BUSI 1188/2288 Option A
Case Study

Introduction

Work term reports are required upon completion of each work term. The report is **due on the first day of classes in the study term following the co-op work term.** Late reports will **NOT** be accepted unless permission has been given by the Faculty Coordinator/Advisor **IN ADVANCE** of the due date or if you have a valid medical reason. A student who does not submit a report, or who submits the report late, will be given a failing grade for the work term and will be ineligible to continue in co-op.

The report is submitted to the faculty co-op coordinator of your academic department for evaluation.

Purpose

The work term report provides an opportunity to develop report-writing and analytical skills as well as to develop skills which demonstrate decision making ability. It also provides the opportunity to critically examine a particular issue or problem in the workplace and to make appropriate recommendations. The report can also focus on an activity of importance to the employer.

Topic

Selecting a topic is sometimes the most difficult aspect of completing the work term report. If the employer has assigned a project which requires a written report, this report may be suitable as the basis of your work term report. Since your audience is different for the work term report, it is not sufficient simply to submit the project report. This project may only serve as the beginning of your work term report. It is important to note that the material in a project report may be confidential so consultation with your employer and the Faculty Co-op Coordinator is essential.

If no project has been assigned, then you may choose a topic in consultation with your Co-op Coordinator, which relates to your position and is within the subject area that you are studying. It is not sufficient for you to simply describe what you did and how you did it; analysis is essential. You should examine the reasons why a particular task is carried out, comment on how effective the procedure is and recommend improvements if possible.

You should tell your employer early in your work term that a report is necessary. S/he can be very helpful in identifying appropriate topics. You should have some idea of the general topic of your work term report by the time you are visited by a representative from the Co-op Office. This visit typically happens about 6-9 weeks after the beginning of your work term.

Evaluation

Your work term report will be evaluated by your Faculty Coordinator/Advisor and you will meet with him /her to discuss the results. Work term reports are given either a pass or fail grade.

The report will be failed or returned for revisions if:
- It is poorly organized
- It is not well written
- It has grammar, spelling or punctuation errors
- The problem /activity is not well researched
- The report is simply descriptive and lacks analysis

Any report which is deemed unsatisfactory for any reason will be returned for correction and re-submission. You have ONE opportunity to re-write the report **WITHIN 7 DAYS** after receiving it back. If the re-written report is still considered unsatisfactory or if it is not submitted on time, you will be given a failing grade for the work term and will be ineligible to continue in the co-op program.

Format

The work term report should be approximately 10 pages in length. This does not include the title page, table of contents, executive summary, or appendices. The report should be double spaced on 8 ½ "by 11" paper with margins of 1" to 1 ½ " and size 12 font.

Your report should be organized into sensible sections. Attached is the recommended format, however, other formats may be acceptable given the project, problem or opportunity. Please consult with your Co-op Faculty Coordinator/Advisor as to specific sections and order.

Title Page
See example below.

Table of Contents
This should be a list of sections in your report and appropriate page numbers.

Executive Summary
The executive summary is a one to two page summary of the project/problem, recommendations and solution. It is intended to serve as a synopsis for the busy executive who doesn't have time to read the entire report.

Background Information or Introduction
This section is intended for the benefit of the reader so that s/he has some background information on the organization, company or government department where you spent your work term thus allowing the reader to better understand the context of your report.

Description of Problem/Process

Describe the problem or activity of your organization. Explain its consequences for the workplace as well as its history. We cannot define the length of this section since this will vary greatly. However, length without content is not wanted.

Analysis of Problem/Procedure
Why do you feel the problem exists? Examine the causes, describe any difficulties you had and how you solved them, and explain the alternative solutions.

Conclusions
The conclusion should include your evaluation of the value of the project/procedure to the organization and to you.

Recommendations
This section will include a solution to a problem or an improvement in a procedure. This section should include an analysis of the possibilities of implementing your recommendations, as well as an opinion as to whether your recommendations will be implemented and when.

Appendices
You may find it advisable to include an appendix or appendices in order to better explain the content of your report.

