off, and leave for medical or personal reasons.

It is your responsibility to communicate directly with your supervisor regarding requested time off. Co-op students are expected to follow the same request and approval process as regular employees. Time off is not automatically granted and may not be accommodated, especially if it impacts business needs.

We encourage students to clarify these details with their employer at the beginning of the work term and include this discussion in their initial expectations meeting.

## Develop your work term expectations

To maximize your experience and succeed in your position it is important to:

- Learn what your manager expects
- Communicate what you are doing and how you are doing it
- Work independently, but regularly confirm you are on the right track
- Ask for feedback

- Get the job done to the best of your ability
- Contribute ideas even if they are not acted upon
- Find other work when projects are complete or at a standstill
- Maintain a positive attitude

During your first week of work, you should schedule time with your supervisor to discuss some of the topics below. If you are uncomfortable or unsure of how to approach these topics, we have a suggested work term contract that you can use to break the ice and get the information you need.

### *Honour your commitments*

Accepting a Co-op position is a professional commitment. It is essential to begin and end your work term according to the dates outlined in your offer letter. If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to a WIL Specialist to clarify any issues. Always follow through on commitments made to customers or team members and talk to your supervisor if you run into challenges meeting expectations. Clear communication about what you can and cannot deliver within deadlines is key. Remember, a Co-op role does not define your career, it's an opportunity to gain professional experience, develop self-awareness, and grow your skills.

### *Accepted hours of work*

Earn your supervisor's high regard by establishing effective, professional work habits. Do not assume eligibility for overtime, flexible hours, or other benefits. Regardless of your current salary, the people around you, or your future career goals, you are building the foundation for your work habits, and it is your choice to make them positive or negative. Your final evaluation includes attendance, punctuality, enthusiasm, initiative, dependability, and other qualities noted on the Performance Evaluation form.

### *Dress standards*

A well-groomed and tidy appearance conveys professionalism and helps create positive impressions among colleagues and clients alike (see the What to Wear section for guidance). Seek clarification from your supervisor on appropriate business attire. Some organizations encourage professional business attire while others allow casual dress.

### *Maintain confidentiality*

Some employers require you to sign an oath of confidentiality in order to protect the rights of their clients. Even if your employer does not require a signed declaration, avoid discussing your organization's business, clients and competitors outside the workplace.

If you are in a position to bring profit to a friend or relative through your work, please declare a conflict of interest and refrain from participating.

### *Stick to business*

Treat the company's resources with respect and use them only for business purposes. Minimize personal calls at work and use company letterhead for approved business only. Do not take office supplies home for your own use.

## **Work not challenging enough?**

Understand the reason for the work you are doing. Is it part of an important project the company needs to complete, do you need additional training before you can advance to another project, or has your supervisor underestimated your abilities? Let your supervisor know that you are willing to complete your assignments, but you would welcome additional assignments that are more challenging. Be proactive; suggest some projects you would like to tackle.

# DURING THE WORK TERM

## Get Office Ready – what to wear

First impressions are important, whether it's a job interview, a networking event or the first day at a new job. It is possible to look professional and feel comfortable and confident that your clothes express your unique personality. Most offices have a business casual dress code. Consider how your coworkers dress and follow the same general principles when in doubt. For instance, if no one wears jeans, reserve those outfits for weekends, but if most dress casually on Fridays, it may be appropriate in that office.

It is typically appropriate to err on the side of business casual unless there is an industry standard. Once you can observe the way others dress you can adjust your clothing accordingly. It is also appropriate to ask the recruiter, HR manager or hiring manager if the company has a dress code.

## Communicate with your supervisor

Meet with your supervisor at the beginning of your work term to discuss your assignments and performance expectations. Schedule regular meetings with your supervisor to report on your progress, seek clarification on further goals, and discuss pertinent issues. Between meetings, communicate via e-mail so your supervisor can respond at his or her convenience.

Take the initiative to communicate with your supervisor in a positive manner if you have concerns about your workload. If you are experiencing downtime or are not feeling challenged, you might propose a project you would be interested in or ask if there are other people you can assist. If you are feeling a bit lost and your supervisor seems too busy, you might set up a meeting to discuss the best ways of communicating when you have questions (email, scheduled meetings) or ask if there are additional resources for you to access.

## Responding to feedback

Accepting feedback graciously can be difficult. Your supervisor may suggest changes to improve the quality of a written assignment or suggest a change in work habits. View this as a constructive critique and not as a personal insult. In most cases, your supervisor is genuinely concerned about your development. Clarify your supervisor's expectations and determine how to meet them. If you have made some mistakes, it is best to acknowledge responsibility for them and then take steps to correct them. If you disagree with the feedback, discuss your concerns with a Career Development Specialist.

