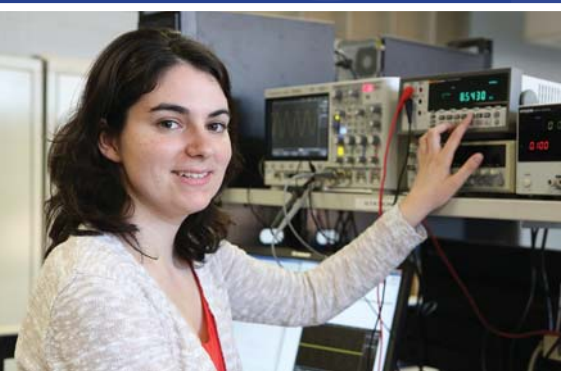
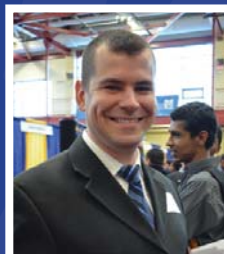
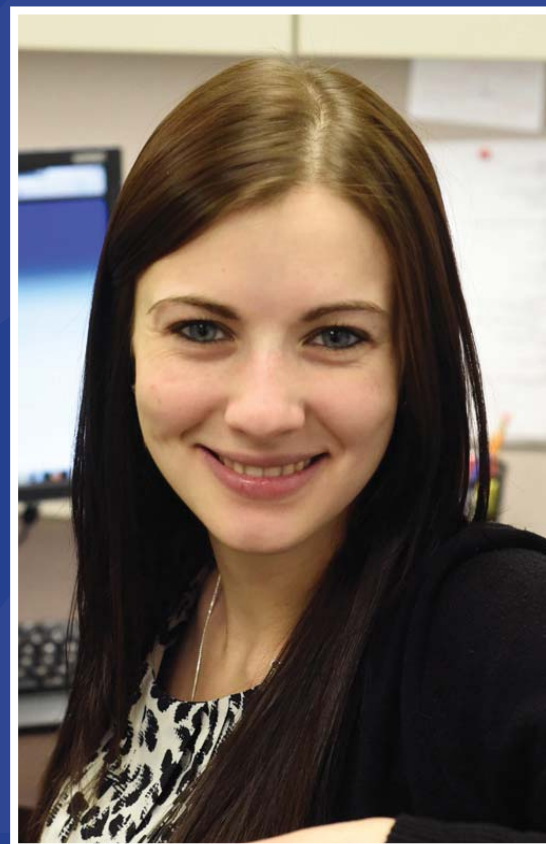
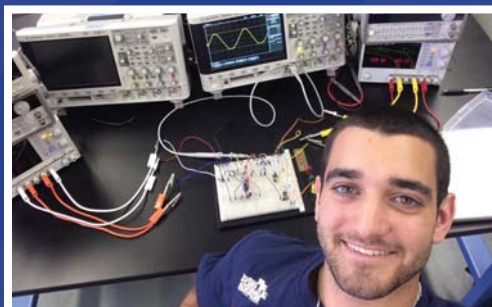
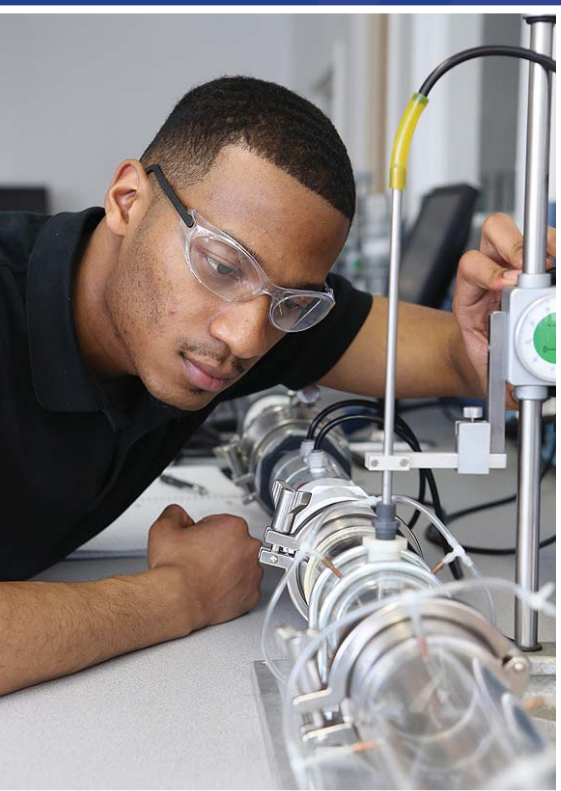


Undergraduate Professional Cooperative Education Program

Student Handbook



Learning with Purpose

Work Ready, Life Ready, World Ready

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Preface

Dear Student,

The Career Services and Cooperative Education Center is pleased to offer you timely and important information about the undergraduate Professional Co-op Program at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Established in 2009, the co-op program is now an integral part of the University experience for students in a variety of academic disciplines. Designed to provide students with the opportunity to gain multiple, real world, and academically relevant industry experiences, the co-op program successfully partners with companies across the United States. Co-op students learn important technical and professional skills, develop greater clarity around their career, academic goals and aspirations and gain an important competitive edge in a dynamic job market.

We invite you to learn more about this exciting experiential education program. This handbook will provide you with an overview of the program, and the policies and procedures of the Professional Co-op Program. Should you have additional questions about the program or your participation, please contact the members of the Professional Co-op team who are aligned with your academic discipline.

