

CO-OP QUICK START GUIDE

College of Computing and Information Sciences

About Co-op

Cooperative Education, or co-op, gives you the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience before you graduate. It will also help you further define your career path and fully realize the value of what you are learning in the classroom.

Cooperative education at RIT is full-time, paid employment directly related to your field of study for a minimum period of 14-15 weeks for a fall or spring semester term and a minimum period of 10-12 weeks for a summer term. All students must be in **good academic standing** to be eligible to participate in RIT's co-op program. The minimum number of terms of co-op required for BS degree certification varies by department as follows: 2 semester terms **and** 1 summer term: Computer Science, Software Engineering; 2 semester terms **or** 2 summer terms **or** 1 semester and 1 summer term: Computing and Information Technologies, Human Centered Computing, Game Design and Development, Computing Security, Web and Mobile Computing, New Media Interactive Development. Graduate (MS) students have optional co-op, up to one year of experience which may vary by department. Check with your academic department to confirm your approved length of time to work.

BS students are eligible for co-op after you have completed the first two years of coursework in your academic program and after completion of required courses as specified by your academic department. You will alternate terms of coursework with terms of co-op during the last two or three years of your program. MS students must complete a set number of courses/credit hours before co-op. International students must have one academic year completed before you are eligible to co-op. Your academic department determines your co-op/academic schedule and will assist you with a schedule to follow. Students should complete co-ops prior to their last semester of classes and should not end on a co-op.

Getting Ready For The Job Search

To prepare for the co-op job search process, complete a mandatory Co-op Orientation or Co-op Preparation Course offered by your department to learn how to develop the tools (e.g. resume and cover letter) and the job search strategies (application and interview techniques) to undertake your search. You will also learn how to use Handshake, the online job posting database available through the student page of the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education website. You will be able to review and apply to co-op job postings and on-campus interview opportunities through Handshake. Co-op Orientations or prep classes are offered to second year, graduate and transfer students every term except summer. You only have to attend a Co-op Orientation or prep class one time. All students must attend either a co-op orientation or co-op preparation seminar as determined by your department prior to going on co-op your first co-op assignment.

How Your Career Services Coordinator Helps

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 individual coordinator for personalized service as well as through regularly offered seminars and workshops. Coordinators work closely with your academic department and foster relationships with employers to develop employment opportunities. To look up your career services coordinator, go to the Career Services Home page and select "Staff Directory"; then enter your program in the search field. We are here to assist you in securing a co-op job and support you while you are working.

When To Begin The Job Search

It's never too early to begin your co-op job search! You should start 6-9 months before you are scheduled to co-op. The term right before you co-op is typically the busiest with resume submissions, interviews and related job search activities.

Create a Profile On Handshake And Upload Your Resume

Handshake is the web-based system used by the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education and selected employers to post co-op job opportunities. (You will use this same system later on to search for full-time positions upon completion of your degree). Login to Handshake at <http://rit.joinhandshake.com> using your RIT computer account and password. Complete your profile and store your resume in the system. Developing a new resume is easy: start by reading through the Resume Writing page of our site (www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/resume-writing). That page also provides you with samples for inspiration. Have your career services coordinator review your draft so that it is error-free and effective.

Learning About And Applying To Job Opportunities

Using Handshake, you can view job descriptions and apply to all positions for which you are qualified. Create a search agent to receive notification of new job openings that match your job search profile and apply with a click of a button! Pay attention to the requirements listed by the employer and the application instructions. Be sure to follow these directions carefully. Keep your options open and avoid limiting yourself to a specific employer or geographic location. Employer on-campus information sessions, interviewing schedules and special events are also posted on Handshake. You can view the details of upcoming career fairs and related activities, including workshops on job search topics. Just click on the Events tab in Handshake.

Broadening Your Job Search

The best job search is a comprehensive one. Handshake is **only one** source of co-op job openings. Look for co-op jobs utilizing other sources: your network of family and friends, professors, past employers, coaches, clubs and professional associations, company websites, LinkedIn and various web sites. We recommend checking our Web-based Tools and Resource Lists page (www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/resources/computing) for a list of sites for your major. If you find a co-op on your own at a company that the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education does not work with, get a copy of the job description and have it approved before you accept a job offer. Contact your career services coordinator for approval.

You should always continue your search until you have been offered and accepted a position!

Prepare For Interviews

Brush up on interviewing skills and attend mock interview programs to prepare for the real thing. For sample interview questions, typical interview formats and interviewing tips please see our interviewing page: (www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/interviewing). 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. Make sure you have appropriate interview attire and arrive for the interview 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

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! If you renege, you can face the possibility of an F on your transcript.

Make sure you confirm your start and end dates, work hours and other work site expectations with your employer **prior** to starting your job. All positions must be full-time, paid and related to your academic discipline.

Ethical Behavior

Co-op employers expect RIT and its students to operate according to accepted business ethics and standards. 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: www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/studentconduct/rr.php and the Student Agreement Policy (found in Handshake under the Resources tab).