Sample Title Page

Ima Keener
Your personal e-mail address

EMPLOYER: ABC Company

City, Province

September 8th, 2010

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION WORK TERM REPORT

SUMMER 2010

TITLE OF WORK TERM REPORT

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Peter Mombourquette

Co-op Employer: Mr. G. Goodboss

Department: Customer Service

Co-op Position: Customer Service Representative

Description: Overview of personal, academic and professional growth as a result of co-operative education involvement.

BUSI 1188/2288 Option B
Lessons Learned: A Reflective Report

Introduction

Work term reports are required upon completion of each work term. The report is **due on the first day of classes in the study term following the co-op work term.** Late reports will **NOT** be accepted unless permission has been given by the Faculty Coordinator/Advisor **IN ADVANCE** of the due date or if you have a valid medical reason. A student who does not submit a report, or who submits the report late, will be given a failing grade for the work term and will be ineligible to continue in co-op.

The report is submitted to the Co-op Office, but addressed to the Faculty Co-op Coordinator/Advisor of your academic department for evaluation.

Purpose

Now that you have completed at least one co-operative education work term, it's time to reflect on your personal growth as both a student and a business professional using concrete examples to explain and support your way of thinking. This report will encourage you to look at your co-operative education experience as a whole and what that experience has meant to you. What have you learned about the professional workplace? What have you learned about yourself? How has the experience influenced your career goals? How has the experience informed your academic studies?

Reflect on Learning Outcomes

This will be a personal paper based on your individual learning throughout your academic program. As a starting point, you might think about your experience within the context of the personal learning plan(s) that you established for your co-op work term(s). Listed below are the general outcomes for co-operative education programs that might help to prompt your reflective process.

Academic Outcomes	Professional Outcomes	Personal Outcomes
Students will reflect upon: • application of classroom theory to workplace practice during co-op experience • academic goals achieved throughout co-op experience • academic motivation	Students will describe: • whether career goals were met through co-op experience • the workplace culture experienced throughout co-op work term(s) • the skills and knowledge attained during co-op program thus far	Students will explain: • how their confidence developed throughout the co-op work term(s) • how strengths improved and weaknesses were overcome • how interpersonal skills were developed or refined • how lifelong learning skills progressed throughout the co-op process

Format

The work term report should be approximately 10 pages in length. This does not include the title page, table of contents, executive summary, or appendices. The report should be double spaced on 8 ½ "by 11" paper with margins of 1" to 1 ½ " and size 12 font.

Your report should be organized into sensible sections. To help you structure this report, we suggest that you explore some of the following themes (note that many of these sections will be intertwined with one another):

1. **Title Page** (See example below).

2. **Table of Contents**
   This should be a list of sections in your report and appropriate page numbers.

3. **Executive Summary**
   The executive summary is a one to two page summary of the work term report. It is intended to serve as a synopsis for the busy executive who doesn't have time to read the entire report.

4. **Background Information or Introduction**
   This section is intended for the benefit of the reader so that s/he has some background information on the organizations, companies or government departments where you spent your co-op work term(s), thus allowing the reader to better understand the context of your report.

5. **Reflection of Co-operative Education Experience**
   Reflecting back on your most recent co-operative education experience, what did you like or dislike about this particular position and its related duties and responsibilities? What did you learn? What do you think your colleagues learned from you? What would you have done differently? Do you have any regrets with regards to decisions you did or did not make? Did this experience challenge you with respect to your abilities? What do you consider to have been the biggest benefit of the co-op program for you? What would you say to prospective co-op students about the entire co-op experience and how you think it would benefit them? One student mentioned that he had a more rewarding and confidence-inspiring experience during his second co-op work term compared to his first, *"What I really liked about this co-op work term was that I had a chance to be more hands-on in what I did vs. my first work term. Being more responsible for my own work allowed me to take more time and more pride in what I did, instead of just doing it and forgetting about it. Being able to solve problems and find solutions was really rewarding."*

6. **Developing as a Student**
   Have you developed greater clarity about your academic goals throughout your co-op work term(s)? What does that mean to you? How did your co-operative education experience influence your concept of yourself as a business administration student? For example, one student reflected that her study habits changed considerably after her first co-op term. She

noted when she first came to university that she approached her work in much the same way as her friends in other programs. However, she stated *"Working in business administration prepares you for this profession as you will be working long and hard hours. As a co-op student, I became more focussed on my school work... spending a lot more time on projects and assignments."*

