CO-OP GUIDE

2011—2012

Cooperative Education Program

Center for Career and Professional Development
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, New York

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Preparing for Co-op

Welcome to the Cooperative Education Program!

You are about to embark on an exciting journey that will lead to new paths in your career development. Along the way, you will cultivate critical technical and leaderships skills, meet great professionals, and learn new things about yourself. We are very pleased to welcome you as a new "co-op" student! This **Co-op Guide** is an important reference for you; it is packed with important information, so please take it with you on co-op—and feel free to share it with your family before you leave!

NOTE:

You are responsible for reviewing this entire guide. There are critical deadlines and information about fees and waivers for which you are responsible!

Co-op Program Requirements

Undergraduates must have a 2.0 GPA and are eligible to start the Co-op Program anytime after the completion of their freshman year. However, you may not enter the program with less than 12 credits remaining in your degree program. Transfer students must complete at least one semester of studies at Rensselaer before going on co-op. Note: In special cases where past co-op participants are completing their degree requirements in December and planning to go to graduate school the following Fall, they are permitted to do a "capstone" co-op during the spring semester. However, they must extend their graduation date to May in order to retain student status.

Undergraduate co-op students are required to work two terms, one of which must be a semester. While most students work both terms for the same employer, this is not mandatory. There are several ways to complete the two-term requirement:

Spring-Summer Co-op (January through August);
Summer-Fall Co-op (June through December); or
Fall Co-op; Spring Classes; Summer Co-op (or similar arrangement)

Special Notes: In some curricula (chemical engineering, for example) it may be necessary to take off an entire year to go on co-op due to the tight sequencing of courses (this plan is approved by the chemical engineering faculty). Also—with an advisor's permission—it is possible for students in other majors to do more than one semester of co-op.

Questions about this should be directed to a career counselor. Finally, all co-op work assignments should be reported to the Center for Career & Professional Development and entered on the student's Co-op Work Plan.

Please refer to the "Next Steps & Required Co-op Briefing" for the steps to follow after receiving a job offer.

Graduate students are eligible for co-op after the completion of one term of study at Rensselaer. However, you cannot enter the program unless you will return to campus as a "full-time" student for at least one term. International students must have resided in the U.S. for at least nine months. You also must maintain a 3.2 GPA, and you have the option of working one term (semester or summer) or more up to one year. Graduate students who desire co-op status should contact the Center immediately upon receiving a co-op job offer, as the process for approval involves several steps:

Co-op Approval Process for Graduate Students

1. Fill out a "Co-op Work Plan" (obtained via a Co-op Briefing), securing co-op approval from a counselor in the Center for Career & Professional Development;
2. Take the Co-op Work Plan to the following individuals/office for signatures: the Graduate Program Director (GPD) in your academic department; Dr. Dunn in the Office of Graduate Education (OGE)—(drop off with Trina Beaudoin); and, if you are an international student, Ms. Havis in the Office of International Services for Students & Scholars (ISSS);
3. As part of Step 2 above, you will need to include the following documents with your Co-op Work Plan for your GPD and OGE: updated Plan of Study for signatures (if your graduation date is impacted by co-op); copy of job offer letter; copy of resume.

"Next Steps" and Required Co-op Briefing for All Students

Co-op Briefing

All students requesting co-op status for the first time must attend a Co-op Briefing. You will be given important information in this meeting about the following: your status at Rensselaer while on co-op; housing; financial aid, and so forth. These meetings are normally held in small groups, and you can pre-register for one on JobLink. If a student has left campus at the end of a semester and later receives a job offer, the briefing can normally be handled at a distance through email and a phone appointment.

Approved Starting & Ending Dates for Co-op Employment—2012

January 2, 2012	Start of spring-summer or spring semester co-op positions
May 18, 2012	End of spring semester co-op positions
May 21, 2012	Start of summer-fall or summer co-op positions
August 13, 2012	Start of fall semester co-op positions
August 24, 2012	End of spring-summer or summer co-op positions
December 30, 2012	End of fall semester co-op positions

Please Note: *You must work at least half of an academic term in order to be registered as a co-op on SIS for that term. International students may not begin or end employment for a given academic term outside of the dates specified above. If you have questions, kindly speak with a co-op counselor.*

Documents Required for Co-op Participation

The following items are a required part of your file:

