

# CO-OP QUICK START GUIDE

## School of Art, Design and American Crafts

### About Co-op

Gaining experience in the career field you are hoping to enter after graduation is valuable in many ways – and taking advantage of cooperative education (co-op) is just one of the options available to you.

### What Is Co-op?

Co-op or cooperative education is full-time or part-time paid employment, directly related to your major that lasts one or two terms. It is a type of experiential education that allows you to gain valuable experience that may help you clarify career goals, hone your skills and earn some extra cash. You register for co-op just like you would a course and it will appear on your transcript with a satisfactory/unsatisfactory. You maintain full-time student status but *do not* pay tuition for co-op.

### Who Can Co-op?

Co-op is optional for students in the School of Design, School of Art and School for American Crafts. To be eligible you must be a student in good academic standing with a minimum of a 2.5 GPA and have completed your sophomore year. Masters students are typically eligible to co-op after 2 terms. You are *not* eligible for co-op after you have completed all your coursework.

### Co-op Versus Internship – What Is The Difference?

From an employer point of view there often is no difference, (but it *is* often important for an employer that the work experience is tied to your academic record). As long as a job meets the definition of co-op it does not matter what the employer calls the position. Co-op should be paid and related to your major. For full-time co-op you must work at least 35 hours per week. For part-time co-op, you must work 10-15 (not exceeding 20) and also be registered for 12 credit hours. Many of you also have an option to register for an internship as a class; so depending on your circumstances, you need to decide which option is best for you.

Co-op	Internship
Related Experience	Related Experience
Always paid	Unpaid or paid
Do not pay tuition	Pay tuition receive credit/grade (use in place of a class)
Jobs – search through co-op job listings through Career Services and Cooperative Education site (RIT Job Zone) or find one on your own	Internships – your academic department may have leads, search in Job Zone or find one on your own
Full-time or part-time, length of a school term (intersession does not count)	Part-time or full-time, length of school term (intersession does not count)
Register for co-op course through your academic advisor or career services coordinator. Appears on transcript with a satisfactory/unsatisfactory	Register for internship class. You may need to complete paperwork and receive pre-approval from your academic dept. chair
Handled by Career Services and Cooperative Education with academic department chairs	Handled totally by academic department
Your employer is sent a work evaluation that they complete online	Your faculty sponsor will let you know what you need to provide in order to receive a grade

### Where Can I Find Help?

You should meet with a career services coordinator assigned to your major to discuss your job search. They can help you get prepared and answer any questions or concerns you may have. They have offices in the Bausch & Lomb Center. To make an appointment, call 585-475-2301. If your major is: Graphic Design, Interior Design, New Media Design & Imaging or Visual Communication Design, then your career services coordinator is Gretchen Burruto ([geboce@rit.edu](mailto:geboce@rit.edu)). If your major is Art

Education (Visual Arts-All Grades), Ceramics, Fine Arts Studio, Furniture Design, Glass, Industrial Design, or Metals & Jewelry Design, your career services coordinator is Shauna Newcomb ([shnoce@rit.edu](mailto:shnoce@rit.edu)). If your major is 3D Digital Graphics, Illustration, or Medical Illustration, your career services coordinator is James Bondi ([jtboce@rit.edu](mailto:jtboce@rit.edu)).

Through the student page of our site ([www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students](http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students)) you will get lots of valuable job search info and be able to access RIT Job Zone, where you can view and apply to job postings and on campus interviews.

### Why Co-op?

Experience will give you the edge over your competition. When you co-op you gain industry experience, clarify career goals, expand your network, and beef up your portfolio.

### When Can I Co-op?

You are eligible to co-op after you have completed your first two years of coursework. Most of you are only able to co-op full-time during the summer because of the way your courses are sequenced; you should start your co-op search at least two terms in advance.

### How Do I Find A Co-op Job?

Start by visiting our site for co-op job listings on RIT Job Zone. Complete your profile and upload your resume. If you don't have a resume – check through the resume samples on our site and see your career services coordinator for feedback.

