

BUSI 1188/2288/3388 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application of classroom theory to workplace practice during co-op experience • academic goals achieved throughout co-op experience • academic motivation 	Students will describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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.

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.