

STUDENT HANDBOOK

WORKPLACE EDUCATION / CO-OP PROGRAMS



COOPERATIVE EDUCATION
Centre for Workplace Education

BRITISH COLUMBIA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

bcit.ca/co-op



LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Centre for Workplace Education (CWE)

Workplace Education / Co-op Student Handbook

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Section 1: Workplace Education (Co-op)

Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) Workplace Education (Co-op) student and welcome to the Centre for Workplace Education (CWE), BCIT's Cooperative Education (Co-op) office.

The commitment of the Centre for Workplace Education (CWE) staff to experiential learning is a reflection of BCIT's overall vision, mission and mandate as noted below:

BCIT's Guiding Statements

Our Vision

- BCIT is Integral to the economic, social and environmental prosperity of British Columbia

Our Mission

The mission of BCIT is to serve the success of learners and employers by:

- Providing high quality technical and professional education and training that supports our graduates as practitioners and as citizens, and
- Advancing the state of practice.

Our Mandate

- BCIT's foundation is comprised of entry- to- practice credentials that lead to rewarding careers. These are enhanced by programs and courses that are coordinated with career development and growth of the practitioner and include degrees, advanced studies and continuing education.
- BCIT offers experiential and contextual teaching and learning with the interdisciplinary experiences that model the evolving work environment.
- BCIT conducts applied research to enhance the learner experience and advance the state-of-practice.
- BCIT exercises its provincial mandate by collaborating with the post- secondary system and employers in activities that improve learner access and success.

Further information about the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) can be found by visiting the website at <http://www.bcit.ca/about/info/>

The CWE Student Handbook

This Centre for Workplace Education (CWE) Student Handbook is intended to provide Workplace Education (Co-op) students with information in enhancing the partnership between themselves, employers and BCIT.

The purpose of this handbook is to:

- Provide an introduction to the concept of Workplace Education (Co-op) programs at BCIT.
- Describe the services offered through the Center for Workplace Education (CWE) office.
- Explain the methods and procedures used in BCIT's Workplace Education (Co-op) programs.
- Describe what is expected of BCIT's Workplace Education (Co-op) students.

To take full advantage of the services offered through the Centre of Workplace Education (CWE), it is important that students have a complete understanding of how the Workplace Education (Co-op) program operates.

Students in Workplace Education (Co-op) programs are expected to read this handbook and keep it for future reference. Questions regarding a specific program can be referred directly to the Cooperative Education (Co-op) Coordinator.

The Center for Workplace Education (CWE) is committed to assisting students in gaining relevant industry work experience and in achieving career success.

For further information about the Centre for Workplace Education (CWE) please refer to the website at <http://www.bcit.ca/co-op/>

Workplace Education (Co-op)

The Centre for Workplace Education (Co-op) administers a variety of experiential education models for the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

Workplace Education Programs include many forms of experiential learning which share a common goal. Each program involves students in applied learning situations designed to enhance theoretical knowledge. In turn these programs help to develop the skills necessary for employment and lifelong learning. Programs may include: Cooperative Education, Co-op Internships and Workplace Experiences.

Workplace Education (Co-op) integrates work experiences with academic studies. Periods of full-time study on campus alternate with periods of full-time paid workplace

experiences off campus, in jobs related to the student's field of study. Students alternate study terms with work terms, allowing them to put into practice new levels of skill and knowledge. Flexible employment periods commence at various times during the year, depending on the specific program and the particular requirements of industry.

Workplace Education (Co-op) provides an enriched educational experience, helping students make sense of their academic work by providing practical and applied examples of their theoretical knowledge.

Benefits of Workplace Education (Co-op) for Students

Students have found Workplace Education (Co-op) to be a valuable enhancement to their academic studies, providing the following benefits:

- Students gain a well-rounded education, enriched by the practical application of classroom learning.
- Students gain relevant employment skills and new applied knowledge to help develop their careers.
- Work placements are paid which helps students with their educational costs.
- Networking opportunities are greatly enhanced through work terms.
- Workplace Education (Co-op) students gain relevant pre-employment skills, including job search, interview and résumé preparation.

Workplace Education (Co-op) students are expected to:

- Conform to all of the conditions and rules that apply to employees in the organization.
- Adhere to all of the requirements as agreed in the CWE's Terms of Agreement document.
- Exercise ethical workplace conduct and follow all required safety procedures.
- Set goals and outcomes for learning at the workplace.
- Work on enhancing their academic, professional and personal skills.
- Maintain employer confidentiality at all times.
- Accept feedback and suggestions for improvement in a positive manner.
- Participate in work site visits with the Co-op Coordinator.
- Resolve any problems or issues that may arise at the workplace in a prompt, professional manner.
- Advise the employer and their Co-op Coordinator of any concerns with their work assignment or environment as soon as issues arise.