- **Job Offer Letter**. Must be on letterhead stationery and include a brief description of responsibilities; the starting and ending dates; and the pay rate. Please send the job offer letter and a copy of your resume electronically (via email) to: co-op@rpi.edu.
- **Resume**. While this is typically available on JobLink, a copy for your e-file is desired.
- **Co-op Work Plan.** Please write down all of the terms that you will be on co-op, including the starting and ending dates, and the name and address of your employer. You can add additional work terms as they are scheduled. If you are an undergraduate, this form must be signed by a career counselor and your academic advisor. If you are a graduate student, you must obtain additional signatures as detailed in the section under "graduate students" above. All international students must also have this form signed by the Director of International Student Services. (Please see Appendix to view the Co-op Work Plan form.)
- All international students must also have this form signed by the Director of International Student Services.
- **Co-op Abroad Consent Form**. (Students working abroad; see p. 3)

Reporting Additional Work Tours to the Center for Career and Professional Development

Upon being admitted to the Co-op Program, the CCPD will register you for co-op at any time that you are working full-time during a summer or semester prior to graduation. You may expect an email from the CCPD in May each year asking you to report employment for the upcoming summer. This will be added to your Co-op Work Plan (no Work Report will be required for additional Co-op tours). This is a normal procedure at any university where students have been enrolled in co-op.

Students Going on Co-op Abroad

In situations where students are working abroad, you must also complete the "Co-op Abroad Consent Form." This form will be given to you by a Co-op Counselor and it must be notarized. Also, you should pick up an "SOS" emergency card from the CCPD and go to the Health Center (see Bonnie Bornt) to discuss international health insurance coverage.

International Students Participating in the Co-op Program

International students participating in the Co-op Program must be authorized to work through USCIS Homeland Security as part of "Curricular Practical Training" (CPT). Please be aware that you must have been enrolled as a full-time student for one academic year prior to employment and must return to school for at least one academic term after your co-op experience. As previously mentioned, your Co-op Work Plan must be signed by the Director of International Student Services. When dropping off this form, take along your current I-20. You will be issued a new I-20 with your permission to work typed on it. You cannot start working until the ISSS Office has given you permission to work on your I-20.(You will also need to obtain a Social Security Number but are permitted to begin working while you are waiting for this card.)

Registration Policies & Procedures

Your Status at Rensselaer While on Co-op. When you are on a co-op assignment, you are normally registered as a "full-time" student at Rensselaer with "0" credits. On occasion, some students may co-op part-time in the Capital Region. They are still full-time students and will normally go to school part-time while working part time. Part-time Co-op is not permitted for graduate students. If you ever need certification of your full-time status at Rensselaer (occasionally needed by a parent's insurance provider), please contact the Registrar's office by emailing registrar@rpi.edu. Include the reasons for the request, name of insurance company and address of where the letter should be sent.

Preparing for Co-op

Registering for "Co-op Education Assignment" on SIS. The Center for Career & Professional Development will register you for Co-op. ***However***, you are responsible for adding/dropping your own classes if applicable. Please be certain to drop your classes as soon as you accept a co-op position.

Registering for Classes at RPI While on Co-op. If you are working locally, you may register for courses at RPI. The rules for course registration during co-op semesters are the same as the rules for full-time, on-campus students. That is, you can register at any time during the registration period, and you can add a course any time during the first two weeks of class. Registration for the summer term is held during the spring, but you may register as late as the first week of class. Please review the course outline for offerings.

NOTE:

Part-time students at Rensselaer are charged tuition on a per-credit basis. If you are scheduled for a full-time co-op assignment, you should take no more than two classes.

SAM (Student Advisor Meeting) Clearance Status. Students going out on a co-op assignment should meet with their advisor BEFORE they go. That way, they will be all cleared to register during the time they are away on assignment.

Students can see their SAM clearance status via SIS, so you always have access to their last meeting date.

Taking Courses at Other Schools. While there is no limit to the number of courses a student may transfer in, approval to transfer credit is not automatic. Co-op students are required to follow the standard RPI transfer process. This includes obtaining departmental and advisor approvals before taking the courses. This requirement is for your protection, so you can confirm the level at which the course will transfer in.

Undergraduates must earn a minimum grade of "C" and graduate students must earn a minimum grade of "B" to transfer credit. Grades for any courses transferred into RPI will not be listed on your RPI transcript, and transferred courses do not carry earned hours.