Sincerely,

Rae T. Perry, Director of Cooperative Education
Jessica Paquin, Assistant Director, Francis College of Engineering (Civil & Environmental)
Amanda Holmes, Co-op Coordinator, Mechanical Engineering
James McGonigle, Co-op Coordinator, Plastics Engineering
Lada Lau, Co-op Coordinator, Chemical Engineering
Wendy Hyatt, Co-op Coordinator, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Kerry Willard Bray, Assistant Director, Manning School of Business (all concentrations)
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Career Services & Cooperative Education Center
University Crossing, Suite 450, 220 Pawtucket Street
(978) 934-2355 or http://career_services@uml.edu

Please note: These guidelines and policies may be subject to change. Please consult with the co-op professional associated with your academic program for any important updates. Portions of this manual were written by utilizing the University of Cincinnati online Cooperative Education Student Handbook and the Northeastern University Cooperative Education Student Handbook.

Key Terms

Academic Program: The program in which a student is enrolled (i.e. Mechanical Engineering, Business Administration, Computer Science).

Academic Semester: The semester(s) during which the student is enrolled and participating in academic courses on campus.

Cooperative Education (Co-op): The program which integrates terms of full-time academic course work with terms of full-time work experience, which is paid, properly supervised and evaluated, and discipline related.

Co-op Assignments: The Learning Objectives, Student Co-op Handout, Informational Interview assignment and other activities assigned to students, which are required to be completed during or following each co-op work term.

Co-op Employer: The organization or corporation employing the student for the duration of the term that the student is working in a co-op position.

Co-op Position: The position a student is filling with an employer as a part of the Professional Cooperative Program everywhere else, i.e. the co-op job or co-op assignment.

Co-op Work Term or Cycle: The semester(s) during which the student is actively working in a position (i.e. "on co-op").

- Spring/Summer 1: January – June;
- Spring Term: January - April/May (Accounting concentration only);
- Summer: May - August;
- Summer 2/Fall: July – December.

Professional Development Seminar (PDS): Required, preparatory, career development and job search course. Accepted students are automatically enrolled in this 1-credit, graded seminar and must satisfactorily complete the course to participate in co-op employment.

Co-op Assessment 1 & 2 Courses: Required, post work experience reflection seminars following the co-op work term. Students are automatically enrolled in this credit bearing Co-op Assessment Seminar the semester they return to campus for academic coursework. This course is graded "U" (unsatisfactory) or "S" (satisfactory).

Co-op Advisor: The professional staff member in the Career Services & Cooperative Education Center who is responsible for administering the co-op program for the student's academic program. The co-op advisor teaches Professional Co-op Program coursework, coaches students in the program, coordinates program policies with his/her academic department and meets with co-op employers to implement and maintain co-op partnerships.

Referral Process: The process by which co-op advisors distribute student resumes and application materials (i.e. refer students) to potential co-op employers.

Transfer Students: Students who enter the University of Massachusetts Lowell from another university. Transfer students must successfully complete one academic full-time semester prior to participation the co-op program.

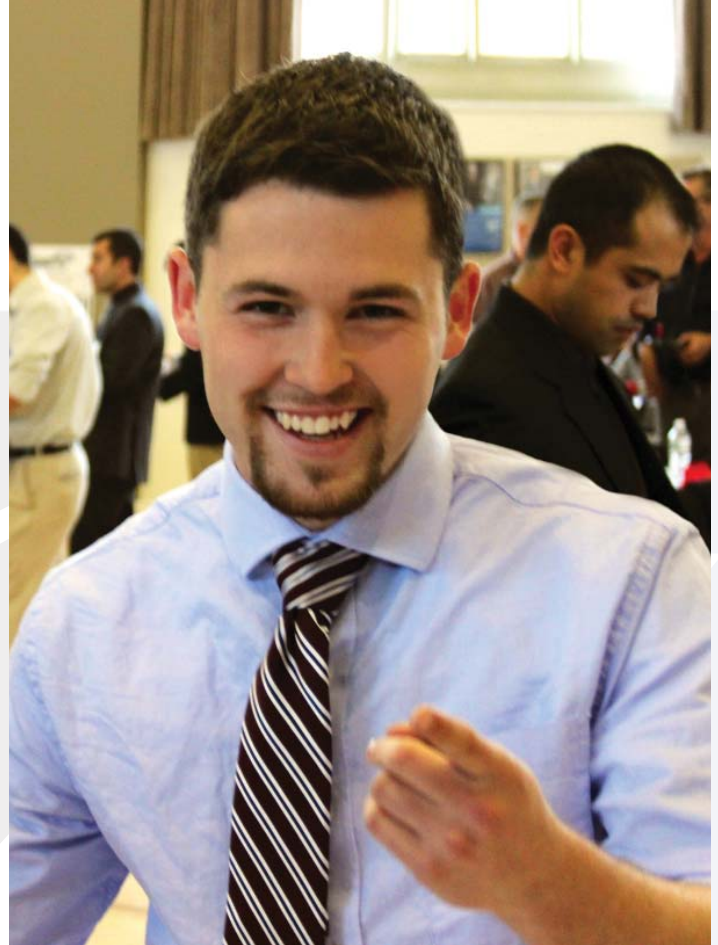


Introduction to the Professional Cooperative Education Program:

For more than 100 years, UMass Lowell has been educating students to work in the real world to solve real world problems. We know that many students learn best by doing and the undergraduate Professional Cooperative Education Program (known as co-op) provides students with the chance to systematically integrate their classroom studies with professional work experiences. By alternating terms of academics and work experience, students deepen their learning and are challenged to develop themselves as professionals, as they gain valuable technical and professional skills through multiple co-op work experiences related to their academic major and career goals.