- Successfully complete all of the requirements of the work term course as specified in the course outline.

Workplace Education (Co-op) students are required to:

- Successfully complete a pre-employment training program prior to undertaking their first work term. Pre-employment training as provided by the Co-op Coordinators, is designed to prepare students for the work term and covers topics such as: program objectives and expectations; job seeking skills; transferring skills to the workplace; workplace conduct; developing learning objectives; job performance progress and evaluation.
- Successfully complete their work term.
- Complete a written report for each work term as per the specific Work Report Guidelines for the program that they are in.

Benefits of Workplace Education (Co-op) for Employers

Employers have found Workplace Education (Co-op) to be an effective recruiting model, providing the following benefits:

- Workplace Education (Co-op) students have current and applied training and offer a source of fresh and progressive ideas.
- The work term can be used as an opportunity to evaluate students as potential employees.
- Hiring co-op students reduces the cost of recruiting employees.
- Wages for Workplace Education (Co-op) students are a cost effective labour source.
- Workplace Education (Co-op) provides the employer with an opportunity to become involved in the educational process, ensuring the program is responsive to industry needs.
- Employers have an opportunity to assist students in developing the skills necessary for industry success.

Benefits of Workplace Education (Co-op) for the Institution

The benefits of experiential learning are not restricted to students and employers. Recent studies suggest that:

- Post-secondary institutions benefit from Workplace Education (Co-op) programs by attracting and retaining highly motivated students, increasing the employment rates of their graduates and enhancing relationships with business, government, and community organizations.

- Participation of Co-op Coordinators in external and internal events is a means of making contact with prospective students, industry partners and potential employers.
- Workplace Education (Co-op) programs promote alumni involvement, part-time studies enrollment, as well as significant support of parents of potential students.
- There is a higher rate of retention and completion for students enrolled in Workplace Education (Co-op) programs.
- International students view Workplace Education (Co-op) programs as a valuable method to acquire their first local paid experience.
- The Centre for Workplace Education (Co-op) is a centralized resource for the development of work experience programs ensuring both quality and relevance.
- Post-secondary institutions benefit from Workplace Education (Co-op) programs by attracting and retaining highly motivated students, increasing the employment rates of their graduates and enhancing relationships with business, government, and community organizations.
- Societal benefits of experiential programs such as Cooperative Education include reduced demand for student loans, increased income tax revenue and increased partnerships between industry and education
- Workplace Education (Co-op) students returning from work terms enrich the educational community on campus.

BCIT is responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining relevant curricula which reflect employer needs
- Ensuring the integrity of its Workplace Education (Co-op) programs
- Providing relevant academic training for students in their chosen career field.
- Providing adequate resources to the Workplace Education (Co-op) programs.
- Developing programs which meet the needs of employers.

Co-op Coordinators

BCIT's Co-op Coordinators are responsible for the following:

- Assist in preparing students with appropriate skills for their work terms.
- Monitor and evaluate the students' work terms and the learning outcomes achieved.
- Assess and evaluate the work term, work term report as per learning outcomes achieved.
- Foster fair and equitable treatment of students and employers through the placement process.
- Facilitate development of relevant work placement opportunities.

- To facilitate development of work placement opportunities relevant to the program area.
- Assist students in preparing effective and professional cover letters and resumes.
- Assist students in identifying realistic career goals based on the student's interests, skills and abilities.
- Assist students in preparing for interviews.
- Assist students in developing a network of contacts for work placements and future employment.

Inquiries should be directed to the relevant Co-op Coordinator as per the program portfolios listed below:

Biotechnology Degree Electrical & Computing Engineering	Earl Anderson 604.451.6911 Earl_Anderson@bcit.ca
CNC Machinist Technician Mining & Mineral Exploration Technology Power & Process Engineering	Judith Hall 604.451.7077 Judith_Hall@bcit.ca
Automotive Service Technician	Cynthia Maclean 604.432.8291 Cynthia_Maclean@bcit.ca
Computer Information / Computer Systems Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanical Engineering Degree	Nicholas Petryszak 604.451.7058 Nicholas_Petryszak@bcit.ca
Marine Engineering Nautical Sciences	Jeff Otto 604.453.4124 Jeff_Otto@bcit.ca

Subject to change <http://www.bcit.ca/co-op/contacts.shtml>

CWE Location and Hours of Operation

The Centre for Workplace Education (CWE) is located at the BCIT Burnaby Campus at 3700 Willingdon Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5G 3H2 in Building NW5, Room 101. A map of the campus can be found at <http://www.bcit.ca/map/>.