NOTE:

If you fail a course at RPI and repeat it at another college, your department may require that you pass an examination before approving the transfer credit.

The Transfer Credit Process

1. Obtain a course description for evaluation by the appropriate RPI department. For example, to transfer credit for a math course, you will need approval from the RPI Math Department.
2. After obtaining departmental approval, have your advisor approve transfer of the course.
3. If you are within 30 credits of satisfying graduation requirements, obtain approval from the Advising and Learning Assistance Center.
4. Submit all required approvals to the Registrar's Office.
5. After you complete the course, have the transferring institution forward an official copy of your transcript to the RPI Registrar's Office.

NOTE:

If Rensselaer does not offer an equivalent course but the course is transferrable, the faculty member should create a course number that represents the department number, the level (e.g. LITR) and a descriptive title. For details, see the reverse side of the Transfer Credit Approval Form.

Course Waivers. Your faculty advisor must approve all course waivers, and written confirmation must be filed with the Registrar's Office.

Academic Credit for Co-op

Academic credit is generally not available for the co-op experience. However, there are certain departments or courses through which you can pursue credit:

- **Chemistry**
  Under certain circumstances, students may receive up to 4 credits for work related to their co-op experience. In order to obtain credit, the student must submit a proposal that outlines the nature of the experience for approval by the advisor before the assignment is undertaken. At the end of the assignment, the student can register for the approved number of credits (for the course CHEM-2930) and submit a report.

- **EMAC Communication Internship**
  The Department of Language, Literature and Communication offers a four-credit Communication Internship (COMM-4300) course. The internship may be taken for credit in conjunction with a Co-op if the instructor of the Communication Internship course deems that the Co-op merits academic credit and meets the additional criteria for internship credit. (Please contact the instructor of the internship course for more information.)

Students should be aware that retroactive credit is not given for internships. Those students who begin the Co-op in the spring semester must register for the internship during the corresponding spring semester. Those who will start the Co-op during the fall must register for the internship in the fall, in order to ensure that the coordination between the employer and instructor is stream-lined. This could result in additional tuition charges during the Co-op period.

- **Management Practicum**
  Management majors who are interested in pursuing credit for co-op may be able to obtain credit through MGMT 4900 Practicum in Management. Students must consult with Undergraduate Student Services in the Lally School for details and guidelines.

- **Other Majors**
  Students who would like to explore academic credit can check into independent study courses within their departments. Please note that ***all*** academic credit is awarded by, and at the discretion of, the faculty at Rensselaer.

Tuition, Fees and Billing

Tuition is charged for all registered courses, but is not charged for co-op. If you receive an e-bill for tuition, check to make sure that your SIS record is accurate. Remember that it is your responsibility to drop your classes, however, the CCPD will register you for the co-op program. **If you do not drop your classes by deadlines dates, you will receive a tuition bill for the upcoming semester!**
Generally speaking, that is around June 30 for the fall semester and November 30 for the spring semester. If you obtain a co-op job after these dates, your bill will be corrected as soon as the CCPD registers you for Coop
on SIS.

If co-op arrangements are made outside of the normal recruitment period, or if you fail to notify the co-op office about an assignment, your records will not be updated and you can expect to receive a bill for tuition. When your records are updated to reflect “on-assignment co-op” status, your account will be corrected to delete the tuition charge. If you continue to receive tuition bills, contact the co-op office to confirm that your co-op is registered.

Activity Fees. If your co-op assignment is more than 25 miles from RPI, you will not be charged an activity fee. If your co-op assignment is within 25 miles of RPI, you will still be assessed an activity fee for the fall and spring terms. You will not be charged an activity fee for summer terms.

Health Center Fees. All students will continue to be charged the health center fee of each semester unless you are on co-op **and living more than 25 miles away** from the RPI campus. **(Do not confuse this fee with the health insurance fee.)**

Student Health Insurance Plan. As a Rensselaer student, you are required to have health insurance, and being on co-op does not constitute an insurance waiver. While on co-op, you will continue to be automatically charged for the Rensselaer Student Health Insurance Plan, unless you have waived/do waive the annual insurance plan in the fall term by September 15th. No student (co-op or not) can cancel their Rensselaer Student Health Insurance Plan for the spring semester (unless it is the student's first semester at Rensselaer, and then he/she is not eligible for co-op). Keep in mind that the Rensselaer Student Health Insurance Plan provides nationwide year-round coverage. This coverage will facilitate care from hospitals and providers in the Troy area, as well as other geographic regions while on co-op.