The Professional Co-op Program is a partnership among students, the University and employers, and is administered by the UMass Lowell Career & Cooperative Education Center. Co-op is viewed as an academic program and is coordinated and supervised by the professional co-op advisor and faculty affiliated with each participating college with the same care and rigor as any other course in the academic curriculum. Co-op is a structured, selective and voluntary program for students. Students who are in good academic standing may elect to apply to the Professional Co-op Program.

Employer partners representing a diversity of professional work environments and industries, eagerly collaborate with the University to hire our well-prepared, highly motivated students. In participating in co-op, they are actively developing their future pipeline of young talent and directly influencing the education of students entering their professions.



Academic Disciplines Participating in the Professional Co-op Program:

The Professional Co-op Program is offered to undergraduate students in the following disciplines:

- College of Engineering: Plastics, Chemical, Civil, Mechanical, Electrical & Computer Engineering
- College of Sciences: Computer Science & Applied Math
- Manning School of Business: All concentrations

Professional Co-op Program Structure

The professional co-op experience is comprised of three distinct phases: professional preparation, the work experience, and the integration of on-the-job learning into the student's program of study through reflection.



Preparation

To ensure student readiness to successfully participate in co-op employment, all professional co-op students enroll in a graded, one-credit, full-semester Professional Development Seminar.

Work Experience

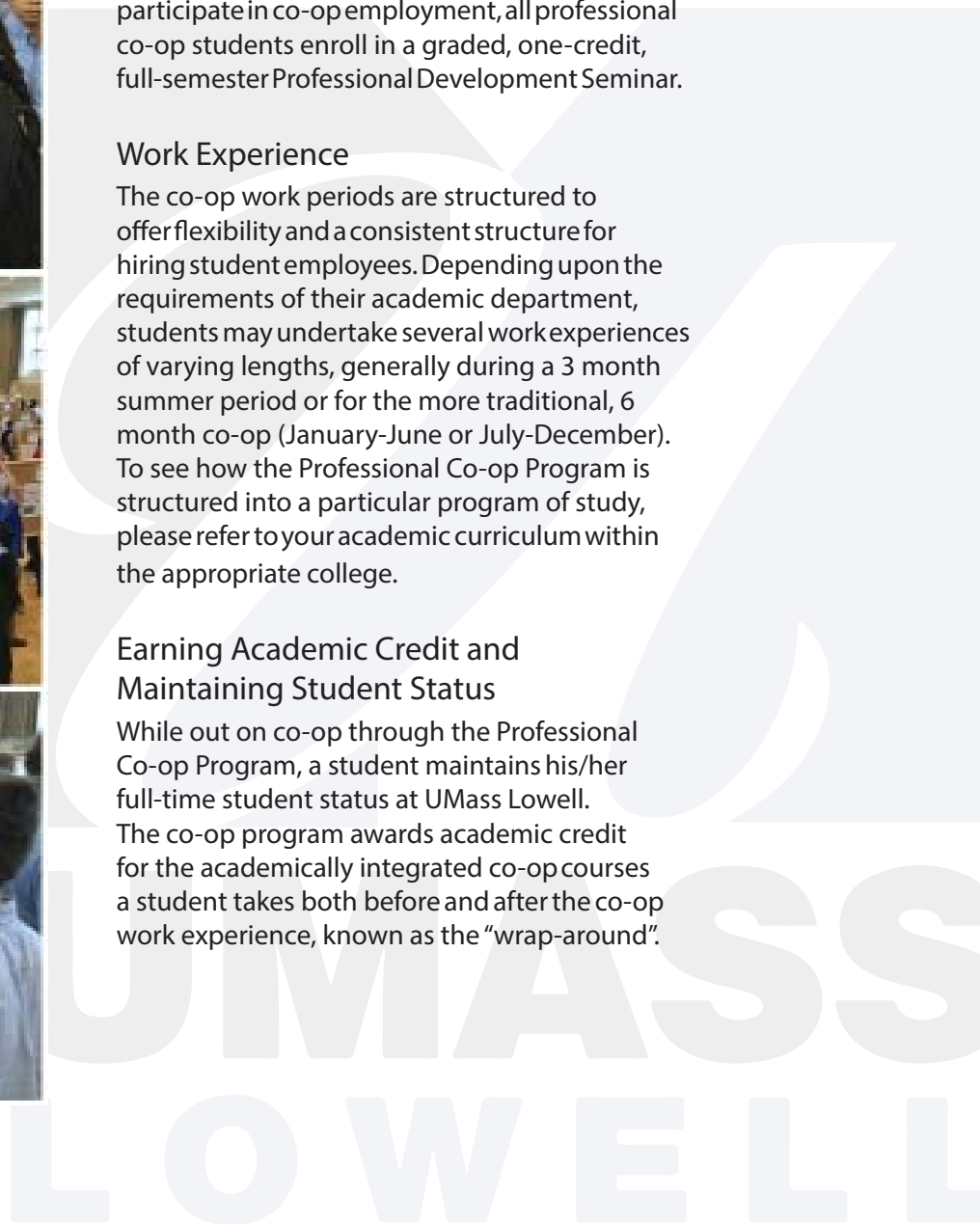
The co-op work periods are structured to offer flexibility and a consistent structure for hiring student employees. Depending upon the requirements of their academic department, students may undertake several work experiences of varying lengths, generally during a 3 month summer period or for the more traditional, 6 month co-op (January-June or July-December). To see how the Professional Co-op Program is structured into a particular program of study, please refer to your academic curriculum within the appropriate college.



Earning Academic Credit and Maintaining Student Status

While out on co-op through the Professional Co-op Program, a student maintains his/her full-time student status at UMass Lowell.

The co-op program awards academic credit for the academically integrated co-op courses a student takes both before and after the co-op work experience, known as the "wrap-around".