The CWE Office is open year round from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. Co-op Coordinators may be seen on a drop-in basis when available or by appointment.

Section 2: Student Involvement

Admission to the Workplace Education (Co-op) Program

In order to participate in a Workplace Education (Co-op) program, a student must be currently enrolled in a BCIT diploma/degree program that has a Workplace Education (Co-op) component.

Each program has specific Workplace Education (Co-op) admission procedures, requirements and deadlines. To apply for a specific Workplace Education (Co-op) program contact the Co-op Coordinator of the program.

Mandatory and Selective/Optional Workplace Education (Co-op) Programs

There are two kinds of Workplace Education (Co-op) programs offered at BCIT: Mandatory and Selective/Optional

Mandatory

The Workplace Education (Co-op) portion of the program is mandatory for graduation and as such all students enrolled in a mandatory program must complete the Workplace Education (Co-op) course as part of their program.

Selective/Optional

Some BCIT's programs offer Workplace Education (Co-op) as an option. Students enrolled in the program may choose to add Workplace Education (Co-op) to their program as an option to enhance their academic studies.

BCIT's program faculty and Co-op Coordinators select eligible candidates from those that opt for Workplace Education (Co-op) based on the following:

- Academic standing.
- Strong desire to gain practical work experience.
- Maturity level.
- Positive work ethic and attitude.
- Interpersonal skills.
- A belief that the student is highly motivated to complete the requirements of the Work Experience(Co-op) program.
- Required minimal grade point as per the specific Workplace Education (Co-op) program's admissions requirements.

Placement Responsibility

It is the goal of BCIT's Workplace Education (Co-op) Program to make the work placement period as structured, relevant and safe as possible. Co-op Coordinators assist in identifying work experience opportunities for the students. During certain periods of the business cycle, job placements may be harder to secure.

The Workplace Education (Co-op) student is accountable to identify and confirm their work placement. To assist the student, counseling, job search skills and resume writing assistance are made available by the Co-op Coordinator.

It is the responsibility of the student and the employer regarding a safe and healthy work environment. Issues arising should be brought to the attention of the employer and the Co-op Coordinator.

Continuing in the Workplace Education (Co-op) Program

To remain in good standing in a Workplace Education (Co-op) program, the student must adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the Workplace Education (Co-op) Student Handbook and program handouts regarding admission and placement in addition to the BCIT student policies. BCIT student policies may be viewed by visiting the website at <http://www.bcit.ca/about/administration/policies.shtml>.

Workplace Education (Co-op) students are expected to follow all of the requirements as set out in the CWE Terms of Agreement document which is provided upon their admission into a BCIT Workplace Education (Co-op) program.

Student Communication and Participation

The Co-op Coordinators provide guidance, direction and feedback to Workplace Education (Co-op) students during their participation in the program. For this reason it is important that students to keep in touch with their Co-op Coordinator on an ongoing basis.

Each student is expected to maintain communication with their Co-op Coordinator on all matters pertinent to participation in the program including such issues as unexpected drop in marks and course withdrawals.

Students must inform their Co-op Coordinator and submit changes of address, telephone number, and email addresses to their my.bcit.ca account at <https://my.bcit.ca/cp/home/displaylogin>

Section 3: Placement Process

Workplace Education (Co-op) Placement

Workplace Education (Co-op) Students are expected to look for suitable work placements with the help of the Co-op Coordinator. By becoming an active participant in the job search students will learn more about conducting a proactive job search.

Workplace Education (Co-op) Program information is available to students to present to prospective employers. Co-op Coordinators are also available to provide advice on how to seek out and approach prospective employers.

Workplace Education (Co-op) positions may be one of those found by the Co-op Coordinator and posted through the Centre for Workplace Education (CWE) computerized system called 'The Bridge' or a position found by the Workplace Education (Co-op) student. Students are encouraged to locate and secure their own work placement.

'The Bridge' job postings are a competitive process. In many cases, BCIT's Workplace Education (Co-op) students may be competing with students from other post-secondary institutions.

'The Bridge' Job Postings

Workplace Education (Co-op) students are provided instructions on how to use 'The Bridge' by the Co-op Coordinator. These procedures are briefly summarized below:

- Job descriptions are posted on 'The Bridge' for a limited period of time as new postings arrive.
- Workplace Education (Co-op) students are expected to review posted job descriptions on an ongoing basis as to specific position requirements, location, and any other factors which they may consider to be important. It is the student's responsibility to check 'The Bridge' frequently for new job postings.
- Each job description will have a due date for submitting a cover letter and resume for the position. All positions require a cover letter unless otherwise stated.
- Job postings indicate the name of the employer and the specific address. Students who are interested in a particular position will post their cover letter/resume and any other application documents required on 'The Bridge' as per the required posting procedures.
- The applications received from interested Workplace Education (Co-op) students are then forwarded to the prospective employer by CWE staff.
- Employers notify the Co-op Coordinator of the student(s) they wish to interview and suggest convenient times and location where the interview is to take place. Students

will be notified of interview schedules. While some interviews will take place on campus, most employers prefer to have students visit their place of business.