Reporting Your Co-op Job And Registering For Co-op

After you have accepted a co-op job, to ensure that you will receive co-op credit for each term you will be on co-op:

1. Report your co-op information to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education through the student portal of our website www.rit.edu/ReportCo-op. Should you arrive on co-op and your supervisor is different than what you reported, our website gives you instructions for updating your supervisor's name and email address if needed: <http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/notification-registration>
2. Register on SIS: Once a co-op is reported with our office (step 1), all students will be registered for co-op on the RIT Student Information System (SIS) by their academic departments. All students must meet their department's co-op eligibility requirements prior to SIS registration which also includes attending a co-op orientation or prep class.

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 (www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/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.

1099s and W-2s: Breaking Down the Difference

Simply put, 1099s and W-2s are two separate tax forms for two different types of workers. If you're an independent contractor, you get a 1099 form. If you're an employee, you receive a W-2. As a W-2 employee, payroll taxes are automatically deducted from your paycheck and then paid to the government through your employer. If you're a contractor, you are responsible for calculating your own payroll taxes and then submitting the sum to the government on a quarterly basis. Source: <https://www.learnvest.com/knowledge-center/the-difference-between-a-1099-and-a-w-2/>

Your Co-op Evaluation – Receiving Credit

To update your supervisor's name and email address if needed: <http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/notification-registration>

Co-op grades are **issued by your academic department** on a pass/fail basis. To receive a "Satisfactory" ("S") grade for co-op on your transcript, the following evaluation documents must be completed and submitted on-line to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education for **each** term you are employed:

1. **Employer Evaluation** of your performance. A link to a customized evaluation form is emailed to your employer by the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education during the midpoint of each term you are on co-op. This evaluation must be filled out by your supervisor and submitted for review by your academic department. It is very important that you report an accurate email address for your supervisor.
2. **Student Co-op Work Report**. This report is available to you via our student web page during the midpoint of each term you are on co-op and should be completed prior to the last day of the academic term. You will get a reminder email during the midpoint of each co-op term.

Please note steps 1 and 2 of the **Reporting Your Co-op Job and Registering For Co-op section** above must be completed in order for you and your employer to be able to access the appropriate evaluations. For a record of your co-op history, submitted evaluations and work reports (if applicable), login through the "View Your Co-op Evaluations" link on our student page.

International Students

1. Report your employment information to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education through the student page www.rit.edu/ReportCo-op
2. Register for co-op or internship with your academic department in the SIS system.
3. Additional permission to participate in curricular practical training must be granted by an ISS advisor prior to the employment start date. Students must **either**:
 - a) Submit the Online CPT Request Form along with a copy of your job offer letter and a screen shot 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 International Student Services.

How Financial Aid Works While You Are On Co-op

RIT does not charge tuition for enrollment in cooperative education. With the exception of the federal Pell Grant, most forms of financial aid are not awarded for semesters of co-op employment. Financial aid includes federal and private alternative loans as well as grants and scholarships. If you have concerns pertaining to your living expenses during your co-op term, please contact your Financial Aid Counselor to discuss some various strategies as to how to cover these costs. If you are a Pell grant recipient, the grant will credit to your student account after the drop/add period for the term. You must register your co-op on the Registrar's system and report your co-op on our website. 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, please contact your Financial Aid Counselor at ritaaid@rit.edu.

International Experiences

If you are working outside of the United States and are not returning to your home country, you are required to meet with our International Experiences Coordinator to make sure you sign all the correct paperwork before leaving the US. Schedule an appointment in Handshake or call 585-475-2301 to set up an appointment.

Housing While On Co-op And When You Return To Campus

Students who co-op in Rochester may stay in RIT housing. 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 who return from co-op are guaranteed on-campus housing, *if they were in RIT housing prior to leaving for 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 finweb.rit.edu/housing/.

Concerns On Co-op

Dealing with stressful and uncomfortable situations can be part of the workplace learning experience. As with every other aspect of experiential learning, the university and your career services coordinator are here to support and guide you as necessary. If you encounter a concern, we encourage you to contact your career services coordinator so we may offer advice or assistance in resolving the matter. It is important to address issues as they arise, rather than postpone such a discussion or ignore the problem. Examples of workplace issues that we can assist with range from coaching you on how to talk with supervisors regarding your work related concerns, how to address conflicts on your team as well as discrimination and harassment complaints. Be sure to call or email us if you have any questions or concerns.

Appointments And Office Hours

Personalized Advisement: Log in to Handshake or call 585-475-2301 to make an appointment with your career services coordinator who will assist you on a one-on-one basis with any aspect of your job search and related activities.

Office Hours: Monday-Friday: 8:00am – 4:30pm

Drop-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 career services coordinators is on duty to answer any quick questions you may have. Check in at the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education reception desk.

Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education

RIT. Bausch & Lomb Center. 57 Lomb Memorial Drive. Rochester NY 14623-5603

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