



Niagara College

Career Services



Maximizing Student Success:

Essential Tips for Co-op Employers



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Co-op students are an asset to any organization. Utilize this guide to help you and your co-op student get the most out of the work experience. Setting your co-op student up for a successful work term allows them to maximize their contributions and allows you to maximize your investment.

NC CAREER SERVICES

With 50+ years of experience and over 130 degree, diploma and certificate programs, Niagara College is a leader in applied education.



Niagara College prepares students from 23 diverse programs to help your organization meet the need for well-trained employees.

Career Services provides assistance to employers interested in recruiting students and new graduates for a variety of reasons, including new talent, staff coverage, peak season or special projects. Opportunities could include co-op, permanent, year-round, part-time or seasonal work.





CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW CO-OP STUDENT!

Co-operative education combines academic learning with practical work experience through alternating academic and full-time paid work terms. Thanks to your partnership, it enables students to apply theory in real-world settings, gain skills, and build professional networks.

We thank you for your ongoing commitment to nurturing emerging talent and providing valuable learning experiences for students. We are confident that a co-op student will bring fresh and innovative perspectives to your organization, and there will undoubtedly be a lasting impact on both your team and the student. Wishing you all the best for a successful and rewarding co-op term!

CO-OP EMPLOYER COMMITMENTS

What are your responsibilities as a co-op employer?

Co-op programs function as a collaborative partnership between educational institutions, students and employers. Students are looking to you for guidance, mentorship, and skill development. Your role is vital to student learning and to the success of the work term experience.



Before the work term

- Provide a work environment that is positive, supportive, safe and free from harassment or discrimination, as per the Human Rights Act.
- Facilitate reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and employment barriers.
- Develop a comprehensive onboarding and training plan in collaboration with the student.



Throughout the work term

- Discuss the co-op student's Work Term Plan during the first few weeks on the job. Revisit this regularly and adjust if necessary.
- Complete the Employer Co-op Monitor Form and potentially participate in a co-op monitor meeting.
- Plan regular check-ins with the co-op student and provide ongoing feedback and guidance.
- Honour the employment contract by adhering to the agreed upon terms.
- Communicate with Career Services regarding any issues or concerns related to the student and/or the co-op position.



End of the work term

- Complete the Employer Evaluation, and provide the co-op student with constructive feedback, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement and overall contributions.
- Gather feedback from the student to assess and enhance opportunities for future co-op students.
- Stay connected and invite the student to stay in touch and potentially join your professional network.



NC Career Services Commitments

We work to ensure both students and employers have a positive experience. A dedicated co-op team is here to support you through the entire co-op process!

What can you expect from NC Career Services?

- Assist employers with the recruitment of NC students, including help with creating job descriptions, defining roles, and understanding co-op program requirements.
- Prepare students for their work term through scheduled co-op prep sessions and 1:1 support.
- Provide advice and support to students and employers throughout the co-op process and if difficulties arise during a work term.
- Develop co-op employment opportunities that fulfil co-op requirements.
- Maintain and enhance relationships with employers.
- Monitor co-op work terms by checking in with students and employers.
- Gather feedback from students and employers to assess and enhance co-op programming.



Co-op Student Commitments

Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally, and to work towards personal and professional development throughout their co-op journey.

What can you expect from a co-op student during the work term?

- Enthusiastic learners who are eager to contribute and gain valuable experience.
- Collaboration in the development and implementation of their personal work term plan.
- Commitment to honour the terms and conditions of the employment contract agreed upon.
- Equipped with foundational knowledge and competencies relevant to their academic program.
- Compliance with all policies and procedures of the workplace.

Maximizing Student Success

Now that your co-op student is set to arrive, you can create a meaningful work experience through effective **onboarding, mentoring and retention** strategies. These are interconnected processes that help to ensure a smooth start, support ongoing development, and help maintain engagement. Remember that students are looking to you for guidance, mentorship, and skill development!



Onboarding

Effective integration into your team



Mentoring

Ongoing guidance and support



Retaining

Overall satisfaction and engagement





ONBOARDING

A key to a successful co-op experience for both you and the student is a well-planned onboarding process that begins before the student's arrival. Thorough onboarding ensures co-op students are well-prepared, engaged, and integrated into your team.

- Foster a welcoming environment by making a positive first impression. Send a welcome email and announcement, facilitate team introductions, and have their workspace or equipment prepared for their arrival. Continue to cultivate an inclusive and supportive workplace culture that makes co-op students feel welcomed and valued.
- Create a formal onboarding process so students know how to be successful in your organization. Consider providing an orientation, a training plan, and reviewing policies and procedures, health and safety, and organizational structure.
- Clearly outline expectations and communicate those early. Outline the student's role, responsibilities, and goals for their time with the company. Make sure they understand what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated. Set clear expectations for hours of work, vacation time, sick days, dress code, inclement weather, remote or hybrid work, etc.
- Anticipate potential barriers to success. Ask the student about what they need to succeed and implement strategies before their start date. This approach will ensure they receive the necessary mentorship, accommodations, and structure to perform at their best.



