



Guide to a Successful Co-Op

Co-Op Manager:

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What is the Co-op?

Co-op stands for “Cooperative education”, as both the college and the company are working together to help you learn and succeed. Co-Ops are: 1) paid work opportunities at companies, 2) managed by Franklin Cummings Tech.

Your goal in the co-op is to convert into a full-time position at those companies, as well as to learn skills on the job that build on what you learn in class.

Why join the Co-op?

Co-ops are highly popular with students. As a co-op student, you will receive a salary, plus

- ongoing support, including emergency support, from your co-op manager
- academic credit for the on-the-job work you do during the school year
- access to tuition support by your company, where available.

While on the job, you will learn through projects, feedback from your supervisor and Co-op Manager, professional development, and networking and career opportunities.

How do you earn a spot in the Co-op?

To earn a Co-op, students need to

- Complete the application process to join the Co-op
- Remain in good academic standing
- Attend Co-op activities, such as the Lunch & Learns and Career Seminar
- Submit a resume for and interview with a company in the Co-op Program

Co-Op Success Checklist (see details of each item below)

Before Your Co-op

- Review your offer letter
- Create a professional voicemail message
- Commute to your Co-op location to see how to get there/how long it takes

In Your First Week

- Learn from your supervisor what he/she expects
- Learn when you need to be at work (what time of day, which days off)
- Find projects to do during your downtime

In Your First Month

- Communicate regularly with your Co-op Manager
- Show up every day
- Hold a one-to-one with your supervisor
- Ask for feedback: how am I doing?
- Get to know three people you work with

Before Your Co-op

Review your offer letter

After Franklin Cummings Tech confirms where your Co-Op placement will be, you will likely have gotten an offer letter directly from the company. Read this offer letter closely! It should give you the following information:

- Start date and End date
- Part-time/full-time
- Work hours
- Job description
- Location
- Parking / Transportation Options
- Pay
- Supervisor's name and contact info
- Any additional process to onboard / complete job application (i.e. will you need to complete a drug test, background check, is there an orientation)
- Appropriate dress code for the role

If any of these items are missing in your offer letter, ask your contact at the company for this information. Also, please share this info with your Co-op Manager, so that she can help you succeed while in the role.

Create a professional voicemail message

A professional voicemail greeting helps people get and keep jobs. When employers (and recruiters) receive a voicemail, they want to know they're talking to the right person. They also want to know that you're someone they can trust. Here's an example of a professional voicemail greeting:

"Hi, you have reached (your name). I am unable to answer your call at the moment.

Please leave your name, number, and a brief message. I will return your call as soon as I can. Thank you."

As a professional, check your voicemail regularly and respond to messages within 24-48 hours.

Commute to your Co-op to see how to get there/how long it takes

You DO NOT want to be late on your first day. One of the most important ways to build trust on the job is to show up on time. Aim to arrive at least 15 minutes early every day, so that you still end up on time despite any unexpected commute challenges. Before your first day, and during the same time as you'd commute, travel to your co-op. Figure out where to park (or how to get there by public transportation) and where the entrance is. This preparation will make your first day much less stressful and will help you make a strong first impression. Your Co-op Manager will be in touch before day 1 to ask you about your pre-visit.

In Your First Week

Learn from your supervisor what he/she expects

To succeed in your Co-op, you will need to understand your supervisor's expectations. Here are excellent questions to ask. If you can find these out BEFORE you start, so much the better.

Logistical Expectations:

- How do people on your team typically schedule lunch and breaks? Is there a specific time I should eat or go on break?

Communication Norms:

- How do you want me to communicate with you if I have questions or updates (phone, email, text and/or in-person)?
- If you are off-site or busy, is there another person I should go to if I have questions?
- Could we schedule a weekly or bi-weekly 1-to-1 where I could get feedback from you and discuss the work I'm doing?

Job Details:

- What do you think a typical day will look like for me?
- What will my main responsibilities be on Co-Op?
- How would you describe the culture of the team? Of the company?
- What does success in this role look like?

Other Questions:

- Who else should I meet with to gain a better understanding of my role on our team?
- Are there specific skills/technologies that I could practice to better improve my role?
- Are there resources I can review to help build my skills in these core areas?

Learn when you need to be at work (what time of day, which days off)

On the job, you will follow your company's hours, which may differ from the school calendar. For example, the company may be open during Memorial Day and expect you to work. Similarly, follow your company's lead, not the school's lead, on any possible snow days.

Find projects to do during your downtime

You'll have downtime during your Co-op when you're not busy. How you manage your downtime says a lot about you as a professional. Instead of going on social media on your phone:

- Ask colleagues if they need help
 - This is a great way to learn about the organization and build your reputation
- Focus on professional development.
 - Check with your supervisor where within the company you can learn.
- Complete your industry certifications
 - With your supervisor's approval, you could finish requirements during downtime.

In Your First Month

Communicate regularly with your Co-op Manager

You are not alone. When you run into outside challenges or problems at work, we have your back. Our goal is to help you secure a full-time opportunity at the company, and so we'll advocate for you with your supervisor and help you navigate problems. To do this, we'll check in with you each week. Our expectation is that you will respond when we reach out, even with a simple thumbs up when things are fine. When issues do come up, we'll take action fast.

Show up every day

For the first four weeks of Co-Op, it is critical to demonstrate consistency and accountability. The expectation during your Co-Op is that you are physically (and mentally) present every day unless you have a pre-scheduled appointment, extreme illness, or an emergency. An emergency is defined as a serious, unexpected and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action or a medical condition requiring immediate treatment.

Hold a one-to-one with your supervisor

Some supervisors are very hands-on, keeping close communication with you throughout your workday. Others may talk to you once a week or less often. Whatever your supervisor's style, it's up to you to establish and maintain the lines of communication between the two of you. Make sure you keep your supervisor up-to-date on what you are working on and the progress you've made. Keep track of your assignments.

Sometimes you report to two supervisors. In this situation, confirm who your direct supervisor is. This clarification includes who you should go to with questions, reporting absences/lates, and things of that nature. Don't forget about your other supervisor. Make sure you clarify moments that you should report to them and the best methods to communicate with them.

Get to know three people you work with

Introduce yourself to everyone you can. The more people who know you and your work, the more support you will have when it comes to starting a career after graduation. You can use those in your network as a reference for future opportunities. In your first month, try to have lunch with three colleagues. Here are good questions to ask:

- How did you get into this industry?
- What's most important to know for someone like me to be successful?
- What are some of your favorite things about your job?
- What have you found challenging?

A note on oversharing: how much information that you share is too much? Try asking yourself:

- Why am I choosing to share?
- In the conversation, would less information be better?
- Is what I am sharing going to benefit my career or the quality of my work relationship?
- Is this a conversation I deem appropriate to have in my workplace?

If you feel someone you are communicating with professionally is oversharing, you are not obligated to do the same. Sometimes less is more! Always make sure what you are sharing is appropriate for the situation and the person or people that you are interacting with.

Ask for feedback: how am I doing?

The best way to learn on the job is to get feedback on how you're doing. The co-op has built-in times when your supervisor will share how you are doing, including weekly status updates and two formal progress reports in the middle and at the end of the co-op.

In addition, we recommend that you ask your manager and those you work with for feedback. Not only will asking for feedback make you better at your job, but it will also show that you love to learn and grow, which is what all companies are looking for in their people. Here are some great questions to ask:

- What specific feedback can you give me on my work so far?
- What should I keep doing?
- What should I stop doing?
- What would you like me to start doing?

Good luck! We are rooting for you.