Another student notes that her co-operative education experience opened her eyes *"to the real living, breathing definitions of corporate culture, organizational behaviour and politics... all of which play an important role in business administration."* Another commented that his academic performance improved considerably, *"My marks improved considerably and my study habits and organizational skills were a big help with that. I became more focused on my school work and was starting projects and assignments weeks before the due date."*

7. Developing as a Professional

How did your co-operative education experience influence your development as a business professional? What did you observe and learn about workplace language, etiquette, issues, work ethic, management styles and organizational policies and procedures? One student noted that co-operative education taught him a great deal about the nature of work. *"Certainly these lessons will be incredibly valuable as I leave the business administration program to enter the world of work. I am more confident about what that world wants of me as well as what I can offer it."*

How did your overall work ethic and on-the-job performance progress throughout your work term(s)? Reflecting on yourself as a professional prior to entering the co-op program, do you approach work differently now than you did then? If so, describe the changes. For example, this student explained that she was very shy and lacked confidence prior to entering the co-op program, but after completing her second co-op work term, she had changed immensely. *"The co-op work terms have undoubtedly increased my confidence as a business professional in the workplace. During my first co-op work term I was very reserved, hesitant and found myself constantly asking for new tasks to complete. I now find myself asking for more responsibility and finding things to do to improve the flow of activities during down time."*

8. Personal Development

How did your co-operative education experience influence your personal development? Many students identify that self-confidence increased, judgement matured, interpersonal communication skills improved, and that they learned to set high standards for themselves. One student noted that when she began the co-op program, she assumed she would create personal ties with everyone in the workplace. Through her co-op work term she learned how to deal effectively with difficult personalities. *"These situations have taught me that you don't have to be friends with everyone... as long as you continue to work in a professional manner".* In many cases, students reflect that they learned the most about themselves in situations that were less than ideal. Another student reflects that working away from home for a co-op work term was surprisingly enjoyable. *"It gave me the opportunity to re-invent myself."*

Other areas which you could explore are: an understanding of what you want from a career, how you view yourself, and the perceptions others have of you. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the changes you have undergone and experienced as an individual. As this student commented, her communications skills greatly improved, *"As a shy individual, I feel that my communication skills have greatly improved, partly because of my increased confidence. When I began the co-op program I found talking to supervisors and co-workers was often stressful, therefore it was hard to communicate effectively. Today, after having completed two work terms, I find myself much more confident and outgoing. I realize that managers and supervisors are not meant to be intimidating; they are there to guide you as best possible."*

9. **Business Administration in Practice**

How did your co-operative education experience influence your views about business administration? Is your concept of the professional business environment the same as it was when you entered the program? Did your co-op experience contribute to a new understanding of the role of business professionals as well as the opportunities for and expectations of these professionals? What are the differences and similarities of business administration theories learned in the classroom compared to that in the workplace? Reflecting on your experience gained from the co-op program, what has the practical application of classroom knowledge in the workplace done to your evolution as a student? What elements learned in the classroom will you carry with you into the work world? One student explains that his understanding of business has improved greatly. *"When entering the business program, I had little understanding on what a professional business environment was and now I completely understand that it's so much more than wearing a suit and tie each day. It is more about the presentation of yourself, respecting your superiors, learning from mistakes, taking training when it is offered, and always being willing to learn and become a much more successful business person."*

10. **What the Future Holds**

How did your co-operative education experience influence your career goals? Does it influence your understanding of what you need in terms of a professional and personal life? Based on your co-op experience, what are your goals for your upcoming work term? After his first co-op work term, one student reflected that he was still looking for what it was he wanted to do for a career. *"I'm still not entirely sure what area I would like my career to focus on, but I'm sure I will find it. However, that is the great thing about being enrolled in the co-op program. It allows the student to try different things to see if it's for them or not. I look forward to my remaining two co-op terms because it will allow me to try different things and see if I like them or not. It's sort of like a process of elimination in a way for the student."* Another student explained how the co-op program has made him feel more comfortable and confident about what the future holds, *"I'm looking forward to the future. I'm looking forward to my final co-op work term, and to graduating and beginning my career. I know the experience that the co-op program has given me will be a huge advantage when I finally graduate and am looking for a job. My experience with the co-op program will be invaluable when that day finally comes, as I will understand how to conduct myself in the workplace and possess the necessary confidence to carry out the responsibilities of that position."*

When you first began the co-operative education program, you probably had very different goals than you do now. Maybe they weren't that different at all. Looking back at those career goals and comparing them to now, how did your co-op work terms influence those goals? Why or why not? Explain.