Professional Co-op Program Structure

Assessment

Upon the completion of each co-op work experience, students enroll in a one-credit co-op assessment course after a 3 month summer co-op and a two-credit co-op assessment course after a 6 month co-op. These courses, are designed to assist our students in evaluating, reflecting, and presenting on their work experience while gaining a greater understanding of more universal issues, such as organizational culture, workplace dynamics, professional ethics and motivation. A special emphasis is placed on preparing for future employment opportunities.

Undergraduates do not earn academic credit for the work experience, but for the completion of courses before (Professional Development Seminar ENGN/PLAS/BUSI/SCIE.2100) and after each co-op experience (Assessment I - ENGN/PLAS/BUSI/SCIE.3100 or 3200 and Assessment II - ENGN/PLAS/BUSI/SCIE.4100 or 4200). Students are enrolled in a co-op experience course while at work for 0 credit, which maintains their full-time student status at the University.

Typical Co-op Terms and Length of Employment

Students who participate in the Professional Co-op Program have the options for sequencing. The University's calendar is comprised of two, 15-week semesters (fall & spring), and two 7.5-week summer terms. A student chooses a co-op term, based on his/her major and goals; this will determine a student's calendar and co-op term. Co-op terms are aligned with UMass Lowell's academic calendar, and as such, are January - June or July - December, although some programs allow a summer-only co-op experience (to align with both summer-school sessions). Accounting students are often hired for a three to five month period (January - April/May) during the spring. Co-op employment is a full-time work experience.



Number of Co-op Experiences & Credits

Full-time undergraduates in the program usually complete two co-op work experiences, but they may complete only one. After a 6 month co-op, students return to campus and take a 2 credit Co-op Assessment course, which combined with the initial Professional Development Seminar results in 3 credits. Students returning from a 3 month summer co-op return to campus and take a 1 credit Co-op Assessment course. In this case, completing two summer co-ops and the three "wrap-around" seminars would result in 3 credits. The co-op sequence & corresponding credit is as follows:

- Professional Development Seminar (1 cr) + 6 month Co-op Experience + Co-op Assessment (2 cr) = 3 credits
- Professional Development Seminar (1 cr) + 3 month Co-op + Co-op Assessment (1 cr) = 2 credits

Earning 3 credits through the Professional Co-op Program seminars can be substituted for an elective in business and math, a technical elective in engineering, or for Oral & Written Communication in computer science. The co-op courses are applied differently in each major and students are encouraged to discuss this with their faculty academic advisor and co-op advisor.

Back-to-Back Co-op Experiences

After a co-op work experience, students are expected to return to campus to re-engage in their academic coursework. Students should not search for co-ops in consecutive cycles as it may significantly impact academic planning, student status, and course sequencing. Back-to-back co-ops must be approved through the student's academic department/academic advisor in consultation with his/her co-op advisor.



Academic Requirements

Co-op is a structured and selective, voluntary program for students in good academic standing. Students in the program need to be making satisfactory progress toward their degree as defined by the University and the curricula in their academic program. A 3.0 GPA or better is encouraged, but applications are considered from students below this GPA. Students must minimally have a 2.0 GPA to be eligible to apply to the Professional Co-op Program. Experiencing academic difficulty could impact a student's ability to remain in the Professional Co-op Program and a student's status in the program could be placed on hold for a semester until the student resolves his/her academic issues.

Transfer Students

Transfer students must have successfully completed at least one full-time semester at UMass Lowell prior to their work experience.

Tuition & Fees

Students pay tuition while they are in classes (eight semesters). No tuition is payable during co-op periods; however, if a student is on co-op and elects to take a course in addition to working full-time at his/her co-op, (outside of defined work hours) this course is billed at the stated tuition and fees for courses and credits.

While on co-op, students are still considered full-time and maintain their student status. Maintaining student status allows students to continue to pay room and board and live in a residence hall (if they choose) while on co-op, participate in student organizations, and have access to campus resources. Maintaining student status also allows students to retain their health insurance and prevents loans from having to be paid. Students are strongly advised to discuss the status of scholarships with the Financial Aid Office prior to participating in a co-op work experience.

General Student Eligibility Requirements

While students do not pay tuition while out on co-op, there is a modest fee to participate in the co-op work experience during each work term.

- Undergraduate students must have earned at least 24 credits at UMass Lowell to be eligible to participate in the Professional Co-op Program. Transfer students must have successfully completed one full semester at UMass Lowell.
- All students must be in good academic standing.
- International students can participate subject to guidelines of the UMass Lowell International Student & Scholars Office.

Students must:

- Complete and pass the Professional Development Seminar preparatory course with a grade of "C" or above before going out on co-op. Once in the program, students must receive a satisfactory grade in their co-op work experience and in the co-op assessment coursework to remain in the program.
- Resolve any previous disciplinary, financial, or academic probation issues, or have their co-op advisor approve a plan to resolve these issues prior to being referred to co-op employers and/or jobs.
- Comply with any pre-employment checks required by the employer (see Co-op Job Offers section of this manual)

International Student Eligibility Requirements

Students on permanent resident status (green card), F-1 or J-1 visas, or other non-immigrant visas with an Employment Authorization Document from the Department of Homeland Security, are eligible to participate in the Professional Co-op Program. Most F-1 or J-1 visa holders must complete one full-year of classes in the United States before they are eligible for participation in the Professional Co-op Program. All international students are required to complete documentation with the International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO) following acceptance of a co-op position and prior to the beginning of their co-op employment term. This will enable students to work without jeopardizing their visa status in the United States.



Co-op Application Process

How to Apply/Enroll

Interested students are encouraged to attend Professional Co-op Information Sessions offered each semester. Information sessions provide students with an in-depth understanding of the co-op process, the services offered to co-op students and expectations of participating students and employers.

