

## MS Cybersecurity Co-op Guide

### Overview

Graduate students are not required to complete a co-op for their degree, but it is strongly recommended to strengthen professional experience. Students may complete a maximum of two co-op blocks (Summer, Fall, or Spring). A co-op block is defined by the academic term, not the employer. All co-op positions must be full-time, paid, professional roles directly related to the student's field of study. Co-op is not credit-bearing and cannot replace coursework or count toward degree credit requirements.

### Eligibility Requirements

Students must be in good academic standing (minimum cumulative or prior-term GPA of 3.0), have completed all assigned bridge courses, and completed at least 15 credits or 5 courses toward their degree provided they are in good academic standing. *Academic integrity violations disqualify students from co-op eligibility.*

### Co-op Approval Process

Students must receive an offer letter and submit it to the Graduate Program Director for approval **prior to accepting a position**. The offer letter must include company information, supervisor contact details, job title and description, start and end dates, and compensation. Students must also complete a required co-op orientation through Career Connect before enrollment can occur.

### Enrollment Process

After approval, students must report their co-op through the RIT Co-op website. Enrollment is completed by department staff only. Late approvals may require additional processing time. International students must have their work authorization before beginning work in the US. Students apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) **after** the co-op has been approved by the Graduate Program Director and they have been enrolled in their co-op in the Student Information System (SIS). Instructions for apply for CPT are found on the International Student Services website.

### **Enrollment Notes**

Co-op enrollment is processed by CSEC office staff and cannot be completed by students. Please contact [cybergrad@rit.edu](mailto:cybergrad@rit.edu) with questions. The approval and enrollment process may take up to one business week and longer during peak periods; frequent emails or phone calls may delay processing. If your co-op does not appear in SIS one week after approval by the Graduate Program Director and the Co-op Office, a single follow up email to [cybergrad@rit.edu](mailto:cybergrad@rit.edu) is appropriate.

Students should consult the Graduate Program Director and their advisor to determine whether taking a course or working on a capstone while on co-op is appropriate. While on co-op, students' primary responsibility is to their employer, and co-op participation does not excuse missed deadlines or late work.

### **Academic Considerations While on Co-op**

Students may enroll in no more than one course while on co-op, though this is not recommended. Students should consult with their advisor to determine feasibility. The employer's expectations take priority during the co-op term.

### **Term Registration Rules**

Co-ops spanning multiple academic terms require registration for each applicable term. Partial-term co-ops are generally not permitted except in limited summer-term circumstances. Once a term is registered as co-op, it is considered fully used.

### **Professional Conduct & Reneging**

Students must honor verbal or written co-op commitments. Accepting another position for the same term after committing to a co-op may result in a permanent failing grade for co-op eligibility and loss of future co-op opportunities.

### **Post Co-op Responsibilities**

Students and supervisors must complete required evaluations at the end of each co-op block. A departmental post-co-op survey is also required. Failure to complete evaluations will result in an incomplete grade that may convert to a permanent failing grade.

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Failure to complete required evaluations will result in an Incomplete record, which may convert to a permanent failing outcome. A failing outcome results in loss of eligibility for any future co-op participation.

### **Maximum Co-op Usage Clarification**

Graduate students are not required to complete a co-op for their degree, but co-op participation is strongly recommended. Students may complete a maximum of two academic-term co-op blocks (Fall and/or Spring).

Summer co-op enrollment counts toward this maximum when required for student status. Once a term is registered as co-op, it is considered fully used and cannot be reclaimed or split across future terms.

### **Mid-Semester and Late-Start Co-ops**

Co-ops must align with standard academic terms. Mid-semester co-ops are not permitted during Fall or Spring semesters.

Limited exceptions for late starts may be considered only during the summer term. Any requests for exceptions must be approved by the Graduate Program Director prior to enrollment.

### **Drop/Add Deadline Requirement**

For Fall and Spring semester co-ops, students must begin work no later than the end of the university's drop/add period for the registered term. Failure to meet this requirement may result in loss of student status and ineligibility for co-op enrollment.

### **Summer Co-op Registration Rules**

If a co-op position begins or ends at any point during the summer term, the entire summer term must be registered as co-op and is considered fully used.

Unused days from a shortened summer co-op may not be carried forward. Summer is the only term in which partial-term co-ops may be considered, subject to approval.

### **Ineligible Positions – Examples**

Positions that are primarily clerical or operational in nature are not eligible for co-op credit, including but not limited to:

- Data entry or administrative support roles
- Routine IT support or computer lab maintenance
- Systems or network administration without a cybersecurity focus
- Basic website setup or front-end web development
- Deployment or use of existing technology without substantive analytical responsibility

### **Program Scope Note**

This guide applies specifically to students enrolled in the MS Cybersecurity program within the Department of Cybersecurity (CSEC). Policies for other programs may differ.