Evaluation & Deadlines

Your work term report will be evaluated by your Faculty Co-op Coordinator/Advisor and you will meet with him /her to discuss the results. Work term reports are given either a pass or fail grade.

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Sample Title Page

Ima Keener
Your personal e-mail address

EMPLOYER: ABC Company

City, Province

September 8th, 2010

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION WORK TERM REPORT

SUMMER 2010

TITLE OF WORK TERM REPORT

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Peter Mombourquette

Co-op Employer: Mr. G. Goodboss

Department: Customer Service

Co-op Position: Customer Service Representative

Description: Overview of personal, academic and professional growth as a result of co-operative education involvement.

BUSI 2288 Option C
Development of a Professional Portfolio

Note: This work term project can only be completed for BUSI 2288 (co-op work term II). Once a student has completed the portfolio option, s/he should make it a priority to continuously update the content on an ongoing basis.

What is a portfolio?
It is a 'toolbox' that contains work samples which profile your skills, abilities, accomplishments and the scope of your experience.

Why should I have a portfolio?
To demonstrate to potential employers that you have superior skills and experience worth considering. Portfolios are a great visual aid for your presentation to an employer. A well organized portfolio indicates that you are a student who is serious about seeking new opportunities. By providing additional credible information in an interview, you make the interviewer's job easier.

How do I build my portfolio?
1) Define the skills or accomplishments you want to emphasize
2) Identify when you used those skills or what your role was in the project
      a. What were your objectives?
      b. What was the outcome/result?
3) Include your resumé and references

What should I include?
Materials you might include are:

FEEDBACK:
Letters of recommendation from employers/professors
Thank-you letters/notes
Awards, scholarships or grants
Performance reviews
WRITING:
Samples of writing from essays
Sponsorship letters
Business plan samples
Professional correspondence (letters, e-mail, etc.)
Editorial samples (newsletters, newspaper articles, etc.)
FINANCIAL/STATISTICS:
Budgeting – developing, managing budgets, etc.
Pie charts, bar graphs, etc.
Statistical analysis
MARKETING:

PowerPoint slide samples
Pictures while presenting or speaking
Brochures/flyers created
Marketing plans
Web promotion (Facebook groups/pages, Twitter accounts, Web sites, ad banners, etc.)
INTERNAL COMMUNICATION:
Company newsletters
Memorandum samples
Training manual samples
CERTIFICATION RECEIVED:
Computer software application training
Work-site training completed
First aid training completed

NEW/SOCIAL/MULTI -MEDIA:
Electronic resume
Personal web site

Screen shots of social media content and professional interaction (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
Blog
Podcast
Web site contribution
Video/CD
CREATIVE AND VISUAL SAMPLES:
Photography
Brochure
Copy and layout
Graphic design for print
Digital graphic design

How do I organize my portfolio?

Choose a binder or portfolio case that best suits your needs. Many students use a zippered, 3-ring binder. This allows you to use clear plastic protective sleeves to display your work. It makes it easy to add, remove or re-organize examples of your work.

Divide your work according to type of material and use tabbed dividers to clearly label each section. You might have a section for feedback; another for accounting; one for marketing; and another for your writing samples or photography, for example. The most important and relevant information should be placed closer to the front of your portfolio. A table of contents adds a finishing touch.

Label each piece indicating the objective, your role, and the results, if applicable. You want to make it easy for the reader/interviewer to determine your contribution to the project (i.e. you might have developed the lay out but did not write the copy) and what you hoped to achieve with the piece. For example, you may have put together PowerPoint slides for a presentation done at school or at work. You may not have been the one doing the speaking in front of the group, but you may have pictures of the speaker with your slides in the background. Explaining this in your portfolio will allow your reader to gain context from your included material.

