

CO-OP QUICK START GUIDE

College of Art and Design

What is Co-op?

Cooperative Education, or co-op, gives you the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience before you graduate. Unlike an internship, co-op at RIT is:

Full-time (35 hours or more)	Tuition free
Part-time (10-15 hours with at least six credit hours)	Meaningful work directly related to your field of study
Paid employment	Single term or two consecutive terms in length

Although employers interchange the names co-op and internship, RIT defines an official internship as:

Pay tuition for credits	Registration needed for internship course with pre-approval from a program director
Paid or unpaid	Directly related to your field of study

For more information, please visit the [College of Art and Design Experiential Learning Options](#).

Co-op Eligibility

Co-op is **optional** for a majority of students within the College of Art and Design. However, it is strongly encouraged, as an opportunity to gain work experience. Students must be in *good academic standing* to be eligible to participate in RIT's co-op program. Students are not eligible to co-op if they have completed their degree requirements.

Eligible for Co-op:	Completed two years of coursework in your academic program for undergraduate students Completed one year of coursework in your academic program for graduate students
Length of Co-op:	Ten weeks minimum
Out on Co-op:	Summer is the most common co-op term

Career Services Coordinators

Career services coordinators are assigned to each major and are available year-round to assist and advise students with the job search process and any career-related concerns. You can meet with your coordinator for personalized advising. We work closely with your academic department and build and maintain relationships with employers to develop co-op opportunities. We are here to assist you in securing a co-op position and remain available to you while you are on co-op.

Job Search Preparation

Meet with your career services coordinator or visit our [website](#) to learn how to develop the tools and the job search strategies to conduct a successful job search. Attend job search and career-related workshops offered during fall and spring semesters. Learn more in Career Connect under "Events."

Create a Career Connect Profile

RIT's preferred career platform Career Connect, powered by Symplicity, is our platform that connects students with employers for co-op opportunities. Log in to Career Connect using your RIT computer account and password. Update your profile with your skills, experience, resume, and portfolio for employers to see. Need help navigating Career Connect? Go to our [website](#) to learn more about this platform and other job search strategies.

When to Begin the Job Search

We recommend starting two terms before you plan to co-op. The term before you co-op will be busy with resume submissions, interviews, career fairs, and workshops.

Applying to Job Opportunities

Through Career Connect, you can view job descriptions posted for RIT students and apply to positions based on your qualifications. RIT has reviewed all co-op jobs in Career Connect. Algorithms provide job suggestions based on your field and interests. Keep your options open and avoid limiting yourself to a specific employer or geographic location for the best results. Most importantly, always continue your search until you have been offered and accepted a position! You can also find additional jobs and resources on [Handshake Open](#).

Broadening Your Job Search

Career Connect is the most trusted source for co-op jobs that fit RIT's requirements. Expand your search through other job boards, family, friends, professors, past employers, and professional associations. Keep a record of jobs you applied for and the employers. If you are unsure if a position qualifies as an RIT co-op, review the job description with your career services coordinator before you accept the position.

If you or the employer have any questions about the co-op program, contact your career services coordinator for assistance.

Preparing for Interviews

Practice your interview skills by attending portfolio reviews, mock interviews, and our workshops. Prepare by reviewing our [Interviewing webpage](#) that includes commonly asked questions, etiquette, and strategies. Find and sign up for on-campus interviews with employers on Career Connect. We highly suggest sending a brief thank you note after the interview and following up with employers to check on the status of your application.

Accepting a Job Offer

Once you accept a co-op job offer, even verbally, you are expected to honor this commitment. **You must not back out**, or renege on the job, to work for another employer! Before starting your co-op, confirm your start and end dates, work hours, and other worksite expectations with your employer. Co-op employers expect RIT students to operate according to accepted business ethics and standards. Further, RIT expects professional behavior at all times, whether on or off campus, consistent with the standards articulated in the RIT Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook and the Student Agreement Policy.

Reporting and Registering for Co-op

After you have accepted a co-op job, **two steps** are required to ensure that you will receive a pass/fail grade for each term you will be on co-op:

1. Report Your Co-op

Notify the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education through Career Connect. If your supervisor changes, you can update the information in Career Connect.