Once you have completed these steps you can start viewing jobs. Apply to as many as you can (try not to limit yourself geographically). If you feel you need a little support or help at any point in your job search, make an appointment to meet with your career services coordinator in our office.

The best job search is a comprehensive one. RIT Job Zone 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-based Tools and Resource List page ([www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/resources/art-design-crafts](http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/student/resources/art-design-crafts)) for a list of other job sources for your major. Apply for positions found “on your own” and keep a record of your job applications. Following up with potential employers is key.

### Co-op Job Search To Do List:

- Meet with your career services coordinator at least two terms in advance
- Write or edit a resume – email it to your career services coordinator for review
- Pull your portfolio together. Great idea to provide employers with a link to an online version
- Register and upload resume in RIT Job Zone
- Apply to all possible jobs and keep track
- Develop list of employers where you will send your resume out (separate from JZ)
- Write cover letter that can be adapted/personalized for each employer
- Send out a slew of resumes
- Follow up with all resumes
- Set up interviews
- Accept position let other interested employers know you are no longer available
- Report job to Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education and register for co-op through your department

### Interested In Working Abroad?

If so, go to our work abroad pages for more info ([www.rit.edu/workabroad](http://www.rit.edu/workabroad)). Meet with Maria Richart, Assistant Director for International Outreach for assistance and leave yourself plenty of lead time.

### Preparing For Interviews

For sample interview questions, typical interview formats and interviewing tips, we have a lot of that info on our site for you. If you are nervous set up a practice interview with your career services coordinator to prepare for the real thing.

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 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 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. Your career services coordinator can help you navigate successfully through this process; be sure to tap into their expertise.

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](http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/studentconduct/rr.php) and the Student Agreement Policy (found on your Job Zone Profile under the Privacy Tab).

Important: Once you have accepted a co-op job you need to do two things to make your co-op official:

1. Register for co-op (it has its own unique course number) through your Academic Advisor.
2. Notify the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education where you will be working -- complete the brief Report Your Job form through the student page of our site: [www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students](http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students).

## International Students

### STEP 1:

- Must obtain work authorization from International Student Services (ISS) before going on CPT (Curricular Practical Training) or co-op!  
You will be getting work authorization after:
- You have been maintaining full-time student status for 9 months and
- You have obtained academic department approval for CPT
- You have registered for CPT in SIS and, students must also have
- Registered their job on the Student page of our Career Services website

### STEP 2:

- International students must bring their job offer letter to ISS to obtain off-campus work authorization which means getting a new I-20 from ISS ([www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/](http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/)) specifying employer name, dates of employment and location of employment.

Why Bother? Reporting/registering your co-op is beneficial to have it a part of your academic record. A work evaluation will be sent and completed by your employer – a record of your success is helpful to have. Many employers require you to be registered for their position. And in rare cases, if any work-related issue arises, we can work with you and the employer. And, it is beneficial for the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education to have a record of where RIT students are working so we can maintain a relationship with that employer and encourage them to hire future RIT students or graduates!

If at any time you have questions or need help do let us know — we look forward to working with you as you take advantage of the co-op experience at RIT.

## Your Co-op Evaluation – Co-op On Your Transcript

To receive a “Satisfactory” (“S”) grade for co-op on your transcript, a Work Evaluation must be completed by your supervisor and returned to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education. A link to this work evaluation is emailed to your employer by the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education during the midpoint of your co-op. Many employers will review your performance based on this evaluation before you complete your co-op.

## 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](http://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.

## 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](mailto:ritaidd@rit.edu).

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

Students who co-op in Rochester may stay in RIT housing because you maintain your full time student status. 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 returning from co-op are guaranteed housing *ONLY IF they were in RIT housing prior to going on 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/](http://finweb.rit.edu/housing/).

## While You Are On Co-op

Stay connected with your career services coordinator. Call or email us if you have any questions or concerns, or just to tell us how things are going! You will receive an email from your academic department and an invitation to our office Welcome Back From Co-op Luncheon. Remember to make the most of this opportunity to not only gain valuable work experience but also to make connections that will help you develop your career.

## Appointments And Office Hours

### Personalized Advisement:

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: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Summer Hours: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday – Friday.

### Walk-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.