Student Dental Insurance Program. Student Dental Insurance Program. Both undergraduate and graduate students are offered a Dental Insurance Plan. Enrollment for undergraduates is optional. Enrollment for graduate students is mandatory, but can be waived, with proof of existing dental insurance, with similar requirements and deadlines as described above for the Health Insurance Plan.

For detailed information on health insurance and dental coverage, go to studenthealth.rpi.edu or contact Bonnie Bornt by calling (518) 276-2997.

Financial Aid & Co-op

Financial aid is an issue of major concern for most co-op students. While no one can guarantee that your co-op earnings will not have any impact on your financial aid package, the Director of Financial Aid will make every effort to minimize this impact. If you have any questions about financial aid, we encourage you to meet with your financial aid counselor before leaving for your co-op job.

You can expect to receive a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) renewal reminder from the U.S. Department of Education in December. If they do not have a valid email address, the renewal reminder will not get to you. Please note that we recommend that all students complete the FAFSA by February 15th.

1. **Should I notify the Financial Aid office that I am on Co-op?**
   No. The Center for Career and Professional Development will confirm your status with the Financial Aid Office.
2. **Am I eligible for financial aid while I am away on Co-op?**
   Co-op students are registered as "full-time" students, taking "0" credits while on co-op. Since you are not taking classes and paying tuition, you would not have a need for financial aid. However, all students are eligible for eight semesters of financial aid, so your eligibility would be moved to a future semester.

(Please note that you must be registered for at least six credits to be eligible.)

3. **How do I report earnings on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?**
   Dependent students should indicate total year earnings in "the student income section of the FAFSA." Student savings, at the time of application, should be listed in "Asset Information."
4. **What effect could a co-op job have on my financial aid?**
   The income that you earn in a particular calendar year will impact the following years' aid package (for example, income earned in 2011 could affect eligibility for aid in the 2012-2013 aid year).
5. **What specific types of aid could be affected if I go on co-op?**
   Potentially everything except Merit awards. This includes state and federal awards and Rensselaer awards (need-based scholarships).
6. **I am in ROTC. If I'm on co-op, will I still qualify for the housing scholarship if I live locally?**
   No. You must be enrolled in classes full-time.
7. **How many credits must I take during summer school to qualify for financial aid?**
   You must be at least a half-time (six credit hours) student to qualify for aid. This may be broken down into one course each for Summer Sessions I and II.
8. **How is my student contribution computed for financial aid?**
   The financial aid staff will first look at your total annual income reported on your W2 forms. From this amount, they will subtract your federal income taxes; there will also be an allowance for state taxes (varies by state) and for FICA taxes (7.65% of your salary). They will then deduct your allowable living expenses from this balance. Your student contribution from income will be 50% of the remainder.

Taxes Assessed on Employment Earnings

Income Tax Liability. Since tax laws vary from state to state, it is important that you know the rules in your state of residence, and in the state of your co-op assignment. You may want to speak with someone from your employer's payroll office to find out about the withholding of state and local taxes.

If you do not work in your state of permanent residence during the co-op year, you may only need to file a tax return in the state where you co-oped. You need detailed and accurate information as far in advance of April 15th as possible. All states have web sites where you can access tax facts. Federal information can be found at www.irs.gov.

NOTE:

A very good website for information about filing taxes by state is the Federation of the Tax Administrators; www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html

Social Security Taxes for International Students. F1 students who have been in the U.S. less than five years are exempt from social security (F.I.C.A.) taxes. However, your earnings are subject to applicable federal and state taxes. You must file a return on or before April 15th each year.

Managing Housing Issues at Rensselaer

On Campus Housing. If you are on co-op during the fall semester and you want to return to that same room in the spring semester, you must find a "replacement" who will then agree to give up the room when you return. If you cannot find a replacement, you must agree to potentially give up the room and be assigned a new room by Residence Life when you return to campus. However, if no one is assigned to your room, you may request that room again for the spring. For more information, stop by the Residence Life office, or email them at res_life@rpi.edu.

