

CO-OP Quick Start Guide

School of Individualized Study

About Co-op

Cooperative Education (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 part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid employment directly related to your plan of study, with an emphasis on one or both of your professional concentrations. Co-op begins after you have completed the first year of academic coursework, or once you have obtained sophomore status by your accumulated, earned credits. All students must be in *good academic standing* to be eligible to participate in RIT's co-op program.

Participating in a co-op or other type of experiential learning is strongly encouraged as it is an opportunity to gain work experience and build rapport with a potential future employer.

Co-op Versus Internship – What is the Difference?

Co-op is a paid or unpaid employment directly related to your plan of study, with an emphasis on one or both of your professional concentrations. A full-time co-op must be at least 35 hours per week, while part-time co-op is 10-15 hours per week (not exceeding 20 hours).

Students in SOIS 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.

Getting Ready For the Job Search

To prepare for the co-op job search process, talk to your academic advisor, 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.

When to Begin the Job Search

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

Your Career Services Coordinator

Career services coordinators are assigned to each college 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. The career service coordinator assigned to SOIS is Kris Stehler (kwsoc@rit.edu).

Handshake

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 in to Handshake (<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. Simply 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 employer or geographic location. Employer on-campus information sessions, interviewing schedules and special events are also posted on Handshake. In addition, you can 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 such as your network of friends, professors, past employers, coaches, clubs, professional associations, and various web sites. We recommend checking our Web Resources pages for a list of sites for your concentration (www.rit.edu/emcs/occe/student/resources) 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 web site’s link to the interviewing page at (www.rit.edu/emcs/occe/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! 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 (www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/studentconduct/rr.php) and the Student Agreement Policy (found in Handshake under the Resources tab).

Co-op Reporting & Registering

After you have discussed going on co-op with your academic advisor and have accepted a co-op, 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 information** to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education through the student page (www.rit.edu/reportexperience). Please notify Kris Stehler (kwsocce@rit.edu) once your co-op report has been submitted. 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/occe/student/notification-registration>
2. **Register for co-op with your academic department:** Submit a completed SOIS Co-op Registration form to SOIS Academic Advisor, Melissa Piciulo, via email: mapcems@rit.edu or drop off the forms to the SOIS front office, located in the George Eastman building, suite 2210.
3. **Register in SIS:** Once SOIS receives the co-op registration form and has confirmation from the Office of Career Services that the co-op has been reported, Melissa Piciulo will register you for the co-op on the RIT Student Information System (SIS).

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.

Co-op Evaluation – Receiving Credit

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.
3. **Debriefing Session**: Students will have an opportunity to debrief from their co-op and reflect on their experience.

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 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 ritaid@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. 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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