MENTORING

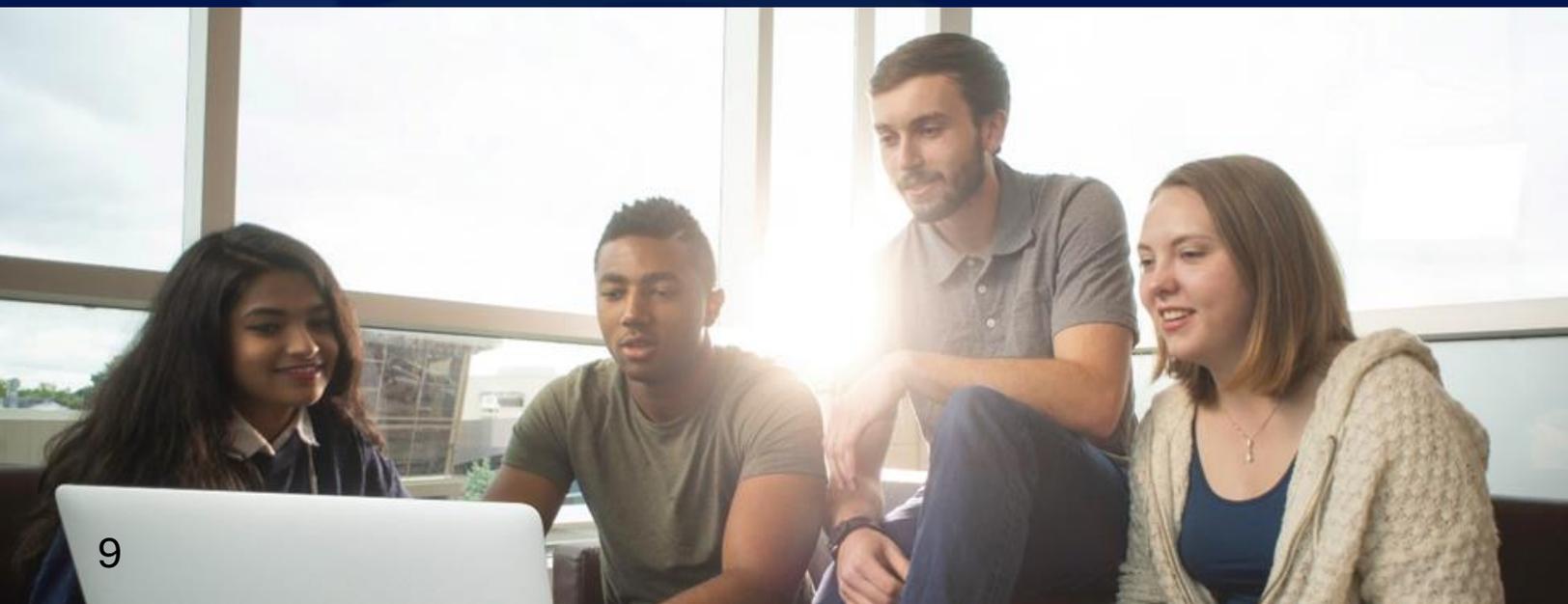
Positive mentorship is a crucial part of a co-op student's personal and professional development as it provides them with guidance, skill development, career insights, and support.

- Inquire about the student's Work Term Plan. This document should be completed collaboratively with the student and supervisor to set realistic and mutually agreed upon goals, and to clarify objectives. This can be reviewed and adjusted as needed as the student reflects on their experience throughout the term.
- With the Work Term Plan in mind, carve out meaningful opportunities for the student to further develop skills and expertise that align with their goals. This might include meetings, networking opportunities, training activities, professional development, special projects, job shadowing, or providing other relevant resources and materials. Assess their skill-set and allow the co-op student to take on scaffolded tasks and projects that will help them learn and grow.
- Assign a mentor/supervisor and plan regular check-in points. The mentor should be easily accessible to the student to offer supportive feedback and guidance, while navigating any potential challenges.
- Explore potential career pathways within the company or industry, including both traditional and non-traditional routes. Share your valuable industry insights related to current trends, challenges, and opportunities. Encourage networking and be open to ongoing conversations.

RETAINING

Co-op programs offer employers the chance to engage with emerging talent, improve productivity, and contribute to the development of future professionals, all while building a strong talent pipeline for future hiring needs.

- A focus on retention improves the overall experience for students, increasing their satisfaction and likelihood of continued engagement.
- Continue to offer support, resources, and opportunities for professional growth throughout the co-op term. Acknowledge and celebrate their contributions and achievements to foster a sense of belonging and value.
- Provide opportunity for talent development. Co-op students who have positive experiences may choose to return to the company for future co-op terms or full-time positions, leading to increased employee retention. They also become a potential source of future talent referrals.
- Keep students motivated and interested by engaging in career path discussions. Have conversations about future opportunities within the organization or industry and share your valuable expertise.
- Retaining co-op students ensures continuity in their projects and allows them to build on their experience with your organization, reducing recruitment costs and training time.
- Offering quality co-op opportunities can improve an employer's reputation as an appealing workplace, helping to attract more talent in the future.



Additional Resources

Questions or concerns during the work term?

Addressing concerns early and constructively can help the co-op student improve their performance and make the most of their work term experience. If you wish to discuss anything about the co-op student or their work term, please contact Career Services. We are here to support you throughout the entire co-op process.

Email: nccareerservices@niagaracollege.ca



Additional employer resources in MyCareer:

- <https://mycareer.niagaracollege.ca/>



Additional resources on Work Integrated Learning:

- Business and Higher Education Roundtable- WIL Hub- <https://bher.ca/wil-hub>
- CEWIL Canada- Employer and Community Partner Resources- <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/Resources/Employer-Community-Partners/Employer-Benefits.aspx?hkey=06c45fb8-e096-452f-9d46-973c1d79e1d9>
- Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning BC - Employer Toolkit For Hiring Students From International Pathways- <https://acewilbc.ca/projects/employer-toolkit-for-hiring-students-from-international-pathways/>

