SFU | WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

ENGINEERING SCIENCE CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION
Supervisor's Orientation Guidebook

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Supervisor's Guidebook to Managing and Mentoring Your Co-op Student

Introduction

This guide is intended to support the co-op student's direct supervisor in assessing and developing the co-op students' learning during their Co-op semester(s).

The SFU Co-operative Education Program requires students to complete at least three Co-op semesters (each spanning a minimum of 13 weeks) of full-time paid employment during the program.

The program integrates semesters of full-time study on campus with full-time employment. Students are awarded with their degree either a Co-op certificate or designation.

The employment period coincides with regular academic semesters (January to April, May to August, September to December).

1. Supervisor as Mentor

1.1 What do mentors do?

- Help the student set long-term career goals and short-term learning objectives
- Help the student understand the organizational culture
- Recommend and/or create learning opportunities
- Transfer knowledge in areas such as communication, critical thinking responsibility, flexibility, and teamwork
- Point out strengths and areas for development

1.2 How does mentoring benefit the mentor?

The opportunity to:
- Contribute to a student's development
- Develop leadership skills
- Reflect upon one's own career
- Share experience and knowledge
- Discover new ways of thinking

1.3 How does mentoring benefit the student?

- Increases personal knowledge and organizational awareness
- Enhances understanding of one's role in the organization
- Develops an environment that supports constructive criticism
- Provides an effective learning tool
- Stimulates thinking about potential future employment options

Some suggestions for ensuring a positive mentoring experience include:
- "Start where the Co-op student is", by building on his or her strengths, interests and abilities
- Set your student up to succeed at the activity, by offering achievable challenges
- Allow the student to take small risks, but within a safe, supported setting
- Expose the student to activities, experiences and opportunities that he or she would not otherwise have been aware of
- Set consistent, scheduled meetings with the student
- Develop a tracking/reporting system for ongoing assessment

2 Learning Objectives

2.1 Purpose

- To learn and practise the skill of writing objectives. Objectives are a common management tool in today's business world.
- To establish a method of communication between the student and the direct supervisor, at the beginning of each work placement the student and supervisor will meet to ensure that both agree on expectations for the semester.

Some objectives will come directly from the requirements that the supervisor has regarding the work to be performed by the student (i.e., in order to carry out the specified job duties an objective will need to be achieved).

Some objectives may reflect the student's desire to learn a specific skill or carry out a specific activity as part of their job (i.e., the student may ask the supervisor if they can become involved in, and so learn about, something related to the job and in which the student has an interest).

2.2 Characteristics of Objectives

Objectives must be clear and convey the same message to both the student and the employer. There are three essential characteristics:

End Result: An observable, what action is required? For example:

- Complete a task
- Learn to use a computer application
- Write a report

Conditions: In what time frame will this occur? Examples include:

- By when will this be done?
- Will the student do the activity unaided or with the assistance of others?

Students are required to prepare at least three learning objectives at the beginning of the Co-op semester.

Measurement: How will success or failure be measured? This must be clearly stated so that all parties know the standard by which the work should be completed. For example:

- If the design is adopted for production
- If the modification solves the problem
- If the work meets specific internal quality standards
- How many times must the activity be done to demonstrate competence?

2.3 Preparation and Timing

Students are required to prepare at least three learning objectives at the beginning of the co-op semester, using a standard template available online through their Co-op departments. All learning objectives should be done by the student with the guidance of the company supervisor. Students should prepare a draft objective for discussion with the supervisor and follow this by writing the final objective, reviewed by the supervisor. These objectives should be completed by the second week of the work placement, and are completed in the student's profile in our online placement system.

Not all activities need to be reflected in learning objectives, but it is expected that most significant activities encountered will be covered. Students should keep the original sheet and provide a copy for their supervisor.

3 Site Visit

Typically each student and supervisor are visited on site at least once during their work placement (students outside the Metro Vancouver may receive a visit from a program coordinator or via phone/email).

The purpose of the visit is to allow the co-op coordinator to support and assess the student's progress in personal, professional and social development in the work environment. This visit is intended to provide feedback for the student's development and in some cases may lead to referral to university or employer resources. While on site, the appropriateness of the work being undertaken is also reviewed.

4 Work Term Assignment

The formal academic assessment is based on an oral presentation, written technical work report, and/or executive summary prepared by the student. The assignment is evaluated by either an SFU Engineering Science faculty member, teaching assistant, or co-operative education coordinator, depending on the assignment.

The work term assignment is required for each semester of placement and will include information such as: Description of Company and Work Environment, Outline of Role, Description and Analysis of Technical Project or Problem, Reflection of Experiences and Future Career Goals.

As the student progresses through their co-op placements the genre of the work report may be adapted to better suit the student's/employer's overall goals. Work report criteria may vary across Co-op departments and detailed criteria are listed on each department's website. Students are advised of this information and responsible for following the guidelines provided. Supervisors are encouraged to read through the work report and in some cases, sign releases making them available as resources for other co-op students.

4.1 Engineering Log Book

To assist students in reflecting on their co-op term experience and documenting their work, we recommend that students use an Engineering Log Book during their work term. This log can be used to document the specific tasks they are working on, the challenges or questions that arise during their work, and the results of their tasks or projects, among other things. Using a log book can help a student learn how to document and organize their work, and assists them in reflecting on the progress and challenges they encounter in their work term.

We encourage supervisors to conduct regular reviews of the student's work, with the log book used as an aid in these meetings. This will greatly improve the communication between students and their supervisors. We find that students who have this communication feel better connected to their supervisor, team and company, ultimately increasing the level of overall experience for both the student and employer.

Purpose
To provide a mechanism for:
• Regular documentation of work placement activities in a format that supports recording of experience
• Review of activities taking a wider, reflective view
• Establishing a regular channel of communication between the student and the company supervisor (as daily or weekly meetings do not necessarily address student's specific learning)"
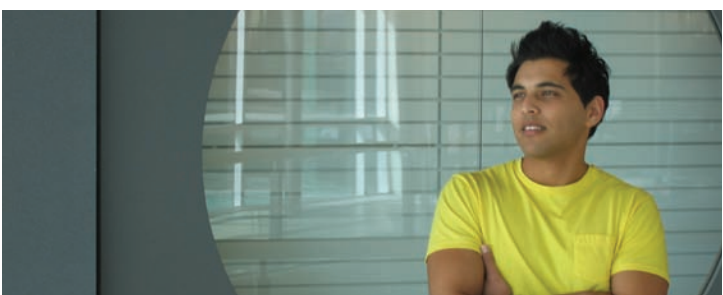
5 Employer Evaluation of Co-op Student

An evaluation of the student as an employee is done by the supervisor near the completion of the Co-op semester using the "Employer's Evaluation of Co-op Student" form. The student should be aware of the contents of the evaluation at the early stages of their work placement. This is particularly important for the student's growth and development. It is expected that employers discuss the evaluation with each student as this benefits their personal and professional development.

Students must ensure the evaluation is completed by their supervisor for submission to SFU Co-op by the due dates for each semester (Dec 15, April 15, Aug 15).