

Mount Saint Vincent University

Undergraduate Degrees

Co-operative Education Program

Mount Saint Vincent University is a leader among Maritime universities in providing co-operative education as an integral element of several professional degree programs. The co-operative education program at the Mount meets national quality standards and is accredited by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE).

Definition

Co-operative education provides students with the opportunity to put theory into practice by integrating the student's academic study with alternating paid co-op terms in employer organizations. This employment is related as closely as possible to the student's course of study. Studies show that co-operative education enhances the student's academic performance and helps ease the student's transition to the workplace upon graduation.

Growth and Progress of Co-operative Education

The first North American co-operative education program was introduced at the University of Cincinnati in 1906. In 1957 the University of Waterloo brought co-operative education to Canada. Today more than 73,000 students are enrolled in co-operative education programs at 87 post-secondary educational institutions.

Co-operative Education Program

The co-operative education program at the Mount was established in 1979. From a single co-operative education program in business administration, co-operative education has grown to include not only the original business program but also information technology, public relations, tourism and hospitality management and the Bachelor of Arts Co-operative Education Route with Integrated Major (History/Information Technology).

Each co-operative education term is a minimum duration of thirteen weeks of paid experience and is related as closely as possible to the student's academic program. Co-op terms enable students to apply theoretical concepts to practical career-related situations while the practical experience gained informs the student's in-class studies. Other benefits include the opportunity to experience the student's chosen career field; the opportunity to improve job search skills including résumé-writing, handling interviews and dealing with employers; the opportunity to develop personal and professional confidence; and to earn income while learning.

Participation

All students participating in the co-operative education program must sign the *Terms and Conditions for Co-op Students* document. This is the student's agreement to abide by the co-operative education standards, regulations and policies governing their activities on campus and in the workplace.

To graduate in the co-operative education program, students must successfully complete three co-operative education terms in their respective degree programs in addition to the normal academic requirements. Graduating students who successfully complete the co-operative education requirements will have the "co-operative education" designation on their degrees. Co-operative education students enrolled in optional co-operative education programs who complete fewer than the required number of co-op terms will have a notation on their transcripts indicating the co-op terms completed.

In addition, all co-op students must complete the mandatory Professional Development Program which provides students with the tools to assist them in securing co-op terms and in reflecting on their co-operative education experiences. Topics include the roles of the various partners in the educational program, the job competition process, self assessment, job search, résumé and cover letter writing, interview techniques, work term reports, setting learning objectives, and issues in the workplace.

Admission to Optional Programs

At the Mount the business program is the only optional co-operative education program. Application to this co-operative education program must be made to the Co-op Office.

Employment Procedures

Employers recruited for the co-operative education program submit position descriptions to the Co-op Office. After approval by the individual department, co-op opportunities are posted. At the close of the posting period, student applications are forwarded to the co-op employer.

Co-op employers interview students seeking co-op positions. In-person interviews are normally held on campus; telephone interviews are frequently used by employers outside the Halifax/Dartmouth area. Other materials often requested by employers include work samples, academic transcripts, and work-related references.

At the end of the interview period, the best possible match of employers and students, or a direct offer, is made. The Co-operative Education Co-ordinators inform employers and students of the applicable process.

Some students may not secure co-op positions, and some employers may not obtain students through the above procedure. While the University does make every effort to assist all students in securing a co-op term and to satisfy the requirements of all employers, it should be stressed that an employer is never required to hire a student whom the employer considers unacceptable.

Students who are matched to an employer or who accept an offer are committed to completing the co-op term. After accepting a verbal offer or submitting a Student Preference List, students are not permitted to renege in favour of another employer. Students who breach this regulation are deemed ineligible for co-operative education and a notation will be placed on their transcript.

Students sign a learning agreement with the University by which they agree to abide by the policies and regulations governing co-operative education for the duration of the co-op term. This also constitutes registration for the summer co-op term.

Salaries paid to co-operative education students are determined by the employers within their own wage structure. As students progress through their programs and assume more responsibility on co-operative education assignments, it is recommended that their salaries increase as merited.

In keeping with the philosophy of co-operative education, the co-op term complements knowledge acquired in the classroom. To achieve this, students should be engaged in positions which provide a variety of experience and a progression with respect to skill level and responsibilities assigned.

Co-operative education program process and procedures are outlined in detail in the *Policy and Procedures for Co-operative Education: Guide for Students*.

Evaluation

The co-op student must have evidence of satisfactory performance on co-op terms and in academic coursework to continue in a co-operative education program.

An evaluation form must be completed by the co-op employer at the end of each co-op term. In order for this evaluation to have constructive value, it is important that it be discussed with the student at an exit interview before the student returns to campus.

During the co-op term each student receives a work site visit either in person or by phone. Meetings such as these provide an excellent opportunity for a frank exchange of views on all aspects of the co-op position, the student's performance, as well as university curriculum. The work site visit is integral to the evaluation of the student's development and to the establishment of long-term relationships with the employers as partners in the education process.

Each co-op term, the co-op student is required to prepare a work term report which is relevant to their area of co-op employment or area of study. This provides experience in the preparation of written reports similar to those which an employer expects from a responsible staff member. The work term report is evaluated by faculty and may also be used by the employer. Overall ratings are satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Satisfactory work term reports are a requisite for continuation and graduation in a co-operative education program.

