

# MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

## Co-operative Education Program



## CO-OP EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

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## INTRODUCTION



### WELCOME ABOARD AS A NEW CO-OP PARTNER!

Thank you for your support of co-operative education at Mount Saint Vincent University. Your contribution to the program is highly valued, as the program could not succeed without your participation. We are confident that this partnership will be a mutually beneficial experience.

Each year the Co-op Team works to secure students in over 200 co-op positions where students apply their studies and knowledge to a workplace setting.

Co-operative education is a value-added component that blends classroom studies and work place experiences. Your participation allows students to develop and grow as professionals.

Co-operative education brings together the employer, the student and the university. The three participants are each an integral part of the co-operative experience.

This partnership has benefits for all parties involved:

- Employers get the latest theories and fresh ideas from the students and university, who in turn get practical input from the work place.
- Students have the opportunity to experience the two as an integrated whole.

Now that you have completed the job posting process, conducted your interviews and a hiring decision has been made, a co-op student will be joining your team. We hope that you will find this handbook to be a useful tool in preparing for your co-op student's arrival and guide you through the process of having a co-op student with you for the term. We also hope you will be able to refer to this handbook to answer any questions.

Thank you once again for supporting our program, our students and the Mount. With more than 35 years of partnering with co-op employers, we are proud of our student's achievements and our many long-term relationships with employers.

### WEEK ONE

Take the co-op student through the organization's orientation, and provide the appropriate information and training (e.g. review HR policies and procedures, computer programs, introductions to other staff, etc.).



### WEEK THREE

Review and set the Personal Learning Plan with the co-op student (see Appendix A or visit [www.msvu.ca/co-op](http://www.msvu.ca/co-op) for a sample template).

### WEEKS 6 TO 11

Prepare for the work site visit with a member of the Co-op Team. This evaluation is an important component of co-operative education as each co-op term is part of the student's academic program. You and the co-op student will be contacted by our office to arrange a time to complete the work site visit (see Appendix B for general questions asked during the visit).

### WEEK 13

You should receive a copy of the Employer Evaluation for the co-op term. For tourism students completing their summer work term into October, the evaluation form will be sent by week 18.

### FINAL WEEK

Review the Employer Evaluation with the co-op student and send the original copy to the Co-op Office.

# YOUR ROLE AS A CO-OP EMPLOYER



## IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Provide a learning environment, where the student is assigned projects that provide a variety of experience and a progression of skill development and responsibilities
- Be a key partner in the education process and provide ongoing supervision and feedback to the co-op student
- Make the student aware of company policies, provide appropriate orientation, expectations and direction
- Advise the student of all issues of confidentiality in the workplace and ensure any non-disclosure agreements are signed prior to the student starting work
- Treat the student as a regular employee in terms of hiring and labour standard practices
- Provide the opportunity for the student to complete the minimum standard work term of 13 weeks at 35 hours per week
- Contact the Co-op Office as soon as possible should you have any issues or concerns related to the student's performance
- Notify the Co-op Office as early as possible of situations arising from labour negotiations or other possible work disruptions during the co-op term



### IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Monitor co-op terms and complete work site visits
- Provide support to employers and students during the co-op term
- Mediate between employers and students, when necessary
- Provide employer feedback to the respective academic department on the content and direction of the academic programs and employer needs
- Provide an on-going assessment of co-operative education programs
- Maintain the integrity of the co-op position competition process and abide by the national standards set by Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE)



### THE ROLE OF THE CO-OP STUDENT

#### IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Abide by the co-op policies and procedures of the university
- Ensure that employers are provided with accurate and appropriate information regarding their qualifications and interests
- Not discuss/mislead employers about their rankings or job acceptance intentions
- Not provide information to employers on other students/employers
- Honour their acceptance of work term as contractual agreement with the employer
- Complete the minimum standard work term of 13 weeks at 35 hours per week

# ORIENTING YOUR CO-OP STUDENT



## A MENTOR SHOULD:

Be assigned to the student for an orientation session on his/her first day of work. This would include discussing:

- Expectations for the co-op term
- Reviewing the position description
- Assigning the first project/task

Acquaint the student with the practices and policies of the company, on issues ranging from:

- The dress code
- Hours of work
- Safety procedures
- Confidential/proprietary information
- Give the student appropriate HR/Payroll information and any forms which are to be completed.
- Be able to answer, or find the answer to any questions

## A STUDENT SHOULD:

- Be given a tour of the premises and introduce the student to other staff members
- Be assigned a work station, which is adequately furnished and supplied with the items he/she will need for their particular job
- Be familiarized with the equipment he/she is to use and given the appropriate instruction where necessary

### THE EMPLOYER'S ROLE:

- To assist the student to set a learning plan for the co-op term (see Appendix A)
- To participate in the mid-term work site visit with a member of the Co-op Team (in person or by phone - see Appendix B)
- To provide the student with ongoing supervision and feedback on performance, and to prepare a written evaluation (Employer Evaluation) to be reviewed with the student before he/she returns to campus



### THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE:

- To monitor the student's progress mid-term through a work site visit in person or by phone
- To hold *Return to Campus* and *Debriefing Sessions* at the end of the co-op term to assist in evaluating the learning experience
- To evaluate the student's work term project
- To assess a grade of "Pass" or "Fail" for the co-op term

### THE STUDENT'S ROLE:

- To set a learning plan with the help of the employer and to review these with the university representative at specified times
- To complete a work term project as defined by the student's academic department e.g. an analysis of a problem, opportunity, or a professional portfolio
- To meet with his/her supervisor to discuss and sign off on the Employer Evaluation form



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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***Question: What exactly is a work site visit and how long will it take?***

This visit will allow the employer, student and a member of the Co-op Team an opportunity to meet mid-way through the co-op term. The work site visit may be completed in-person or by telephone.