Professional Co-op Program Application

The Professional Co-op Program Application is the first step in indicating interest in the program and is available on the Career Services & Cooperative Education website. Students who want to participate in the Professional Co-op Program need to fill out the application and submit it according to the stated instructions. A completed application does NOT guarantee a spot in the program. After receiving the application, the respective co-op advisor will review the student's application materials. If a student is accepted into the program he/she will be informed of his/her acceptance and will then be enrolled in the Professional Development Seminar (1 cr.) by the Co-op Office.

(All undergraduate students in Plastics Engineering are required to enroll in the Professional Development Seminar. Students in this major then determine if they wish to enroll in the Professional Co-op Program).

Co-op Student Agreement & Participation Form

This form is completed by students during the Professional Development Seminar course. This form outlines the responsibilities of the co-op advisor and the expectations of the students in terms of commitment to the three-phase cycle of the program, including all academic work term requirements and post co-op academic coursework.

Preparation for Co-op Employment

Professional Development Seminar (ENGN/PLAS/BUSI/SCIE.2100 one-credit, required course before first co-op experience)

The Professional Development Seminar is a required preparatory co-op course designed to provide students with the necessary structure, resources, and support to successfully secure and engage in their first co-op experience. Through a variety of interactive teaching methodologies and assignments, students will participate in a sequence of learning activities including self-assessment, industry research, and the development of co-op learning objectives.

Students will prepare to engage in the job search process through resume writing, strategic interviewing, professional networking and learning professional behavior and presentation skills. The goal of this course is to assist each student in developing a sound plan of action to successfully participate in the cooperative education experience.

The Professional Development Seminar is a one-credit, letter graded course (A-F) and students must receive a minimum of a "C" grade to be considered for co-op employment.



The Search for Cooperative Education Employment

Starting with enrollment in the Professional Development Seminar and continuing throughout their participation in the co-op program, students should develop and maintain a strong working partnership with the co-op advisor in his/her discipline. Co-op advisors have significant knowledge about current employer partners and professional opportunities related to a student's academic discipline. Based upon student skills and interests, co-op advisors help students assess their appropriateness for various industries and positions and connect students to available co-op positions. They also play an active role in coaching students on how to best demonstrate their technical and professional skills to employers and evaluate opportunities.

While the student's interests are a significant part of the hiring equation, it is important for students to maintain a broad perspective on the many opportunities to gain experience in their field. The educational value of the co-op experience, not the pay rate, location or narrowly defined career goals, is the essential factor in determining co-op employment.

Student Communication with Co-op Advisor

Students are required to meet regularly with their co-op advisor and keep their advisor well informed of their search process. Face to face meetings, e-mail correspondence, and active participation in co-op related programs will maximize student opportunities and the overall benefits of the co-op program.

Students may schedule appointments with their co-op advisor through the Career Services & Cooperative Education website <http://career.uml.edu> or by calling 978-934-2355. Some advisors also create brief drop-in times for their students.

Co-op Program Participation Does Not Guarantee Employment

Co-op advisors will make every reasonable effort to help students prepare their search materials, interview successfully and find a position, but UMass Lowell does not guarantee that every student in the program will find a co-op. Our success rate for students in the Professional Co-op Program has consistently been very high; however, because of the job-market or other conditions, occasionally even a well-qualified student may not obtain a position. Working closely with a co-op advisor and actively engaging in a job search will increase the likelihood that a student will find a position. We have also found that co-op opportunities increase when a student is actively pursuing 6 month positions. Previous work and/or technical experience and projects within a student's major also makes a stronger application. Ultimately employers make the final hiring decision.



The Search for Cooperative Education Employment



Tools and Resources for the Co-op Employment Search

Career Services & Cooperative Education Center Resources

The Career Services & Cooperative Education Center provides co-op students with a broad array of information, career related programming, and online resources. Whether students need to create a LinkedIn profile, wish to research the companies attending an upcoming career or co-op event, or have an employer review their resume, the Center offers co-op students a full menu of in person, career related workshops and assessments, online resources, access to employment opportunities, and personal, ongoing consultation with their co-op advisor. It has been our experience that most successful co-op students regularly access and utilize these services and resources.

Finding Your Own Job

While UMass Lowell has a range of resources available to help students find a co-op position, students are also encouraged to call upon their own connections to find a suitable co-op job, apply directly on company sites and utilize a variety of job searching techniques. Students should work closely with their co-op advisor to make sure a position found outside of the University's resources meets co-op program requirements and to verify the position with an employer.

Career Services & Cooperative Education Website (<http://career.uml.edu>)

The Career Services & Cooperative Education Center website offers a treasure trove of invaluable resources for students who are actively in a job search including, but certainly not limited to, online interview preparation, articles on how to develop stand out resumes and job search letters, and videos on effective networking and job fair attendance. Co-op students are advised to review the website on a weekly basis for updated information on new career related workshops, programs, and on campus industry visits.

CareerLINK

CareerLINK is the University of Massachusetts Lowell's online database of job postings. This system is where many of our employer partners post jobs only open to Professional Co-op Program students. On CareerLINK, professional co-op students can upload their resumes and apply for co-op opportunities. Students can search, sort and select co-op postings based on specific majors. After a student's resume has been approved by his/her co-op advisor, he/she is eligible to apply for positions available to Professional Co-op Program students directly through the system.



Tools and Resources for the Co-op Employment Search

Interviews for Co-op Employment

Most employers contact students directly to schedule interviews for possible co-op employment. The interview may be held on campus, on-site, or via phone/Skype. It is not unusual for students to participate in several rounds of interviews with an employer before a decision is reached. Co-op advisors are available to assist students in preparing for interviews and it is important that students communicate to their co-op advisor about the interviews in which they are participating. Students are expected to conduct themselves with absolute professionalism when communicating with an employer. If any questions or issues arise around employer communication, the student should consult directly with his/her co-op advisor.