- Some employers prefer to arrange interviews with the students directly. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the Workplace Education (Co-op) students to inform their Co-op Coordinator about the interview(s).
- After the interviewing is complete, the employer submits the name(s) of the student(s) he/she has chosen. The student is asked to contact the Co-op Coordinator to discuss the job offer.

Accepting a Position

Students are encouraged to consult with their Co-op Coordinator directly during the process of accepting a position.

Once a Workplace Education (Co-op) student has received a position offer from an employer they are expected to contact the employer to discuss the exact terms of employment. Normally, the employer will formally indicate by letter, the conditions of employment.

When an employer makes a job offer, the student makes a firm commitment to that employer for the period of the placement by signing the Confirmation of the Work Term form.

Tuition Fees

Once a student is placed in a Workplace Education (Co-op) position, they will be registered by their Co-op Coordinator in the appropriate work term course. Workplace Education (Co-op) students will be provided specific information by their Co-op Coordinator as to fees and payment processes for their particular course. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their course tuition fees are paid by the due date.

Section 4: Information While on the Work Term

Maximizing the Value of a Work Experience Co-op Job

The value of the Workplace Education (Co-op) job as a learning experience depends to a great extent on the way the student approaches it. Attitude is a major determining factor of the quality of the work experience. Workplace Education (Co-op) students are encouraged to give some thought to what they want to learn, the areas in which they wish to gain experience and their own personal qualities and capabilities they may wish to improve. By doing so, students will be able to set realistic and achievable learning and career objectives.

The value of the work term will be greatly enhanced if realistic and worthwhile objectives are established and actively pursued. Just as the Workplace Education (Co-op) student has objectives and expectations, so too does the employer. Consequently, one of the students' objectives should be to make certain that the employer's objectives are met.

Communications

It is up to both the student and the employer to have regular contact and/or performance reviews so that the work term progresses successfully. It is the responsibility of the Workplace Education (Co-op) student to maintain contact with their Co-op Coordinator throughout the work placement period. Students are required to contact their Co-op Coordinator regarding any problems they may be having and are unable to resolve.

Transportation and Living Arrangements

Transportation to and from the work place is the Workplace Education (Co-op) student's responsibility. Some out-of-town employers may pay return travel expenses. Living accommodations are also the student's responsibility, although some employers may assist in finding rental accommodation. Students are encouraged to discuss relocation/transportation issues with their Co-op Coordinator.

Failure to Report

After accepting a position, any Workplace Education (Co-op) student failing to report to the employer on the date work is to begin will be reported by the employer to the Co-op Coordinator. Students who miss employment without notification or a valid reason will lose the job and may not be eligible to participate in further Co-op work terms.

Vacations

Students requesting vacation time must have the approval of the employer and the Co-op Coordinator in advance, at the beginning of the work term.

Strikes

Whether a student should cross a picket line and work, or observe the picket line and not work, is a decision the individual student makes in consultation with the Co-op Coordinator. The role of the Co-op Coordinator in this situation is to inform the student of the potential consequence of either decision.

Resignation

If a student considers quitting a job before the scheduled end of the work term, they must consult with their Co-op Coordinator before taking any action. Failure to consult prior to resigning may lead to failure of the work term and an unsatisfactory (U) grade.

Termination/Layoff

If the employer terminates or lays off a student, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the Co-op Coordinator immediately. A termination will be reviewed and assessed for future action by the Co-op Coordinator in conjunction with the student and the employer.

Section 5: Course Credit

Workplace Education (Co-op) course credit is issued once the student receives a satisfactory assessment of the work term placement.

Satisfactory completion of a work term means that the student submitted a satisfactory Work Term Report; received a satisfactory or better performance evaluation by the employer, and the Co-op Coordinator who conducted the work site evaluation was satisfied with the performance of the student on the job.

Work Term Report guidelines are provided to the Workplace Education (Co-op) student by the Co-op Coordinator.

Section 6: The Value of Workplace Education (Co-op)

A Workplace Education (Co-op) placement is a valuable learning opportunity for the student, employer and BCIT. The achievements of measurable learning outcomes, skill enhancement and career success for Workplace Education (Co-op) students are the goals of all staff at the Center for Workplace Education. The procedures outlined in this handbook are a means to ensure that students are able to achieve these goals.

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