

Co-op FAQ – Employer Perspective

What is Co-op?

A MLIS co-op placement is an enrichment opportunity for students to work and learn in an environment which relates to their course of study. Students report to an experienced supervisor who oversees the student's training and day-to-day duties.

When are co-op placements offered?

Co-op placements may occur during any of the following terms:

- WINTER January – April
- SUMMER May – August
- FALL September – December

How long are co-op placements?

Students may participate in two four month or one eight month placement. Each placement must be for a minimum of 14 weeks. It is up to the employer to decide if they would like the placement to extend for longer than 14 weeks.

What are the specific start and end dates for co-op placements?

Co-op placements start in January / May / September and finish in April / August / December. The start and end dates are normally aligned with the beginning and the end of the term, but the specific dates are negotiated between the employer and student.

What criteria are there for employers who are considering offering a co-op placement for an MLIS student?

Each new co-op opportunity is reviewed before it is offered to students. The Manager of Graduate Student Services looks at the following criteria when deciding whether or not to approve a co-op placement:

- Are the duties well suited for a Master of Library and Information Science student? Will a student be adequately challenged?
- Will there be suitable supervision (co-op supervisors need to have an MLIS degree, a degree in an equivalent field or suitable LIS experience in order to ensure that the student has adequate support during the placement)?
- Does the placement meet the other basic requirements (Is it a paid placement? Does it extend for a minimum of 14 weeks?)

How many co-op terms may each student complete?

Students may complete one or two co-op terms (for a total of 8 months). The co-op terms may be with the same employer or with different employers and the terms may be consecutive or non-consecutive (i.e., a student could spend one term in school then one term on co-op followed by another term of school and then another term on co-op followed by the final term of school). Students must have at least one course remaining in their program following their final co-op term.

Are students paid while they are on co-op?

Yes. The pay rates are set (and paid) by the employer and will vary. A hourly rate of \$18-26 is suggested but some employers may pay more or less than this amount. Placements with the federal government use a pre-determined [pay scale](#).

Are there any additional administrative fees associated with hosting a co-op student?

There is an administrative fee to participate in co-op which the student pays (it is similar to a tuition fee).

What status will a student have while on co-op?

The student's status will be listed on their transcript as "Part-time Co-op." Co-op students are required to return to their academic studies immediately following their co-op placements.

What are the timelines for co-op applications?

The general timelines for processing co-op placements can be found on our website. For specific dates please contact the Co-op Office or ask to be put on our email notification list.

May all MLIS students participate in co-op?

No, in order to be eligible for co-op students must meet the following requirements:

- An overall course average of at least 75% with no individual course mark below 70%.
- By the time a co-op placement begins they must have completed at least four [MLIS courses](#) including: LIS 9001 Perspectives on Library and Information Science; LIS 9002 Organization of Information; LIS 9003 Information Sources and Services; and LIS 9005 Managing and Working in Information Organizations.
- Students must be "returning students" (i.e. they must have at least one course remaining to be completed following their co-op placement).

Is co-op a mandatory part of the MLIS Program?

No, co-op is an optional enrichment opportunity. A co-op placement will extend the length of time a student takes to complete their MLIS degree; it does not take the place of the academic course requirements.

Do employers get to interview candidates?

The co-op office forwards applications from interested students to employers. It is up to the employers to decide which candidates they would like to interview. Interviews may be completed via phone, SKYPE or in person at FIMS. The Co-op Office will arrange the interview schedules that best accommodate the employers' and students' availabilities.

If I offer a co-op placement am I guaranteed to get a student?

Most employers who participate find students for their positions. If, however, a student declines your placement, the placement can be offered to another interviewee or the position can be reposted. The co-op office will follow up to discuss possible next steps.

Once a co-op student has been hired, is it possible to extend his/her contract? If so, for how long?

Yes, employers may invite their current co-op student to stay on for a second co-op term (unless the student is already completing their second co-op term). The student has the option to accept or decline the offer.

What happens if the co-op supervisor is unable to supervise the student for the duration of the co-op term?

Unexpected staffing changes can occur. If a situation arises where the designated co-op supervisor is no longer able to supervise a co-op student, please contact the co-op office as soon as possible. In most cases a substitute supervisor may be able to fill this role in order to continue the placement.

Is it possible for two people to co-supervise a student?

Yes, several organizations have utilized co-supervisions in the past. It is up to the organization to decide whether this will work well for the co-op placement to be a success. At the end of the co-op placement the supervisors may complete separate or joint evaluation forms.

What can employers do to increase their chances of success through the posting and screening processes?

In order to increase the chances of success through the hiring process employers should:

- submit their posting as early as possible (late postings tend to get a lower response rate)
- interview as many applicants as possible (in order to keep the pool of potential candidates as large as possible)
- do your best to sell the students on the benefits of working in your organization

What should an employer do if their workplace requires security clearance?

Some organizations require a security or background check before a student can be hired. It is up to the employer to decide whether to begin this process during the interview period or after a specific student has accepted the placement offer. Since the process can be long and costly, the employers may decide what timing is best / most suitable for their needs. At the employer's request, we can help to forward any necessary forms to the student.

Where are co-op placements typically located?

Co-op placements can be located anywhere in Canada but most positions tend to be in Southwestern Ontario and Ottawa.

What happens if a student cannot complete the placement?

Emergencies and/or other unexpected situations may arise. In the case of an unexpected situation, employers and students should respond directly to any immediate concerns. Once the immediate situation has been dealt with, please contact the Co-op Office so that we may follow up as necessary.

What support is offered to new employers?

The [Co-op Office](#) is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm EST/EDT. You may reach the co-op office via phone 519 661 2111 ext. 88468 or via email fims-coop@uwo.ca

How can I find out more?

You are welcome to contact the Co-op Office at any time in order to find out more about the co-op program. If you would like to receive email notifications (sent at the beginning of each term) please forward your contact information to fims-coop@uwo.ca.