Equal Opportunity

In compliance with federal mandates, University policy, and in the spirit of equal opportunity, the Co-op Center strives to refer students to available and potential cooperative education positions based on their expressed career interests, academic performance. The University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell), as a public institution of higher education of the Commonwealth, recognizes its responsibility to promote the interest and welfare of the public it serves. In so doing, the University reaffirms its commitment to employment practices and a learning environment free of discrimination and harassment. At UMass Lowell, equal opportunity and safe working and learning environments are not only just, but also the foundation for the diverse, inclusive and highly effective community in which all members may thrive.

These guidelines apply to all faculty, employees, students and individuals who are authorized to conduct business with and/or perform services on behalf of UMass Lowell.

UMass Lowell does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, national origin, covered veteran status, disability, ancestry or any other characteristic protected by law in employment, admissions, participation in its programs, services and activities, and selection of vendors who provide services or products to UMass Lowell.

Co-op Job Offers

Accepting a Job Offer

Students are expected to immediately notify their co-op advisor upon receiving an offer (verbal/written) of co-op employment. Often verbal offers are extended to students in advance of formal paperwork. Once a co-op employer extends a student an offer (either verbal or written) students are expected to promptly notify the employer within three business days if he/she intends to accept or decline an offer unless the employer indicates an alternate time schedule. The co-op position is an agreement between the student and the employer. When the student verbally accepts a co-op position, he/she has committed to the position and is no longer in the job search. When an offer is accepted, the student must refrain from seeking alternate co-op employment. Declining a job after accepting it, may result in the student being suspended from the Professional Co-op Program.



Co-op Job Offers

Compensation

All students in the Professional Co-op Program receive compensation while employed on co-op. While the co-op team may consult with employers to help develop appropriate pay scales, significant variances in pay rates exist among students and positions for numerous reasons, such as industry demand, student ability, tenure with firm, geographic location, employer pay scales, and economic conditions.

Social Security requirement

All students, including international students must have a Social Security number from the U.S. Social Security Administration before working on co-op.

Income tax

Federal law requires students to complete a W-4 form with their employer before beginning work. This form ensures that the appropriate federal and state taxes are deducted from wages. If an employer does not deduct these taxes from wages, students are still responsible for paying them. International students are required to pay federal and state taxes.

Independent Contractors/Consultant

Students should verify with their employer that they will be receiving a W-2 form (not a 1099) at the end of the year. Students are advised not to accept co-op positions as Independent Contractors/Consultants (1099 form). There are concerns about the possible lack of student awareness about the status of their protection under workman's compensation, payroll deductions for taxes and social security, and possible penalties should students fail to pay self-employment taxes.

Housing, Transportation & Relocation

Transportation, relocation, and housing are the responsibility of the student. Students living on campus in UMass Lowell housing, who accept a position locally, can continue to live on campus according to all stated residence hall expectations and room & board fees. Students living in UMass Lowell on-campus housing should review the terms and conditions of their housing contract for the procedure to be released from their housing and/or meal-plan contract due to co-op participation. Residential students should review the [Frequently Asked Questions & UML Housing Information for Students on Co-op](#). Students can choose to live off-campus during their co-op and each student is responsible for finding housing.

Employers are encouraged to offer co-op students some level of assistance with relocation costs, such as a stipend or housing allowance. Students should be clear about any possible assistance that will be offered prior to accepting an offer of employment. Co-op advisors can often play an important role in clarifying and communicating with company officials about relocation policies and procedures. Students are well advised to seek the advice of their co-op advisor on such matters.



Co-op Job Offers

Forms/Paperwork/Screenings

Once employment is confirmed, students complete all company employment forms and report their Professional Co-op Hire in CareerLINK. Students must make certain there are no advising or financial “holds” on their SiS record. Active “holds” will prevent registration for the co-op experience and the student from starting co-op employment.

Professional Co-op Agreement for Students, Employers, and University

Once an offer of co-op employment has been extended by an organization and accepted by a UMass Lowell student, all of the co-op partners, including the University, enter into an agreement that outlines the expectations and responsibilities for all parties. It is the co-op student’s responsibility to initiate the completion of the co-op agreement on CareerLINK. The co-op agreement forms have several required parts and all must be on file with the Career & Cooperative Education Center prior to the start of student employment.

Most co-op employers require applicants to undergo a pre-employment screening, such as drug testing, credit checks, physical examination, security clearance, and criminal record checks. Failure to complete and pass these checks may prevent a student from being hired for that position and prohibit his/her ability to continue participating in the program and apply for future co-op positions.

Many companies also require that, like all their employees, co-op students sign non-disclosure/confidentiality agreements. These agreements restrict students from discussing proprietary company, product, or research information. These agreements protect the employer from unauthorized disclosure of information and students may be legally bound by the agreement’s terms. Typically, information gathered on such a co-op cannot be used in any projects, term papers, or reports unless the employer allows the student to do so. Any questions or concerns about signing an agreement should be discussed with a co-op advisor.

International Students & Co-op Job offers

All international students are required to complete documentation with the International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO) following acceptance of a co-op position and prior to the beginning of their co-op term. International students in the Professional Co-op Program should work closely with their co-op advisor and the ISSO office to complete their Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form. The student must make sure they receive the approval from ISSO prior to starting employment to ensure that they are not in direct violation of their visa status in the United States. Also, any changes in employment dates require prior approval from the co-op advisor and ISSO to ensure compliance with all regulations.

