

Co-op Quick Start Guide

School of Art, Design and American Crafts

Co-op or cooperative education integrates classroom study with work experience in a company or organization. It is full-time paid employment related to your major that lasts 10 weeks (single quarter) or 20 weeks (2 consecutive quarters or a “double-block”). Co-op is part of your education – you are no longer eligible to co-op once you have completed all your coursework. Co-op is optional for your program, but we encourage you to take advantage of it. Getting actual work experience will always benefit you!

Who can co-op?

Co-op is optional for students in the School of Design, School of Art and School for American Crafts. To be eligible you must be in good academic standing with a minimum of a 2.5 GPA and have completed your sophomore year. (You are not eligible for co-op after you have completed all your coursework). Masters students are typically eligible to co-op after 3 quarters.

What is co-op?

Co-op or cooperative education is full-time paid employment, related to your major that lasts one or two quarters. You register for it just like you would a course. You maintain full-time student status but do not pay tuition for co-op.

Co-op versus Internship – what is the difference? Well, from an employer point of view there often is no difference, (but it *is* often important for an employer that the work experience is tied to your academic record). As long as a job meets the definition of co-op (paid, at least 35 hours/week, related to your major) it does not matter what the employer calls the position. However, there is a difference at RIT because many of you also have an option to register for an internship as a class:

Co-op	Internship
Related Experience	Related Experience
Always paid	Unpaid or paid
No tuition	Pay tuition receive credit/grade
Jobs – search through co-op job listings through Co-op and Career Services site (RIT Job Zone) or find one on your own	Internships – your academic department may have leads, search in Job Zone (we can assist), or find one on your own
Full-time, 10 weeks in length	Part-time or full-time
Appears on transcript with a pass/fail	Register as an elective or studio credit (if your major does not offer internship with a course number)
Handled by Co-op and Career Services with academic department chairs	Handled by academic department
Your employer is sent a work evaluation that they complete online	Letter from employer or samples of your work and meeting with instructor required to receive a grade

Where can I find help?

You should meet with a program coordinator assigned to your major to discuss your job search. They can help you get prepared and answer any questions or concerns you may have. They have offices in the Bausch & Lomb Center. To make an appointment, call 585-475-2301.

If your major is: Graphic Design, Computer Graphic Design, Interior Design, Illustration, 3D Digital Graphics, or New Media Design & Imaging, then your Program Coordinator is Gretchen Burruto (geboce@rit.edu).

If your major is Visual Arts-All Grades, Fine Arts Studio, Industrial Design, Ceramics, Glass, Metalcrafts & Jewelry, or Woodworking & Furniture Design, your Program Coordinator is Shauna Newcomb (shnoce@rit.edu).

Through the student page of our site (<http://www.rit.edu/emcs/occe/students>) you will get lots of valuable job search info and be able to access RIT Job Zone, where you can view and apply to job postings and on campus interviews.

Why co-op?

Experience will give you the edge over your competition. When you co-op you gain industry experience, clarify career goals, expand your network, and beef up your portfolio.

When can I co-op?

You are eligible to co-op after you have completed your first two years of coursework. Most of you are only able to co-op during the summer because of the way your courses are sequenced; you should start your co-op search at least two quarters in advance.

How do I find a co-op job?

Start by visiting our site for co-op job listings on Job Zone. Complete your profile and upload your resume. If you don't have a resume – check through the resume samples on our site and see your program coordinator for feedback.

Once you have completed these steps you can start viewing jobs. Apply to as many as you can (try not to limit yourself geographically). If you feel you need a little support or help at any point in your job search, make an appointment to meet with your program coordinator in our office.

The best job search is a comprehensive one. RIT Job Zone is **only one** source of co-op job openings. Look for co-op jobs utilizing other sources: your network of friends, professors, past employers, coaches, clubs and professional associations, and various web sites. We recommend checking our Web-based Tools and Resource Lists page (<http://www.rit.edu/emcs/occe/students/online-resource-lists-art-design-crafts>) for a list of other job sources for your major. Apply for positions found “on your own” and keep a record of your job applications.

Co-op Job Search To Do List:

- Meet with your program coordinator at least two quarters in advance
- Write or edit a resume – email it to your program coordinator for review
- Pull your portfolio together. Great idea to provide employers with a link to an online version
- Register and upload resume in RIT Job Zone
- Apply to all possible jobs and keep track
- Develop list of employers where you will send your resume out (separate from JZ)
- Write cover letter that can be adapted/personalized for each employer
- Send out a slew of resumes
- Follow up with all resumes
- Set up interviews
- Accept position let other interested employers know you are no longer available
- Report job to Office Co-op and Career Services and register for co-op through your department

Interested in Working Abroad?

If so, go to our work abroad pages for more info (www.rit.edu/workabroad). Meet with Maria Richart, Assistant Director for International Outreach for assistance and leave yourself plenty of lead time.

