

# **COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK**

**Revised 7/04**

## **WHAT IS COOPERATIVE EDUCATION?**

Cooperative Education (Co-op) is a nationwide program that integrates classroom theory with practical work experience. Students who participate in Cooperative Education work in jobs that are related to their academic major. They acquire practical work experience that increases employability after graduation. In addition to gaining experience and academic credit, many students earn money to help finance their education. Occasionally, a co-op position may become a full time job, however, there are no guarantees of permanent employment implied.

## **COOPERATIVE EDUCATION / INTERNSHIP**

At Madonna University, Cooperative Education is defined as a paid experience consisting of one or more terms of work. Internships are usually unpaid and consist of at least one work term.

## **SCHEDULING OPTIONS**

Students at Madonna University co-op on either a parallel or alternating schedule. Parallel Co-ops work and go to school in the same term, either part time or full time. Alternating Co-ops alternate full time semesters of school with full time semesters of work. At Madonna University 97% of the students co-op on a parallel basis.

## **ACADEMIC CREDIT**

Students acquire academic credit for Cooperative Education and internships. The amount of credit earned is determined by the academic department granting the credit. Students agreeing to work at a site arranged by the Career Services Coordinator agree to register for credit and pay for tuition, just as they would for any other class.

Students may earn from 1 to 6 credits per term. Factors that determine the amount of credit are: departmental guidelines; complexity of assignments; length of assignment; additional project requirements; and the discretion of the faculty advisor. In most departments, there is no direct correlation between the number of hours worked and the number credits granted. Students should check with the individual academic department to determine the number of credits available for co-op and internships.

## **GRADING**

The grade for the co-op or internship is determined by the co-op faculty advisor. On the Co-op Registration Form, the advisor will indicate whether the student will receive a pass/fail or a letter grade. Grading is based on the employer evaluation, completion of assignments, accomplishment of objectives and the results of the onsite visit.

## **COURSE NUMBERS**

Students participating in a required co-op should check the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#) for Cooperative Education course numbers. Students using elective credit for Cooperative Education will follow the Madonna University guidelines for course numbering to determine level (e.g. 1000 open to all students, 2000 open to sophomores and above, etc.). Cooperative Education courses end in 910 or 920 (e.g. HUM 2910). Internship courses end in 930 or 940 (e.g. SLS 4930). Students usually take an x910 course before an x920 course and an x930 course before an x940 course. The faculty advisor, based on the students level in school, determines course numbers.

## **TUITION AND REGISTRATION FEES**

Students pay for the academic credit they receive. Co-op may be added until the end of the 6th week of a term with no "add" fees incurred. (Students may add co-op credit after the 6th week with the approval of the Director of Cooperative Education). Students are responsible for all tuition and registration fees.

## **JOB REFERRAL POLICY**

The Career Services staff develops openings specifically for Cooperative Education and Internships. Only students who agree to participate in co-op or internships for academic credit will be referred to co-op and internship openings. Co-op and internship information given to a student by the Career Services Coordinator is confidential and should not be shared with other students or community members.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Students from any academic major may participate in Cooperative Education/Internships.. To participate in the program students must be:

- Admitted and enrolled in classes at the University.
- Have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- Have completed 30 or more semester hours of study. Transfer students must complete at least 12 semester hours at Madonna before participating.

Students with a lower grade point average or less than 30 semester hours may participate with the written approval of their faculty advisor.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

1. Complete an "Application for Cooperative Education/Internship".
2. Read and sign the "Cooperative Education/Internship Student Agreement and Authorization".

3. Schedule an initial meeting with a Career Services Coordinator to discuss career goals, availability for work and qualifications. Bring the completed application, agreement and resume (if available) to this meeting.
4. Attend workshops on resume writing and interviewing if recommended by the Career Services Coordinator. Submit approved resume (hard copy and email or disk) to Career Services Coordinator.

After these steps are completed the Co-op coordinator will assist the student in the search for a co-op/internship.

## **OBTAINING A CO-OP JOB**

**TAKE THE INITIATIVE ...** Follow-up on leads given to you by the Career Services Coordinator; Check with the Coordinator about new positions that have been posted with the office; Follow-up on job leads you develop on your own.

**KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE CAREER SERVICES OFFICE...** Let your Coordinator know if you have an interview; Keep current copies of your resume on file; Keep the coordinator informed of any changes in your employment status.

**MONITOR THE JOB POSTING BOARD ...** Check co-op postings in the office and on-line often to determine listings that may be of interest. Students should inform the coordinator of postings that they are interested in pursuing.

**INTERVIEW WITH EMPLOYERS ...** The coordinator will refer students to employers who request candidates with the student's qualifications; If an employer wishes to interview the student, the coordinator or the employer will contact the student directly. If for some reason the student cannot make the interview it is the student's responsibility to contact the employer and the coordinator.

Decisions to interview or hire applicants are made by employers, not the Career Services staff. Although the staff offers assistance in obtaining a co-op/internship placement, no placements are guaranteed.