Place personal information at the back of your portfolio and label it as such. This section would include your resume, transcript, reference list, awards, certificates, evaluations and letters of recommendation.

Include your best work. There is no need for you to include every sample of your work, only the best. If you have worked on 10 marketing plans, include 2-3 examples demonstrating your best work. When including class work, use clean copies and remove notes/grades from professors.

How would I present my portfolio?

Always take your portfolio to interviews. Refer to your portfolio in your cover letter and/or resume. In responding to interviewer's questions, refer to examples in your portfolio when appropriate.

Use an example in your portfolio to illustrate your answer. If you are asked about PowerPoint, present your portfolio and turn to a PowerPoint presentation. Point to your opening slides to illustrate how you organized your presentation and turn to other slides as you describe your presentation. (However, in your eagerness to sell yourself to the interviewer, be careful not to give the full presentation again). Outline the presentation you made using an example from your portfolio. This allows the interviewer to get a good sense of your organizational skills as well as your eye for design.

Questions to ask yourself before you submit your portfolio:

1. Is all the material in my portfolio really my own work?

A portfolio is a collection of work samples that give a prospective employer an idea of what you have done and what you are capable of doing. Every document, brochure, set of presentation slides or other sample in your portfolio should reflect a major, if not complete, involvement on your part. What you want to avoid at all costs is an employer asking you in an interview "Did you write this, design this?" and having to say no.

Including a PowerPoint where you essentially checked the spelling and made copies, or a brochure produced by an outside consultant at meetings you attended, or an annual report you handed out at events on behalf of your company – *unless* in this case you have clearly identified your role in a note, "This brochure was produced by M T &L for an event that I attended for the client" – cannot really be considered your own work samples and should not be included in your portfolio.

2. Have I done my best to show my range of skills?

Remember that everyone knows you have not been in the work force forever. But just because you haven't done something as part of paid employment does not mean you haven't done it, and aren't able to do it. If your co-op terms have not given you the opportunity to write a business plan for example, but you have written one for a class you have taken, include a key piece from it as a sample. It is quite acceptable to mix academic product, volunteer product and work term product on your portfolio – identify them by type; "business plan sample" rather than by dividing them into work and school categories.

Remember that an employer is going to consider whatever is included in your portfolio as evidence of all you know how to do – if it's not there they might think you couldn't do it.

3. Does my portfolio look more like a collection of everything I have ever done or like a presentation of my best work?

Remember a portfolio is a display, not a file folder. If you made brochures or flyers all summer long in your co-op you don't need to include all of them, just a few of your best ones and hopefully each of these should be different. Remember, the object is range and quality of skills – what you know how to do – and not to give evidence of everything you have ever done.

4. Have I put as much work into presentation and organization as I did into contents?

Do you have a cover page? A table of contents? Are the divider tags and notes explaining what each sample, and your role in its production? Are there labelled dividers so a reader can work from the table of contents to find particular material? Do your sample labels clearly explain what the objective-role-result (or words to that effect) of the sample were? Does it look like professional work or a scrapbook?

5. **Have you done what you could to give a sense of yourself as a potential employee in your portfolio?**

    Do you have letters, notes or emails of appreciation or thanks from people you have worked with, either in the workplace or through volunteer involvement? Even a quick email from a former supervisor saying "great job" is worth including. What about customer service awards? If you don't have any material like this you might consider contacting a few key people and asking them to write something short for you on letterhead to put into your portfolio.

6. **Have you considered visuals and social/multi media?**

    Employers these days expect new hires to have design sense as well as writing sense and to be tech savvy. A text only portfolio can look a little dry and also one-dimensional. Is there any creative work you can include? Any photos you have taken? Even recreational photography shows you know how to handle a camera and chances are you will get handed a camera sometime in your career. If anything you have written has ever gone up on a web page consider including a screen shot of that rather than just the copy. And finally if you have been involved in any form of social media in a professional way, include that too. Even posting a notice for a Business and Tourism Society meeting on Facebook counts, or any postings you have made to a Podcast site, both are worth including to round out your range.