## Meeting and greeting colleagues

Make the effort to introduce yourself to your new colleagues and take the lead in establishing effective working relationships. Rise as you meet a person for the first time and offer a firm handshake. It is considerate to use a formal title like Mr. or Ms. until they invite you to address them by their first name, especially with senior executives. Greet your colleagues warmly and respectfully each day.

## Teamwork

Offering your assistance to colleagues helps you build relationships. When participating in team projects, do your best to help achieve consensus on goals, keep teammates informed of your progress and follow through on your commitments. Acknowledge colleagues who have assisted you when writing reports or making presentations.

## Social functions

You are encouraged to attend social functions organized by your employer as they provide an enjoyable forum for enhancing your relationships with colleagues. You can be less formal on these occasions than in the workplace, however you should remain professional. If alcohol is being served, limit yourself to one drink.

## Conflict

It is not uncommon to find yourself facing problems or conflicts in the workplace. Ignoring them and hoping things will get better is not an effective way to deal with them. Inform your supervisor of problems as early as possible and ask for advice on resolving the issues. Contact a WIL Specialist to help you handle sensitive situations.

Do your best to avoid arguments with colleagues or customers. If you do experience conflict, remain calm and try to apply the following techniques:

- Listen completely and pause to think (and breathe) before you respond.
- Restate the problem to be sure you are both on the same track.
- Choose your words carefully and speak slowly (focus on the facts).
- Keep the discussion focused on only the relevant details.
- Avoid making accusations and do not get personal.
- Focus on finding a fair and equitable solution.
- If you have made any errors, acknowledge them with a sincere apology.
- Consult your supervisor for guidance.

## Workplace problems?

We are all here to help support you during your work term. If you feel uneasy about sitting down with your supervisor for the site visit, contact a Career Development Specialist to discuss your concerns prior to your scheduled site visit. This will give you an opportunity to prepare for the meeting and your Career Development Specialists can coach you on how to discuss sensitive issues. If necessary, your Career Development Specialist will book a separate meeting for you and your supervisor.

If you have sensitive issues that you need support with at any point during your work term, please contact the Co-op team. If it's not something we can resolve, we will help connect you to the right resources.

## QUICK TIPS

### *Standing out from the crowd*

To set yourself apart and leave a positive impression always:

- Be professional: be on time, respect breaks, ask for feedback, and dress appropriately
- Maintain a positive attitude: look for opportunities to get involved in new projects
- Immerse yourself: learn about the industry, meet your coworkers, and always find ways to go above and beyond your supervisor's expectations
- Do your best work: build your supervisor's confidence in your abilities to earn more responsibility

### WHAT DOES SHOWING INITIATIVE MEAN?

Do not be afraid to ask your supervisor what skills and traits they value. When on the job, if you want to impress your supervisor, look for ways to apply your problem-solving skills to a work scenario:

- Identify a problem; Ask questions to clarify
- Develop potential solutions and evaluate feasibility; Present solutions
- Request feedback; Revise based on feedback; Gain co-worker buy-in and implement

## DURING THE WORK TERM - ACADEMICS

### Register in the Co-op course

Students pursuing the Co-operative Education designation will complete the following work term courses. These courses do not replace any of the BComm program requirements.

- Work term one: COOP 523.01
- Work term two: COOP 523.02
- Work term three (optional): COOP 523.03
- Work term four (optional): COOP 523.04

Once you have entered your work term into Elevate, please allow 1-2 weeks for approval. As soon as it is approved, the Co-op team will send you instructions on enrolling in the appropriate Co-op course.

### D2L and work term assignments

The Co-op Student Handbook, course outlines, assignments, and forms required throughout your work term are available on the D2L for COOP 523. You will see the course in D2L closer to the start of term.

Work term assignments are an academic requirement at the University of Calgary. They connect the academic portion of your degree with your workplace experience and help the university assess your skills development. Assignments may include self-evaluations, meeting sessions, feedback forms, surveys, and reflections. Full details will be available on D2L. Students must submit all assignments. Failure to do so, or submitting work of inadequate quality, will result in a "Fail" (F) grade. A minimum level of achievement is required for each component to earn a "Completed Requirements" (CR) grade. Students will also receive an F grade if assignments are submitted after the due date without prior communication with the Co-op team.

## END OF WORK TERM

You want to finish the work term on the best possible terms to ensure a positive reference and continued employment opportunities for yourself and future Co-op students. To accomplish this:

- Leave your work in a state that another employee can take over.
- Schedule an exit interview with your supervisor to share feedback and request a reference.
- Discuss opportunities for future employment, if appropriate.
- Leave a forwarding address and phone number.

### Employer: performance evaluation

We ask your employer to complete an evaluation of your performance and discuss it with you. The Performance Evaluation form is part of your Co-op work term grade. Students arrange the performance evaluation with their manager and must submit it by the deadline.