## **WHAT IF I RECEIVE A JOB OFFER?**

Notify the Career Services Office immediately if you are offered and accept a position. Obtain a "Cooperative Education Registration" form from the Career Services Office.

## **HOW DO I REGISTER FOR A CO-OP/INTERNSHIP CREDIT?**

Obtain the signature of a faculty advisor and the Career Services Coordinator on the "Cooperative Education Registration" form. The Career Services Staff will recommend faculty to assist students as a Co-op Faculty Advisor. The Co-op Faculty Advisor will determine the course number for the co-op/internship, the number of credits to be earned and the method of grading (letter grade or pass/fail) and record this information on the registration form.

This form must be submitted to the Career Services Office for students registering on-line. Students registering by mail or in person, must include the yellow portion of the “Cooperative Education Registration” with the class registration. Failure to submit this form will result in the class being dropped.

Cooperative Education/Internship is a graded, credit/tuition course. Students accepting a position arranged by the Career Services staff agree to register and pay for tuition as they would for any other class.

### **WHAT FORMS ARE REQUIRED?**

Each term, students must complete a “Learning Agreement”. This form is the "contract" that outlines your learning objectives during the co-op/internship term and the method of evaluation. Before completing the form, obtain input from your work supervisor, then meet with your faculty advisor to determine your goals and objectives for the term. When complete the form is signed by the student, employer, faculty advisor and coordinator.

A “Job Description” is required each term also. All forms should be submitted to the Career Services Office.

Some faculty advisors require the student to keep a journal or write a paper. The faculty advisor will assign these requirements. If required for the course, these requirements will be noted on the “Learning Agreement”.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE A JOB THAT I WANT TO USE FOR CO-OP?**

If you are working in a job related to your field of study and would like to use the experience for co-op credit, submit a job description to a Career Services Coordinator. Typically, students are asked to seek a project or new/expanded duties during the co-op work term that would qualify to receive credit and give the student a learning experience.

If your job is approved for co-op credit, obtain a Cooperative Education Registration form from the Co-op Office and obtain the signatures of a faculty co-op advisor and career services coordinator.

### **HOW ARE EVALUATIONS DONE?**

Each term students are asked to evaluate their co-op/internship. The evaluation is mailed to the student’s home and should be submitted the week of finals.

The Employer evaluation is mailed to the student to give to their employer. A copy of this form will be given to the student and the co-op faculty advisor. Results of the employer evaluation as used in determining the student’s grade.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PARTNERS**

### **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Define the student's co-op duties and responsibilities.
2. Assure safe and healthful working conditions.
3. Offer wages at a rate comparable to employees who do similar work.
4. Help students to formulate goals for the Learning Agreement and facilitate the accomplishment of the learning objectives.
5. Recognize the student as a trainee and provide supervised practical experiences with an increasing level of responsibility and challenge as the student progresses academically.
6. Meet with a representative of the university for an on site visit to discuss the student's progress.
7. Complete a written employer's evaluation of the student's work.
8. Notify the Career Services Coordinator should problems with the student's performance or changes in their employment status arise.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Initiate the Co-op process and update the Career Services Coordinator on employment status.
2. Actively participate in the employment process by: attending resume and interviewing workshops; submitting a perfect resume; following up on job leads; developing job leads and keeping the Career Services Coordinator informed of progress.
3. Register for academic credit and pay for tuition for the co-op class.
4. Complete and return co-op forms on time, including: Job Description, Learning Agreement, Journals or assignment, Student Evaluation.

All forms should be submitted to the Cooperative Education Office. The Career Services Staff will forward materials to the faculty co-op advisor and the employer.

5. Adhere to all policies of the employing organization. Students must dress appropriately, report to work as scheduled and notify the employer of any absences (students may be expected to report to work during school vacations).
6. Perform work with professionalism and maintain confidentiality.
7. Demonstrate attainment of the learning objectives as defined by the method of evaluation in the Learning Agreement.
8. Notify the career services coordinator of any problems that may occur at the work assignment. Failure to notify the coordinator of early termination or problems could result in a NC grade.

### **CO-OP FACULTY ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Sign the student's Registration for Cooperative Education, assign a course number, determine the number of credits to be earned and indicate whether the student will receive a letter, grade or pass/fail.
2. Assist the student with the completion of the Learning Agreement including the formulation of the learning objectives and the method of evaluation.
3. Make an on site visit or phone call to the work site to ascertain the student's performance. (This contact may be made by a representative of the academic department or the career services staff.)
4. Evaluate the work experience.
5. Assign a course grade for the co-op work experience.

### **CAREER SERVICES COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Provide advising, counseling and workshops to potential co-op students to prepare them for a successful job search and co-op placement.
2. Contact employers for co-op openings and research new employers to expand co-op opportunities.
3. Refer students to co-op openings.
4. Serve as a liaison between the student, the co-op faculty advisor and the employer to facilitate communication, maintain the quality of the learning/working experience and foster good work relationships.
5. Ensure proper registration of co-op students with the Registrar's Office.
6. Maintain central records of all co-op assignments.