Off Campus Housing. Students who live off campus and are on co-op during either semester face a similar issue. It is extremely expensive for students to pay for housing where you are on co-op and also back at school. If you live in a fraternity or sorority, there is usually not a problem. If you have a contract in a private residence, inquire as to whether you can sublet. Then, consider (1) posting an ad in The Poly; (2) posting an ad on the Student Union website for off campus (see http://offcampus.union.rpi.edu/); or (3) contact the co-op staff to post an ad on Co-opNet for students returning to campus the next semester (do this early!).

Finding Housing Where You Will be Working

Rental Agreements. Your landlord may ask you to sign a rental agreement. A rental agreement is a legal document, which should be read carefully before you sign it. Ask for clarification if you do not understand any of the clauses.

Past Co-op students suggest the following websites they have found helpful in their housing search.

Housing Relocation Websites

Apartments.com
ApartmentGuide.com
CitySearch.com
Rent.net
Craigslist.com

Pre-employment Legal Considerations

A word of caution for those who are seeking employment with outside business entities or governmental agencies:

It is not unusual for employers to request that new employees, co-ops, or interns sign certain documents before they begin their work arrangement. Typically, the employer may ask you to sign forms relating to required state and federal tax withholdings, FICA and Social Security matters, immigration matters, and the like.

While every form and item to be signed by you should be reviewed carefully, particular attention should be taken with forms, which are of the following types: (a) confidentiality agreements; and (b) covenants not to compete.

Confidentiality agreements require an employee to keep certain employer information secret. This type of information can include: confidential business information of the employer such as customer lists, trade secrets, formulas, business plans, and the like; confidential scientific and technical information which may pertain to the technology endeavors of the company; and classified information or other documents under government secrecy obligations. These agreements usually establish a time frame for how long material must be kept confidential – but if it doesn't set forth any time period at all, the agreement to keep material confidential may last indefinitely. Before you sign such a document, you need to know: (1) what the information is that you are to keep secret; (2) what all the required terms of confidentially are; and (3) what the penalties are for not complying, which can be quite severe (these can include money damages or penalties, a court injunction and having to pay for a lawyer to help you defend yourself). Note that a confidentiality agreement can also seriously impact your ability to publish any results of your work while working under a confidentiality agreement. So, if you do wish to publish, you must have a very explicit conversation with your employer before the confidentiality agreement is signed, so that appropriate exceptions are made to allow for publication.

Covenants not to compete can be separate from confidentiality agreements or can be incorporated within them. These types of clauses typically say that you agree not to engage in a business which competes with the business of the employer for a certain period of time. Some may restrict this area of competition to either a particular area of the country, or to a certain field of technology or business. Some may establish a period of time when competition cannot occur – if the agreement doesn't specify a time period, the obligation not to compete may last forever! Ordinarily, a student should refuse to sign such a document for a co-op or internship position, which could have the effect of seriously impairing the career opportunities of that student after the internship or co-op program is over.

In conclusion, think very carefully before you sign either a confidentiality agreement or a covenant not to compete. Please consult a member of the professional staff in the Center for Career and Professional Development or legal counsel before signing these documents.

Safety on the Job

There are many health and safety issues that need to be considered in a work environment. Some of the issues are so important that they are covered by state or federal regulations.

The **Occupational Safety and Health Act** (OSHA) mandates that employers furnish a place of employment free from hazards, and that they comply with safety and health standards established by the Secretary of Labor. If you are working in a laboratory or an industrial environment, you may be exposed to conditions that could be harmful to your health. OSHA, or designated state agencies, requires employers to inform employees of all safety and health hazards (including chemicals, noise, hot surfaces, heavy lifting, and eye and foot exposures). The employer's responsibility includes provision of:

1. A written policy covering the hazards.
2. Training before you start work. The training should include safety procedures, health effects, flammability, emergency treatment, and clean up.
3. Personal protective equipment (ear plugs, safety glasses, hard hat and respirators) at no cost to you.

Even though you may be physically separated from the RPI campus while you are on co-op, you are still considered a "full-time student" and you retain your student rights and responsibilities.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a violation of federal law. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.

Sexual harassment may be overt or covert. Overt examples include physical assault; demands for sexual favors accompanied by threats concerning one's job, evaluation or promotion; and/or touching, patting and pinching. Less obvious, but still considered sexual harassment, are forms of verbal abuse, including sexual innuendo and telling sexually explicit jokes.

