

Co-op Quick Start Guide

College of Science

Thomas H. Gosnell School of Life Sciences
School of Chemistry and Materials Sciences
School of Physics and Astronomy

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 employment directly related to your field of study for a minimum period of 10 weeks (Summer) or 15 weeks (Fall or Spring term). All students must be in **good academic standing** to be eligible to participate in RIT's co-op program. Although co-op is encouraged in all the College of Science programs, it is only required in the Bioinformatics program (one cooperative education experience).

Students are eligible for co-op after they have completed the first two years of coursework in their academic program. Students in the Department of Chemistry are eligible for co-op after completion of the first year of coursework.

Getting Ready For The Job Search

To prepare for the co-op job search process, attend a Co-op Preparation Seminar, and/or meet with your career services coordinator, to learn how to develop the tools (resume and cover letter) and the job search strategies (application and interview techniques) to undertake your search.

How Your Career Services Coordinator Helps

Career services coordinators are assigned to each College of Science 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 career services coordinator for personalized advisement or attend regularly offered seminars and workshops. Career services 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! Starting two terms before you want to co-op will prepare you to submit your resume to employers who require early resume submission (For Federal Government and many summer co-ops, start your job search three terms in advance). 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 Handshake 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/occe/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. Some employers will direct you to submit your resume through the company web site – be sure to follow these directions carefully. Keep your options open and avoid limiting yourself to a specific type of employer or geographic location.

Employer on-campus information sessions, interviewing schedules and special events are also posted on Handshake. You can also view the details of upcoming career fairs and related activities, including workshops on job search topics.

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 friends, professors, past employers, coaches, clubs and professional associations, and various web sites. We recommend checking our Web Resources page (www.rit.edu/emcs/occe/student/resources/science) for a list of sites for your major. Apply for positions found “on your own” and keep a record of your job applications.

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/occe/student/interviewing). 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 within two days 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 offer, 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 function 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: 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, two steps are required to ensure that you will receive the appropriate co-op credit (acknowledgement on your transcript) 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 our student page: www.rit.edu/reportexperience. 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. Once you have reported your co-op with the Office of Career Services, contact your Academic Advisor so he/she can register for co-op on the RIT Student Information System (SIS). All students must meet their academic department's co-op eligibility requirements prior to accepting a co-op position. Note: co-op is for zero credit.

International Students

1. Report your employment information to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education through the student page www.rit.edu/reportexperience
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.

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/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.

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/>

Receiving Credit

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>

To receive a "Satisfactory" ("S") grade for co-op on your transcript, the following evaluation documents must be completed and submitted to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education for each term you are on co-op. Your academic department will review and award a grade.

1. **Employer Evaluation** of your performance. A link to a customized evaluation form is emailed to your supervisor by the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education around the midpoint of each term you are on co-op.
2. **Student Co-op Work Report**. This report is available to you via our Student web page at the midpoint of each term you are on co-op. You will get a reminder email during the midpoint of each co-op term.

For a record of your co-op history, submitted evaluations and work reports, login through the "View Your Co-op Evaluations" link on the student page of our site.

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 ritaidd@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 475-2301 to set up an appointment.

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

Students who co-op in Rochester or co-op remotely may stay in RIT housing during their co-op term. A student going on co-op for fall semester that must relocate has two options related to securing RIT housing for spring semester:

- Students may apply for spring semester housing in November while they are out on co-op at myhousing.rit.edu. These students are guaranteed RIT housing for the spring semester and will move into their housing the week of spring semester move-in. Specific housing preferences cannot be guaranteed.
- Students who have participated in Housing Selection and reserved a space in housing for fall semester may hold their space in RIT housing while gone on co-op during fall semester. This way guarantees the space that a student selected during Housing Selection will be waiting for them when they return to RIT for spring semester. In order to hold the space the student's co-op must be located 45 miles or more from Rochester and requires the student to relocate to the co-op location. The cost of holding a housing space for fall semester is one-half the term's rent of the type of housing the student is assigned to. Please contact Housing Operations at housing@rit.edu to make arrangements to hold your space. This option is only available for fall semester.

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

Office 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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