Co-op Job Offers

Co-op Registration Process

Once a position is accepted and reported, the co-op office registers the student in the Co-op Experience course XXXX.3/4CE for the duration of the co-op cycle, which maintains the student's full-time equivalent status at the University. Students are also automatically enrolled in the subsequent Co-op Assessment course for the following semester, which is required upon completion of each co-op experience.

Students with Disabilities

Employers are required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for a qualified individual with a disability. Students who believe that they will need a reasonable accommodation to apply for a co-op position or perform an essential job function, should inform their co-op advisor and discuss with their potential employer. Co-op and Disability Support Services staff can assist students and answer questions regarding co-op employment.

Health Insurance

Massachusetts requires all students who are registered as full-time students to be covered by health insurance; this includes students working in a co-op position. Please see the UML website for more information regarding Health Insurance requirements.

Financial Aid/Scholarships and the FAFSA

It is very important for students to contact the Solution Center and/or the Financial Aid Office in order to understand and maximize student aid. It is important for students who rely on financial aid to fund their education to understand how financial aid may be handled or affected by co-op participation.

Typically students do not receive financial aid while participating in a co-op work experience since they are usually not enrolled in credits. Financial aid regulations require students be enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester to be considered for financial aid. Students on a professional co-op work experience are registered for the 0 credit, cooperative education course. This allows UMass Lowell to report the co-op status as "full time equivalent" to the National Student Loan Clearinghouse and to health insurance providers. If a student borrowed Federal Direct student loans before participating in co-op, this "full time equivalent" status will prevent the student from having to repay Federal Direct student loans while on co-op. To receive financial aid, students must be enrolled in actual credits during the semester.

One of the primary financial benefits of participating in the University's co-op program is that the federal government does not require students to include their professional co-op salary as part of their expected student contribution on the FAFSA form. When completing the FAFSA, students can enter the amount the student earned on co-op on line 43F.

Students are strongly encouraged to review the [Frequently Asked Questions about Co-op and Financial Aid](#) for more clarification and detail.

Co-op Experience

Making a Successful Transition

Before the start of each co-op cycle, co-op advisors hold “send-off” meetings to discuss how to maximize students’ co-op experiences, expectations while working, tips for success, and answer questions about making a successful transition to the workplace.

Standards of Conduct

Co-op students are ambassadors of UMass Lowell and are expected to observe UML’s student conduct code and conduct outlined in the student handbook. While on co-op, the student is an employee of the company or agency and is under the supervision of that organization in the performance of duties. Each student is expected to meet all of the requirements of professionalism inherent in the employing organization.

Communication with Co-op Advisor & UMass Lowell

Students on co-op will continue to receive important information regarding both co-op requirements and UMass Lowell business via email. Co-op students are expected to check their student email regularly. Co-op advisors are available and eager to connect with their co-op students during their co-op experience. Students are encouraged to communicate with their advisor if they have any questions, are experiencing any difficulties or need assistance and/or coaching to resolve any issues at the work-site. Advisors can support and guide students as they navigate their new workplace and experience the successes and stresses of making the change from being a full-time student to a full-time employee.

Co-op Assignments

Co-op students are expected to develop learning goals in consultation with their supervisor(s) at the beginning of the work experience. During the co-op cycle, a few additional assignments may be expected and vary depending on a student’s discipline. Some examples include, networking with selected colleagues through an informational interview, developing a handout describing the work site and/or a reflection paper. Students may also be asked to host their co-op advisor for a site visit at their company in consultation with their supervisor. At the end of the co-op experience, students are expected to complete an evaluation of the work experience and supervisors are also asked to give feedback regarding student performance. Typically these assignments are reviewed and utilized when the student returns to campus and participates in the Co-op Assessment reflection seminar.

Vacation & Time-off

Students are expected to work from the beginning of the co-op term to the end of the work assignment. Exact start and end dates should be clarified before accepting an offer and students should discuss these dates with their employer and co-op advisor. Students on co-op observe only company holidays, not University holidays or vacations during the co-op semester. Employers expect students to be responsible and have regular punctual attendance while working as a co-op. Students are expected to arrange for personal and college-related commitments to take place outside of regular working hours. Any exceptions must be discussed with the student’s co-op advisor before requesting permission from an employer. Some co-op employers may ask students to work longer than the published UMass Lowell co-op cycle and it is up to the student and employer to make those individual arrangements.



Co-op Experience

Military

Students with military training obligations that require time off from work should notify their co-op advisor and prospective employer prior to the start of their co-op cycle. Students in the military reserves who get activated for service while on co-op should immediately contact their co-op advisor to ensure appropriate military leave is recorded with the University.



Guidelines for Enrolling in Academic Coursework while on Co-op

Students are not permitted to take any academic courses that would conflict with the regularly established work hours as determined by the employer. While students may elect to take courses outside of regular work hours during the work semester, they must follow all rules, regulations and procedures in doing so as required by UMass Lowell. It is expected that during a co-op work cycle, the co-op is the priority and the needs of the work site should come first.

Absences & Medical leaves

Students should contact their supervisor immediately if they must be absent because of illness or emergency. If the absence lasts for an extended period, students should contact their co-op advisor. On occasion, a health problem may significantly impact a student's ability to participate in their co-op work experience. In these situations, students should consult with their co-op advisor to determine the best plan of action, which may include a medical leave from the University and leaving the co-op employment site early. Students are advised that interrupted enrollment (including leaving a co-op early) may have an impact on student loan grace periods and repayment expectations.