If you feel you are being sexually harassed, you should:

- Let the harasser know that you do not agree with his/her action. Say no – firmly, without smiling or apologizing.
- Report the harassment to your supervisor. If the harasser is your supervisor, speak to his/her supervisor.

- Document instances and circumstances of harassment.
- Talk to your Human Resources representative.
- File a formal complaint with the Rensselaer Center for Career and Professional Development, your Human Rights Commission, or with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- File criminal charges with your local police, if you were attacked or raped.

Co-opNet Listserve

During the course of your assignment, you will receive monthly bulletins and updates from the Director of Cooperative Education via **Co-opNet.** The CCPD will add you to the listserv.

Student Evaluation of Co-op Experience

During the start of each academic term, the Co-op Director will send out a copy of the Student Evaluation Form (see Appendix). This form is to be filled out by students who have just started their co-op assignments. It is due 30 days after starting the job and is simply to let the Co-op Director know if you have any concerns starting out on your job.

Performance Evaluations

While many companies conduct internal performance evaluations, we also ask that all Co-op employers complete an evaluation of your performance at both the midterm point and at the conclusion of your assignment. The Co-op Director will forward a copy of the evaluation to you via "Co-opNet." You will be asked to forward the evaluation to your supervisor, and your supervisor will be instructed to return the appraisal to us at **co-op@rpi.edu.** For your personal benefit, please take the initiative to ask your supervisor for a copy of this document. Evaluations are sent to students in April, July, and November. Remember that both positive and negative feedback is useful, because it helps us become aware of ourselves, determine the consequences of our actions, and to change or modify our behavior.

A copy of the evaluation is available on the CCPD website, under "Co-op" and "Co-op Forms."

Developing Your Communication Skills

Your co-op assignment provides the opportunity to develop effective professional communication skills because you will be required to prepare and present information using a variety of formats – from oral presentations to written reports; from intradepartmental e-mail to interdepartmental email. Daily communication within the employing organization should be seen as an integral part of your professional development.

Creating Effective Documents

Professional advancement is increasingly dependent on skills in preparing technical memoranda, reports, and papers for publication. So if you don't have the ability to communicate job-related technical information effectively, you decrease your chance of being totally successful.

The development of effective communication skills requires considerable practice. There are some basic techniques, however, that you can use to increase the readability of your text.

Know your audience – It's not enough that you know what you are talking about. You have to make sure that the reader can understand what you are saying.

Know your purpose – The purpose of your communication determines the level of detail to be included in your written message.

Know your subject – When you are asked to report, verbally or in writing, make sure that you research the topic thoroughly so that you can present with confidence. Include facts to back up what you are saying.

Organize material logically – Well-organized communications have a beginning, middle, and ending. It may help if you prepare and follow an outline.

Writing Tips

- It's not easy to effectively edit your own work. You may be so familiar with what you intend to say that you miss glaring errors. If you can't find someone else to edit your text, try reading out loud. If it doesn't sound right, get out your pencil and edit!
- Remember - you are the new co-op on the block. Even if you see an unprofessional email from another staff member, don't take the risk of forming a poor impression by following suit.
- Never, ever, use work time as personal Internet time.
- Don't hesitate to ask your boss or advisor for advice about standard communication formats (e.g. – is e-mail appropriate, or is hard copy preferred?)
- Visuals, including charts and graphs, enhance the professional appearance of your report. Make sure all visuals are labeled and are referenced in the text.
- The Center for Communication Practices (formerly known as the Writing Center) at Rensselaer provides e-handouts for everything from lab reports to ESL grammar issues. They also provide individual help in-person or through online conferences - at no charge to RPI students. Visit their site at http://www.ccp.rpi.edu/

Ten Ways to Build a Professional Image

1. Identify your co-op learning objectives (academic/technical, career, personal).
2. Set goals and work to achieve them. Act—don't just plan.
3. Communicate well—both in writing and verbally.
4. Be self-directed and self-motivated. Ask if you can assist on important projects and manage your time effectively, so that you can meet deadlines.
5. Observe your work environment and learn about your job and your company.
6. Get to work on time—regular attendance is expected.
7. Develop team skills and the ability to cooperate with the team members.
8. Dress appropriately. If your office has a dress code, then your problem is solved. The best way to avoid a problem is by understanding the corporate culture and dressing how you want to be seen (professional, serious, upward-bound).
9. Focus on what you can do and take responsibility and credit for your work.
10. Listen carefully, ask questions, and analyze information.