Preparing for Interviews

For sample interview questions, typical interview formats and interviewing tips, we have a lot of that info on our site for you. If you are nervous set up a practice interview with your coordinator to prepare for the real thing.

Make sure you have appropriate interview attire and arrive for the interview 15 minutes before scheduled time. Remember to send employers a brief thank you note after the interview and follow-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! Make sure you confirm your start and end dates, work hours and other work site expectations with your employer prior to starting your job.

Co-op employers expect RIT and its students to operate according to accepted business ethics and standards. Further, RIT expects your behavior at all times, whether on or off campus to be in accordance with the standards articulated in the RIT Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook: <http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/studentconduct/rr.php> and the Student Agreement Policy (found on your Job Zone Profile under the Privacy Tab).

Important - Once you have accepted a co-op job you need to do two things to make your co-op official:

1. Register for co-op using a course Add Form from the Student Services Office in your college. Your department chair can authorize the addition of co-op. Co-op has its own unique Course #
2. Notify our office where you will be working -- complete the brief Report Your Job form through the student page of our site: <http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students>.

Why bother?

It is beneficial to have it a part of your academic record. If any work-related issue arises, we can work with you and the employer. Many employers require you to be registered for their position. And, it is beneficial for the Office of Co-op and Career Services to have a record of where RIT students are working so we can maintain a relationship with that employer and encourage them to hire future RIT students or graduates!

If at any time you have questions or need help do let us know — we look forward to working with you as you take advantage of the co-op experience at RIT.

Your Co-op Salary and Income Tax Information

Your employer determines your compensation level. Salary rates are based on a number of variables, including your academic major, year level, prior work experiences and established company policies. There may be some room for negotiation based on circumstances. Check our web site for the latest co-op salary data listed by academic program: (<http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students/salary>). According to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS), salaries/wages paid to co-op students are fully subject to applicable federal and state income taxes.

Your Co-op Evaluation – Receiving Credit

To receive a “Satisfactory” (“S”) grade for co-op on your transcript, a Work Evaluation must be completed by your supervisor and returned to the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services. A link to this work evaluation is emailed to your employer by the Office of Co-op and Career Services during the midpoint of your co-op.

International Students

- International students must obtain work authorization from International Student Services before going on CPT (Curricular Practical Training) or co-op.

- Students must have been maintaining full time student status for 3 consecutive quarters and obtain academic department approval before getting authorization from ISS.
- Authorization means you get a new I-20 from ISS (<http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/>).

How Financial Aid Works While You Are On Co-op

While you are enrolled for a co-op assignment, you are not charged RIT tuition for the quarter. Therefore, with the exception of the Federal Pell Grant, you are not eligible to receive financial aid for the co-op quarter. If you are eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant for your co-op quarter, this grant will credit to your student account after the drop/add period for the quarter and after you register your co-op on the Registrars system and report your co-op on Job Zone. Financial aid includes federal and private alternative loans as well as grants and scholarships. Your co-op earnings will not negatively impact your eligibility for federal student aid in the subsequent year. You are asked on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to report earnings from a co-op. The reported co-op earnings will automatically be excluded from your adjusted gross income when calculating your expected family contribution (EFC). If you have any questions regarding your co-op earnings and financial aid, you should contact your Financial Aid Counselor at ritaaid@rit.edu.

Housing While On Co-op and When You Return to Campus

Students who co-op in Rochester may stay in RIT housing because you maintain your full time student status. Students who co-op out of town are typically responsible for finding their own housing near the employer's location. Some companies provide housing assistance in the form of subsidies or housing allowances, or space in locations they own or rent for this purpose. Most employers will at least provide a list of apartments or housing options to assist students.

Students returning from co-op are guaranteed housing ***ONLY IF they were in RIT housing prior to going on co-op***, however, preferences are not guaranteed. RIT Housing Operations communicates with students via email and provides information on how to apply for housing when you return to campus.

While You Are On Co-op

Stay connected with your program coordinator. Call or email us if you have any questions or concerns, or just to tell us how things are going! You will receive an electronic quarterly Co-op Newsletter, email from your academic department, and an invitation to our quarterly office Welcome Back From Co-op Luncheon. Remember to make the most of this opportunity to not only gain valuable work experience but also to make connections that will help you develop your career.

Appointments and Office Hours

Personalized Advisement:

Call 475-2301 to make an appointment with your program coordinator who will assist you on a one-on-one basis with any aspect of your job search and related activities.

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 8:00 am – 5:00 pm; Friday: 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

Walk-In Hours:

Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays 9:30am - 11:30am & 1:30pm - 3:30pm; Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30am – 11:30am. These are times set aside where one of our program coordinators is on duty to answer any quick questions you may have. Check in at the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services reception desk.