Co-op Experience

Workplace Issues

Termination by Employer

Co-op students are expected to perform their work assignments like any other employee at their company. Employers may fire a co-op student for many reasons, including unsatisfactory performance, incompetence, irregular attendance or tardiness or unacceptable behavior. Employers are encouraged to contact the student's co-op advisor to discuss concerns and to work out resolving any problems. Students should contact their co-op advisor immediately if they have been discharged from their co-op position. In most cases, the student will receive an "Unsatisfactory (U)" in their co-op experience course, which will be reflected on their academic transcript and the student will be removed from the Professional Co-op Program.

Non-Discrimination & Sexual Harassment Policy

UMass Lowell does not condone any form of discrimination or harassment toward students, either on or off campus. Although the University makes reasonable efforts to ensure that co-op sites are free of discriminatory practices and sexual harassment, it is possible that a co-op student may experience illegal or unethical behavior in the workplace. Students who experience any kind of harassment or unfair treatment on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, genetics, disability, or veteran status during a job interview or while employed, should contact their co-op advisor immediately. Sexual harassment is defined as objectionable, unwanted sexual attention from either a person in a position of authority or power or from a peer. Sexual harassment also can involve verbal or written communication of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational, living or work environment. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate any concerns to their co-op advisor.

Layoffs

On rare occasions, economic conditions may force employers to terminate co-op employment before the end of the co-op term. If a co-op student is notified of a layoff, the student should contact his/her co-op advisor as soon as possible so that the advisor can work with the student to secure another opportunity or make other arrangements for the co-op term.

Deserting a Job

Under no circumstances should a student resign from a position without the permission of his/her co-op advisor. If a student leaves a co-op position without approval from his/her co-op advisor, the student will receive an "Unsatisfactory (U)" in his/her co-op experience course, which will be reflected on his/her academic transcript and the student will be removed from the Professional Co-op Program.

Unemployment compensation

Students who are employed in Massachusetts under a cooperative education program are not eligible for unemployment compensation.



Co-op Program Violations

Unsatisfactory performance or failure to follow Professional Co-op Program guidelines may result in the following actions depending on the nature of the problem:

- Co-op program warning
- Co-op program probation
- Co-op program suspension
- Co-op program removal

The co-op advisor or Director of Cooperative Education determines consequences when students do not follow program expectations. Minor offenses usually result in a warning and serious or repeated violations may result in more significant consequences. Students are expected to follow the University's Code of Conduct while on co-op and violations will be referred to the Student Conduct Office. While on the work assignment, the student is an employee of the company or agency and is under the supervision of that organization in the performance of duties. Each student is expected to meet all of the requirements of professionalism inherent in the employing organization.

Appeals/Exceptions Process

Students may appeal a decision regarding a violation of co-op program expectations, petition an exception to a stated co-op guideline, or request reinstatement to the program. Guidelines regarding appeals can be requested by contacting the Director of Cooperative Education. Once a written appeal is submitted to the Director of Cooperative Education, the appeal and/or exception to co-op guidelines is reviewed by a Career Services & Cooperative Education Office appeals committee convened by the Assistant Dean of Career Development. The committee is comprised of a team of Career Services and Cooperative Education staff.



Learning through the Co-op Experience

Reflection is a critical component of learning through cooperative education. Throughout participation in the Cooperative Education Program, tools and assignments are provided to facilitate reflection and learning. Through the Professional Cooperative Education program, students are encouraged to learn about the working world, explore their interests and preferences, and gain knowledge about the strengths, skills and talents they bring to the workplace.

Upon return to campus for coursework after their co-op work experience, students in the Professional Co-op Program are automatically registered in the appropriate credit bearing Co-op Assessment course (xxxx.3100/3200 or xxxx.4100/4200) by the Cooperative Education Office. The goal of these assessment courses is to assist students with reflecting on their co-op experience through facilitated small group discussion, individual consultation and participation in co-op only student/employer events to identify their technical and professional skills and explore how these skills and employer connections might be translated into both their academic program and future job or occupation environments.

Returning From Co-op

Sample Events/Assignments:

- Revision of Resume & Job Search Materials
- Debrief with co-op advisor and peers to discuss co-op experience, organizational culture and making a successful transition to full-time student coursework.
- Co-op Expo - Student to Student Networking and Information Session: This is a traditional, student to student networking session, in which returning co-op students speak with new students actively seeking co-op employment to gain information about co-op opportunities and organizations. This program provides an invaluable opportunity for students to articulate knowledge gained from their co-op experiences in preparation for future interviewing opportunities and to learn more about the regional and national employer partners.
- Co-op Connections - An Employer/Student Networking Event: Co-op students actively seeking employment opportunities and co-op employers who expect to hire UMass Lowell students for the upcoming co-op cycle engage in discussion around specific co-op opportunities, the University's academic programs, students' work experiences and technical skill acquisition.
- Participation in selected workshops, career fairs and information sessions offered throughout the semester for additional career and professional development as determined through consultation with co-op advisor.

The above list of reflection activities are a sample and may vary from semester to semester. Failure to complete the required course expectations will result in a grade of "Unsatisfactory (U)" and removal from the program.

Professional Co-op Program Status and Continuation

In order for students to remain in the Professional Co-op Program, it is expected that students actively engage in post co-op reflection, and communication with their co-op advisor. Keeping an "active" status in the program enables students to search for designated "Professional Co-op Program Only" positions in CareerLINK, individual consultation with their designated co-op advisor for coaching, and access to Professional Co-op Program events. Each semester student activity will be reviewed and those students who do not respond to requests and communication from the cooperative education staff, will have their status in the program changed to "inactive." Inactive status prohibits students from participating in program benefits, but students who wish to reactivate their status should contact their co-op advisor. If a student is removed from the Professional Co-op Program due to a policy violation, academic status or co-op course failure, the student may request reinstatement into the program through the appeals process.



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Learning with Purpose