Regulations

Program Standards

In order to graduate with a degree completed in the co-operative education program, students must:

1. fulfill the requirements for the degree in which they are enrolled;
2. maintain a 2.0 CGPA in each academic semester after admission to co-operative education*;

3. be enrolled as a full-time student in every semester, including summer, both before and after each co-op term. The Chair of the Department must approve written requests for permission to enrol in a course during a co-op term;
4. attend all levels of the co-operative education professional development and return-to-campus sessions;
5. alternate co-op terms and academic study according to the sequence prescribed by the academic department which includes ending on a full-time academic term;
6. complete three co-op terms with a passing grade, and according to the standards prescribed, by the appropriate academic department. For a description of the appropriate standards, students must consult the Calendar entry for each department, and the appropriate Co-operative Education Co-ordinator;
7. adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined in the *Terms and Conditions for Co-op Students*, the *Policies and Procedures for Co-operative Education: Guide for Students* and the University Calendar;

*Students who do not meet the 2.0 CGPA requirements for co-operative education but have more than 7.5 units of transfer credits, or grades from courses completed more than five years ago, may request an individual review of their transcripts by the Department Chair who may approve continuation.

Withdrawal Dates

Depending on the time of withdrawal, admission to and withdrawal from the co-operative education program, the following situations may occur:

1. tuition fees may be assessed for any withdrawal from a co-op course/term or the co-operative education program according to the University withdrawal policy.
2. from the date of admission to an optional co-operative education program to the date prior to an offer being accepted or a Student Preference List is submitted, no notation whatsoever will be made to the student's transcript;
3. once an offer is accepted or a Student Preference List is submitted withdrawal without permission will result in a "WF" for the co-op term and the notation "required to withdraw from co-operative education";
4. withdrawal from the co-operative education program will result in a "W" for the co-op term and the "withdrawal from co-operative education" notation will appear on the student's transcript;
5. if a student fails to complete the co-op term requirements, an "F" will result for the co-op term and the notation "required to withdraw from co-operative education" will appear on the transcript.

Deferral Policy

Students may be eligible to defer a co-op term under exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness). Application must be made in writing to the Co-op Office. Decisions to defer a co-op term for exceptional circumstances will be made by the relevant academic department. This will result in the student's being unable to complete course requirements according to the sequence prescribed by the academic department and may result in delayed graduation for

as much as a year. In order to maintain status as a co-op student, the student may be required to take additional courses. Students who qualify can only defer one co-op term. See the Policy and Procedures for Co-operative Education: Guide for Students for more details.

"Self-Directed Search" Policy

Students who fail to actively participate in all stages of the co-operative education process within the parameters of co-operative education policies, procedures, regulations and the *Terms and Conditions for Co-op Students* will be given a status of "Self-Directed Search." This status results in the student being removed from the application and interview cycle. Details of the "Self-Directed Search" status are outlined in the *Policy and Procedures for Co-operative Education: Guide for Students*.

Appeal Process

Students are able to appeal decisions regarding admission to and withdrawal from co-operative education as well as the assignment of an "F" for a co-op term. All appeals will be made in writing to the Academic Appeals Committee.

Co-op Term Regulations

During the co-op term, the student is an employee in all matters pertaining to conditions of employment and a student only for the purposes of academic evaluation. The University accepts no responsibility for the working environment in which the student is employed.

Co-operative Education Program Fees

The co-operative education program is an academic program which integrates semesters in the classroom with semesters in the workplace. The co-operative education process for each co-op term is an eight-month period starting with co-op term preparation the semester prior to a co-op term, the co-op term itself, and the debriefing and return-to-campus evaluations and activities the semester after the co-op term. Each co-op term receives an academic credit valued at one unit. As such, co-op students pay tuition fees for each academic semester and tuition fees for each co-op term. Consult the Financial Section on page .

Application Dates

Bachelor of Business Administration students normally apply for admission to the co-operative education program in November of their second year of full-time study at the Mount. Bachelor of Business Administration students may also apply in September of their third year of full-time study to commence a co-op term the following January. Students should check with the Co-op Office at the beginning of the academic year to confirm the exact application dates.

Students who choose to apply to co-operative education must consult the department or the Co-op Office for the academic and co-op term sequence.

Applications from full-time students with credits transferred from other programs and/or institutions or with a sufficient number of credits through prior part-time studies will be

considered at the beginning of their first academic term at the Mount. Students should consult the Co-operative Education Co-ordinator.

Admission Criteria

In order to be admitted to the optional co-operative education program, applicants must be recommended to the program by the appropriate faculty co-op co-ordinator and have achieved the following:

1. an 2.0 CGPA at the end of the academic semester prior to the job search process*
2. normally completion of 10 units of credit; and
3. successful completion of BUSI 2214, BUSI 2221, BUSI 2230 and ECON 1101

*Students who do not meet the 2.0 CGPA requirements for co-operative education but have more than 7.5 units of transfer credits, or grades from courses completed more than five years ago, may request an individual review of their transcripts by the Department Chair who may approve admission.

Application forms for the co-operative education program and details regarding the particular requirements of each academic department can be obtained from the Co-op Office. For admission to the co-operative education program, students must be able to complete the required number of co-op terms and maintain full-time status as defined by co-operative education program regulations.
