



TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Rensselaer Cooperative Education Program, administered by the Career Development Center (CDC) offers students the opportunity to gain valuable experience in employment, which relates directly to the students' major. At the same time, it provides the employer an opportunity to evaluate potential full-time employees while having important work assignments completed.

I. Duration of Agreement. If an employer offers a work assignment and the student accepts, both are expected to continue this association for the following time period:

Undergraduate Students. A minimum of two work terms (typically *one semester and one summer*). An undergraduate who desires to work more than two terms is permitted to change employers. At that point, the student will not be required to make an additional "two-term commitment" to another employer. If scheduling more than two work terms will defer the expected graduation date, or if a student wants to work three *consecutive* terms, approval must be obtained from the Career Development Center (CDC) and the student's academic advisor.

Graduate Students. A minimum of one work assignment (a summer or a semester). Graduate students will normally have the option of co-opping up to a maximum of one calendar year. All requests to participate in the Co-op Program must be approved with the student's faculty advisor.

II. Only under the following circumstances may the duration of the co-op assignment be terminated:

1. The employer does not provide the student with career related work experience.
2. The student does not meet the accepted level of performance of the employer.
3. The student's academic performance falls below the accepted level (undergraduates – overall GPA 2.0; graduate students – overall GPA 3.2).
4. The student makes a significant change in his/her educational program or leaves Rensselaer.
5. The employer's economic position requires discontinuation of the co-op program.

III. Responsibilities of Co-op Students

- A. The CDC must approve all co-op positions. A copy of the job offer letter must be submitted that includes the (a) job description; (b) starting and ending dates; (c) name and phone number of the immediate supervisor; and (d) rate of pay. The student will also provide the CDC with his/her emergency contact information while employed.
- B. The student agrees not to sign any "non-indemnity"/ "hold harmless" or "non-compete" agreements with the employer. Any such agreement should first be forwarded to the Director of Cooperative Education.
- C. No student on academic probation will be eligible for a co-op work assignment without written approval from the faculty advisor and academic advising office.
- D. The student will be responsible for filing a "Work Plan" with the Office of Cooperative Education no later than 30 days after accepting a job offer. Any changes in this plan must be discussed with the co-op counselor.
- E. Any student contemplating a change in major or a transfer to another university should immediately consult both the Office of Cooperative Education and the employer as to the effect of such a change on further participation in the Rensselaer Cooperative Education Program.
- F. The student will be responsible for obtaining housing and making transportation arrangements to insure regular attendance during the work period.
- G. If the student has any concerns regarding the co-op assignment, it is her/his responsibility to contact the co-op counselor. No student may resign from a co-op position without prior approval from the counselor.
- H. The student will receive a grade of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" based on the submission of a required "Work Report" and their work performance.

IV. Responsibilities of Employers

- A. The employer agrees to select the student and assign jobs without regard to race, sex, national origin, religion, handicap, color, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- B. Rensselaer expects that the employer will provide worker's compensation and liability insurance regarding the student as an employee. The Institute also holds the employer responsible for providing a safe workplace that complies with all federal, state, and municipal standards.
- C. Employers will be expected to provide challenging work experiences that directly relate to the student's major and class level. All details regarding the job should be provided to the student prior to his/her starting date if at all possible. The employer agrees to notify Rensselaer immediately of any significant change in the student's job duties or in the case of disciplinary action.
- D. The employers will provide appropriate orientation to the organization and the co-op's work setting. Sufficient training will be provided to prepare the student to be a productive member of the employment work place. The employer will provide professional supervision to guide the co-op student in carrying out his/her job responsibilities.
- E. The employer agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold Rensselaer harmless from any claim, lawsuit, administrative action or cost whatsoever for damage to persons or property which arise under or are caused in any manner whatsoever by the student working or the employer.
- F. The employer will be responsible for supplying Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with supervisory performance evaluations after each work term. The evaluation is to be discussed with the co-op *before* the co-op student's departure from the work site. Every effort should be made to confirm second and subsequent assignments with the co-op student at this time.
- G. Students cannot be asked to sign "non-compete agreements." Doing so would violate the Institute's academic principles and would close the doors to students' future employment opportunities. All employers are asked to provide copies of their Employer Agreements to the Director of Cooperative Education.
- H. For international students, the employer must strictly adhere to the starting and ending dates of employment as authorized on the student's I-20 form. Any changes to this authorization must be approved by the Career Development Center *and* International Student Services at Rensselaer.
- I. The employer agrees not to require/request the student to use his/her personal automobile to transport clients or to perform business-related services on behalf of the employer.

V. Responsibilities of RPI, Cooperative Education Program

- A. The Career Development Center will insure that each student and employer entering the program is aware of the objectives and procedures under which the co-op program operates.
- B. The Career Development Center will review the content of the work assignments on a regular basis to assure the assignments are challenging and directly related to a major field of study offered at Rensselaer.
- C. The Career Development Center will inform students of co-op opportunities through *Joblink*, Career Fairs and academic departments. The CDC will also schedule campus interviews and set up informational meetings as requested by employers.
- E. The Career Development Center will be responsible for assigning a Co-op Counselor to each co-op student. The counselor will conduct a briefing and debriefing(s) for the students as appropriate, aid in the transition from campus to work, and monitor the students' performance on the job in order to facilitate the students' career development.
- F. The Career Development Center will maintain contact with students during their co-op experience through monthly Co-op Bulletins and also by phone as deemed necessary. Site visits will be conducted as resources permit.
- G. The Office of Cooperative Education will provide assistance to both student and employer to rectify any problem that may occur during the course of the co-op relationship between the employer and the co-op student.