Course Registration for Upcoming Academic Terms

Co-op students follow the same RPI procedures when registering for upcoming semesters as do students who are taking classes. Course listings are available online. Students register via SIS during the period noted in the time ticket that the Registrar's office sends to your RCS account. Co-op students are eligible to register when seniors and graduate students register. Note – time tickets for the fall semester are sent out in mid-March and registration is late March – mid April. Time tickets for the spring semester are mailed in late October, and registration is early November. It is your responsibility to be aware of, and follow through on, the registration process.

Securing Campus Housing After Co-op

Requesting On-Campus Housing for the Semester Your Return to Campus.

If you will be on co-op in the spring semester, and wish to return to campus housing for the Fall semester, you have three options – **(1)** go through the lottery, **(2)** be invited into a room to live with a friend, or **(3)** be assigned to a room. Below are instructions for all three options.* **(A Residence and Dining Plan Agreement will be emailed to all students in the spring and fall semesters via CO-OPNET)**

A. To go through the lottery:

a. Complete the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement (pick up the agreement in Residence Life or email res_life@rpi.edu to receive a copy electronically). Check the Residence Life website for all deadline dates.*

b. Indicate on the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement that you are currently on a co-op assignment.

c. Email res_life@rpi.edu or include a separate note to indicate that you want to be included in the lottery. If you have a friend who will be going through the Lottery as a proxy for you, please indicate that in your email. If you do not contact Residence Life before the deadline date, you cannot be entered into the Lottery.

B. To be invited into a room to live with a friend:

a. Complete the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement (pick up the agreement in Residence Life or email res_life@rpi.edu to receive a copy electronically). Return it to Residence Life prior to the deadline date.

b. Indicate on the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement that you are currently on a co-op assignment.

c. Specify the name, room/apartment and residence of the person who is inviting you in an attached note.

C. To be assigned to a room:

a. Complete the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement (pick up the agreement in Residence Life or email res_life@rpi.edu to receive a copy electronically). Return it to Residence Life prior to the deadline date.

b. Indicate on the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement that you are currently on a co-op assignment.

c. Residence Life will begin assigning co-op students to housing during the month of June. Assignments are made in the order that applications are received, so it is recommended that you submit your application as early as possible. Students will be contacted during the summer with specific assignment information and offers.

If you are on co-op in the Fall semester, and wish to return to campus housing for the Spring semester, you have two options – **(1)** Co-op Replacement Process, or **(2)** Apply for Housing. Below are instructions.

Co-op Replacements. If you completed the co-op replacement process, and your co-op replacement is living in your room, your space will be reassigned to you when you return. You will be contacted if you need to complete a housing agreement. Have a question about this? Email res_life@rpi.edu. You must contact Residence Life with questions about the Co-op Replacement Process. The CCPD is not responsible for Residence Life policies and procedures.

To Apply for Housing. Please complete and return a Residence and Dining Plan Agreement as soon as possible. You can pick up the agreement in Residence Life or email *res_life@rpi.edu* to receive a copy electronically. If you are interested in being assigned to a specific area/building, be sure to indicate so on the form. Assignments will be made during December. Returning student assignments are made based on the date applications are received. If you want to live on campus next semester, you should return your application quickly. It is too soon to say how many spaces will be available, and that is not something Residence Life can control. However, you can control getting your application in early, and they urge you to do that. Residence Life must receive a signed copy of the Residence and Dining Plan Agreement to assign you to housing.

What About Off-campus Housing?

