

CO-OP QUICK START GUIDE

School of Individualized Study

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)	Directly related to your field of study
Paid Employment	Single term to two consecutive terms in length
Tuition Free	

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

Part-time (20 hours or less)	Directly related to your field of study
Full-time (35 hours or more)	Pay tuition for credit
Typically unpaid	Register for internship course

Co-op Eligibility

Co-op is **optional** for all undergraduate students within the School of Individualized Study. 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.

Eligible for Co-op:	Completed one year of coursework in your academic program
Completion Requirement:	10 - 14 weeks
Out on Co-op:	10 weeks summer term, 14 weeks semester

Students will have the option to register an internship as an independent study which will replace a class. This experience must be an unpaid and directly related to your plan of study, with an emphasis on one or both of your professional concentrations. Students are encouraged to work with their academic advisor to determine which option is best.

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. You can also review the Career Connect platform, our online job database, to review and apply to job postings as well as on-campus interview opportunities.

Create a Career Connect Profile

The Career Connect platform is our central database to connect students with selected 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 semesters before you plan to co-op. Prepare for the term before you co-op as it will fill your schedule with resume submissions, interviews, career fairs, and workshops.

Please note: Some organizations, mainly the federal government and research universities, have early application deadlines. If you are interested in these, check the organization's career site, and meet with your assigned career services coordinator.

Applying to Job Opportunities

Through Career Connect, you can view job descriptions and apply to positions based on your qualifications. RIT has approved all co-op jobs in Career Connect. New algorithms provide job suggestions based on your field and interest. As you apply to different companies, review the requirements listed per post as some employers direct you to submit your resume through their company website. 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!

Broadening Your Job Search

Career Connect is the most trusted source for co-op jobs that fit RIT's requirements. Expand your search through your family and friends, professors, past employers, and professional associations. You can also utilize other job search sites, such as LinkedIn, Indeed, Handshake Open, etc., or connect with your career services coordinator for additional resources based on your targeted career field. Keep a record of jobs you applied for and the employers. If you are unsure if a position qualifies as an RIT co-op, present the job description to your career services coordinator or academic department before you accept the position for approval.

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 workshops and participating in a mock interview with your career services coordinator. Prepare by reviewing our [Interviewing website](#) 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 to be by 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, **three steps** are required to ensure that you will receive the appropriate credit 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. Should you arrive on co-op and your supervisor is different than what you reported, you can update your submitted report.

1. Register with your Academic Department

Submit a completed SOIS Co-op Registration form to SOIS Academic Advisor, Melissa Piciulo, or drop off the forms to the SOIS front office, located in the George Eastman building, suite 2210.

2. Register on SIS:

Once you have reported your co-op to our office, you will be registered for co-op on the RIT Student Information System (SIS) by your academic department. 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 ensure co-op credit:

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 and a screenshot of your registration in SIS. The registration must be for the term(s) in which you are requesting Curricular Practical Training OR
- 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 website](#) 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 enrollment while on co-op. 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 to our website.

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 & Scholarships.

Housing

Students who co-op in Rochester or have a remote co-op may stay in RIT housing during their co-op term. A student going on co-op for fall semester outside of Rochester has two options related to securing RIT housing for spring semester:

1. A student on co-op for fall semester who wants RIT housing for spring semester, may apply for spring semester housing in November while out on co-op at myLife.rit.edu. Students coming back to campus from a fall co-op are guaranteed RIT housing for the spring semester. Specific preferences cannot be guaranteed.
2. A student whose co-op is located 45 miles or more from Rochester and requires the student to relocate during the fall semester, may hold their RIT housing contract and assignment for their return spring semester for an alternative rent rate. This option is also offered to students completing a virtual co-op if 45 miles or more from Rochester. Rent is reduced for the fall semester to one-half the term's rent of the type of housing the student is assigned to.

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. They may offer 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 Credit

The following documents must be 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 will review and award a grade.

1. Employer Evaluation of your performance

A customized evaluation form is emailed to your supervisor by our office during the midpoint of each term you are on co-op.

2. Student Co-op Work Report

This report is available to you on our website during the midpoint of each term you are on co-op. You will receive a reminder email during the midpoint of each co-op term.

3. Debrief Session

Students will have an opportunity to debrief from their co-op and reflect on their experience.

For a record of your co-op history, submitted evaluations and work reports, log in through the "Work report/evaluation" link on our [Students Co-op website](#).

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.

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.

Personalized Advisement

Log in to Career Connect or call 585-475-2301 to make an appointment with your career services coordinator.

Office Hours

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

Drop-ins

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

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585-475-2301
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rit.edu/careerservices