Meetings such as these provide an opportunity for a frank exchange of views on all aspects of the co-op position, the student's performance, as well as the curriculum. It also allows the

university to build long-term relationships with employers and identify new learning opportunities for future co-op terms. The student's learning plan and work term project will be discussed. Please see Appendix B for general questions that will be asked during the work site visit. A member of the Co-op Team will meet with the student for approximately 30-45 minutes and meet with the supervisor for an additional 30 minutes.



***Question: Can I re-hire the co-op student?***

Students can be re-hired to complete an additional co-op term with the same employer. In order to re-hire a co-op student a new job description must be submitted which expands on the student's previous duties or includes new projects. The new job description must be approved by the Co-op Office before the student can accept the position to ensure the student will be receiving a new learning experience.

***Question: How do I handle absenteeism or if I have issues/concerns about the student's performance?***

Students should not be missing time. If they are, this should be treated according to your organization's policies and procedures. If you have issues about the student's performance, you should contact the Co-op Office immediately and we will work with you to help resolve any issues.

Co-operative education is a learning experience for the student and we are here to facilitate the process.

***Question: Is a student entitled to vacation during their work term?***

Students are not entitled to time off during their work term. However, if students have a commitment that they are aware of and will require a few days off during the work term, it is the

student's responsibility to discuss this during the interview process. If this is not discussed during the interview, the employer has no obligation to consent to time off once the work term starts.

***Question: What should I do if the position requirements change after the co-op term starts?***

Please notify the Co-op Office as soon as possible should the position change after the co-op term has begun. The Co-op Office must be notified in order to ensure that the new duties are still considered suitable for a co-op position.

### Mount Co-op Student of the Year

As a co-op employer, you may nominate your co-op student for the Mount Co-op Student of the Year Award. A call for nominations is sent out in late October/early November.

The Mount Co-op Student of the Year Award was instituted in 1999 in recognition of the Mount's 20th Anniversary of Co-operative Education. Annually, we continue to recognize one student, from each discipline, who are chosen based on the nominations received from employers.

### Mount Co-op Student of the Year (2014) Award Recipients:

#### **Jessica Skinner, Business Administration Co-op Student**

Nominated by BDO Canada LLP, Bedford, NS

#### **Emily Ennett, Public Relations Co-op Student**

Nominated by Maverick Communications Inc., Kentville, NS

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### Mount Co-op Employer of the Year Award

In 2009 we instituted the first annual Mount Co-op Employer of the Year Award in recognition of the 30th Anniversary of Co-operative Education at the Mount. This award acknowledges employers who have displayed commitment, excellence and longstanding support of the Mount's Co-op program. These partnerships are critical for the success of our program. An employer from the Business Administration, Public Relations, and Tourism & Hospitality Management programs were selected.

### Mount Co-op Employer of the Year (2014) Award Recipients:

#### **Business Administration Program:**

Ms. Lori MacMillan, Manager Accounting and Assurance

BDO Canada LLP, Halifax, NS

Nominated by Jessica Skinner, Business Administration Co-op Student

#### **Public Relations Program:**

Mr. John Verlinden, Corporate Director, Communications

Northwood Homecare Ltd., Halifax, NS

Nominated by Kylie Taves, Public Relations Co-op Student

#### **Tourism & Hospitality Management Program:**

Ms. Debra Simms, Senior Rooms Operations Manager

Halifax Marriott Harbourfront, Halifax, NS

Nominated by Rebecca Cripps, Tourism & Hospitality Management Co-op Student



# Personal Learning Plan

Learning Goal I want to learn...	Strategy I will learn by...	Evidence of Success I will know I am successful when... (provide specific work examples)	Target Date	Evaluation of Objective (Exceeded Expectations, Met Expectations or Did Not Meet Expectations)	Supervisor's Comments

Co-op Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B - WORK SITE VISIT REPORT



### A UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE WILL MEET WITH YOU AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What is your general opinion of the student's performance to date?
2. What is your opinion of the student's communication skills (i.e. oral and written)?
3. Please comment on the student's professionalism.
4. Are there any issues with attendance and punctuality? If yes, please elaborate.
5. What is your opinion of the student's initiative?
6. What are the student's major strengths (soft and technical)?
7. What area or skills have you seen the student develop?
8. What are the student's major strengths (soft and technical)?
9. Does the student have the academic foundation necessary for this work term?
10. What are your thoughts regarding the student's personal learning plan?
11. What are your thoughts regarding the topic of the student's co-op work term report/project (if applicable)?
12. Do you have any other comments or questions?
13. Have you considered your co-op needs for the next semester?

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**Co-op Student + the Mount  
+ Co-op Employer =  
A Mutually Beneficial Experience**

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