2. Register on SIS:

Once you have reported your co-op to our office, contact your academic advisor to get registered for co-op on the RIT Student Information System (SIS). All students must meet their department's co-op eligibility requirements before the SIS registration.

If you're an **international student, you have one more step** to make your co-op official:

An International Student Services (ISS) advisor must grant permission to participate in a curricular practical training (CPT) before the co-op start date. Students must either:

- a. Submit the Online CPT Request Form along with a copy of your job offer letter, a screenshot of your registration in SIS, and proof you have reported the co-op. The registration must be for the term(s) in which you are requesting Curricular Practical Training.
- b. Bring the documents listed above to International Student Services.

When this information is received, an ISS advisor will create a new SEVIS I-20 with CPT Authorization on it. You will receive an email when the new I-20 is available to be picked up in the International Student Services office.

Your Co-op Salary and Income Tax Information

Your employer determines your compensation level. Salary rates are based on several variables, including your academic major, year level, prior work experiences, and established company policies. Check our [Salary and Career Info webpage](#) for the latest co-op salary data.

According to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS), salaries or wages paid to co-op students are entirely subject to applicable federal and state income taxes. You may encounter different tax forms:

1099 Tax Form: You are hired as an independent contractor, and you are responsible for calculating your payroll taxes. You then submit the sum to the government on a quarterly basis.

W-2 Tax Form: You are hired as an employee, and payroll taxes are automatically deducted from your paycheck and then paid to the government through your employer.

Financial Aid

RIT does not charge tuition for full-time co-op enrollment. Except for federal loans and the Federal Pell Grant, most forms of financial aid are not awarded for semesters of co-op employment. If you are a federal loan and/or Pell Grant recipient, these aid items will credit to your student account after the add/drop period for each term. For this to happen, however, you must register your co-op on the Registrar's system and report your co-op in Career Connect.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will ask you to report earnings from your co-op, and the reported earnings will automatically be excluded from your adjusted gross income. Your co-op earnings will not negatively impact your eligibility for federal student aid in the subsequent year.

If you have any questions regarding your financial aid, co-op earnings, or living expenses during your co-op term, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Housing

Students who co-op in Rochester or have a remote co-op may stay in RIT housing during their co-op term because you have full-time student status when your co-op is registered in SIS. Notify RIT Housing of your plans in advance.

Concerns on Co-op

Entering a new workplace learning experience can be stressful and uncomfortable. If you encounter a concern, contact your career services coordinator for advice or assistance in resolving the matter. It is essential to address issues as they arise rather than postpone a discussion or ignore the problem. We can assist with: how to talk with supervisors about your work-related concerns, how to address conflicts on your team, as well as discrimination and harassment complaints. Call or email us if you have any questions or concerns.

Receiving a Passing Grade

We strongly recommend the following documents are completed and submitted to our office for each term you are on co-op to receive a "Satisfactory" (S) grade for co-op on your transcript. Your academic department program director will review and award a grade.

1. Employer Evaluation of your Performance

Career Services emails your supervisor a link and directions to complete an employer evaluation near the end of your co-op term.

2. Student Work Report

Students must submit a work report on their experience for their academic department to review. The work report is emailed to you toward the end of each term you are on co-op.

For a record of your co-op history, employer evaluations and work reports, log in through the "Student Work Report" link on our [Students Co-op webpage](#).

International Experience

International students must notify International Student Services if they will pursue co-op outside the U.S. If you are working outside of the U.S. and are not returning to your home country, you are required to meet with an international experiences coordinator to make sure you sign all the correct paperwork before leaving the U.S. Schedule an appointment in Career Connect or call 585-475-2301 to set up an appointment.

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Personalized Advisement

Log in to Career Connect or call 585-475-2301 to make an appointment with your career services coordinator who can assist you one-on-one with any aspect of your job search and related activities.

Career Services Hours

Monday – Friday | 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Drop-in Advising

Have a quick question about your job search or want your resume reviewed without making an appointment? Attend drop-ins virtually or in person at Bausch & Lomb Center to meet with a career services coordinator.

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday | 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday and Friday | 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education

RIT Bausch & Lomb Center

57 Lomb Memorial Drive

Rochester, NY 14623-5603

585-475-2301

careerservices@rit.edu

rit.edu/careerservices