Check the RPI Union database for help locating housing when you return.
http://offcampus.union.rpi.edu/

In Case of Emergency

From time to time, situations arise where we may need to contact you immediately. Please update your Joblink profile to include your cell phone or other contact phone number, and address while you are away. We must be able to reach you at all times. Also, if a situation arises that you need to contact professionals at Rensselaer , refer to numbers below:

During normal business hours please call:

The Center for Career & Professional Development, 518-276-6234

After business hours, please call**:**

- **Public Safety** at 518/276-6611

Co-op Work Report Requirement

At the conclusion of your first co-op assignment only (whether single or consecutive terms), you will be required to write a Co-op Work Report. This report should be written during the last month of your employment. The purpose of the report is to share your co-op experiences with the co-op faculty liaison in your academic department as well as your co-op counselor. Additional details about this requirement follow:

Report Content and Format

You will be submitting your report to the Center for Career and Professional Development electronically; there is no need to include a cover sheet, but please DO include the following information at the top of your first page:

Cooperative Education Program

Work Report

Your Name, Degree, & Academic Major

Your Employer's Name, City, and State

The Starting and Ending Dates of Employment

The Co-op Work Report consists of two sections and should be three to five pages in length:

Part One (1 – 2 pages). In this section you should introduce the employer, the department's function, and your specific job responsibilities (please discuss technical aspects of job, so that the faculty member understand your role at the company).

Part Two (1 – 2 pages). Evaluate your assignment compared to your job description and your expectations. If you applied for any patents or received any honors/awards, please mention them. It is also helpful if you provide an evaluation of Rensselaer's Co-op Program and any recommendations you may have.

Procedure for Submitting Report to Rensselaer. It is important that all students understand that your report MUST BE reviewed by your supervisor prior to submitting it to the CCPD! The reason is that students can innocently discuss proprietary information—and your supervisor would be the only person who could make that determination. Therefore, please follow this procedure:

1. Write the report, and save it with the following filename: Your last and first name; the abbreviation for your major; and the words "WkReport": (example: Martino, Bob.CHE.WkReport)
2. Send the Co-op Work Report to your supervisor and ask him/her to approve it. It should then be sent it to: co-op@rpi.edu. Please ask to be "cc'd" on this

message so that you know the report was submitted. Your grade will be submitted upon receiving the report.

3. Please note that by properly naming the word file and then forwarding it on to the alias email address above, we can quickly process your grade for co-op!

The deadline for co-op reports is 30 days after the start of classes for the academic term that you return to campus (semester or summer)!

The Co-op Debriefing Meeting

The debriefing meeting is your opportunity to provide feedback to program coordinators after returning from co-op. It is only necessary after your first co-op tour. Students who co-op are required to attend a debriefing meeting when they return to campus. It is your responsibility to sign up for a debriefing meeting at the beginning of the semester. A list of scheduled co-op debriefing meetings will be listed in JobLink at the start of the semester. All students have a JobLink account and can log in to RSVP a scheduled meeting. Visit http://www.rpi.edu/dept/cdc/ for more information.

Your Grade for Co-op

Your participation in the Cooperative Education Program is noted on your academic transcript; as such, you will receive a grade of “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”:

Satisfactory. This grade is awarded (a) if you submit a Co-op Work Report after your first co-op tour and (b) if your performance evaluation is satisfactory.

Unsatisfactory. This grade is given if you (a) fail to submit a Co-op Work Report or if your work performance or conduct on the job is unsatisfactory. If there are problems with your work performance or conduct on the job, you will be contacted by a Co-op Counselor in the Center for Career and Professional Development.

Commencement Walk Policy

The Institute has granted an exception for co-op students who may have 12 credits (no more) during the spring semester of what would be their normal graduation year. Please make a mental note that, if you wish to walk with your class at the time of graduation, you must comply with the Institute's policy. Also, you will be asked to file a “Petition to Walk” in graduation, which may be picked up at the Registrar's office during that spring semester. If you have any questions at all on this, please see the Co-op Director. If you have more than 12 credits, you will be invited to walk in the next Commencement ceremony. Please share this policy with your family now as we want them to be informed!

Terms of Understanding

The Rensselaer Cooperative Education Program, administered by the Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) 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. Are required to work two terms, normally this would be one semester and one summer (January through August or June through December). 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 Center for Career and Professional Development (CCPD) 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-oping 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 CCPD 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 CCPD 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 his/hers 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 Center for Career and Professional Development *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 Center for Career and Professional Development will ensure that each student and employer entering the program is aware of the objectives and procedures under which the co-op program operates.

B. The Center for Career and Professional Development 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 Center for Career and Professional Development will inform students of co-op opportunities through *Joblink*, Career Fairs and academic departments. The CCPD will also schedule campus interviews and set up informational meetings as requested by employers.

D. The Center for Career and Professional Development 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.

E. The Center for Career and Professional Development 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.

F. 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.

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