

Co-op Manager Best Practices

Thank you for taking on the mentoring and supervising role for one or more of our CCIS students and for providing him or her with a quality assignment. Should you have any questions or concerns along the way, don't hesitate to reach out to your co-op coordinator.

The following information is provided as a guide and is based on feedback from many employers and students.

Onboarding & Training

For many students, this will be the first time working in a professional job. Outlining your expectations and processes will help the student to better understand what is expected. Some recommended topics include:

- Reporting structure and expectations
- Work hours
- Dress code
- Internet and cell phone usage
- Breaks
- Flextime/working from home
- How often he/she will be paid
- Overtime
- Employee handbook
- Who to go to with concerns

Providing Feedback

One of the best ways to ensure a great co-op experience for your company and the student is to provide consistent feedback.

- **In the beginning:** Within the first week or two, explain how the student's work will be evaluated, and by whom.
- **Learning outcomes:** Students are asked to set learning outcomes. These must be submitted through our central co-op system within four to six weeks of the start of the job. The student should discuss these outcomes with you. This is a great time to discuss your goals for the student in addition to their personal goals.

Regular meetings: Set up consistent meetings with the student as an opportunity for you to provide positive feedback, to note areas for improvement and for the student to ask questions.

End of co-op evaluation: At the end of the student's co-op, you will be asked to complete an assessment through our central co-op system. To facilitate this, you will receive an email in the beginning of the co-op asking you to confirm your contact information. When it is time to complete the assessment, you will receive an email. Your comprehensive feedback in this format is incredibly valuable to the student. This is also a great opportunity to discuss any interest you may have in hiring them for a future co-op or full-time after they graduate.

Enhancing the Co-op Experience

Here are some suggestions to enhance the co-op experience:

- **Integrate the student:** Include the student as part of the team for meetings, lunches, lectures, etc.
- **Contextualize their work:** Provide the student with understanding of how his or her responsibilities and contributions fit with team, department, division, and ultimately the company. Facilitate informational sessions and informational interview opportunities to help them learn more about the company.
- **Provide new experiences/skills:** Enable students to learn new technologies, challenging them along the way. Doing so may encourage them to return to your company for subsequent co-op periods or permanently after graduation – or recommend the position to their friends.
- **Match your co-op student with a mentor or buddy:** Help find someone other than a manager who can meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss strengths, areas for improvement, and help navigate the professional workforce.

Expectations of Student

The Northeastern University co-op program is an integral part of the students' learning experience and they are expected to act in a manner that reflects well on your organization and the university.

- **Professional behavior:** We expect students to act in a professional manner and to uphold the same standards you would expect of any regular employee at your company. Frequently, students are new to the work force and may make some missteps. Your help with their development in setting expectations and providing feedback will strengthen their professional development.
- **Exclusivity:** Students are your employees, exclusively, during the co-op period. They are full-time workers, although temporary. Students should not be taking classes during co-op unless you have given them permission to do so.
- **Time-off:** Unless there is an exceptional situation, they should not be taking time off while on co-op. There is no expectation that they are paid any benefits including vacation time, sick leave or personal days. If a special circumstance arises, it is your discretion how to manage the student's time-off request. If a student appears to be out of work a lot, please contact your co-op coordinator to discuss.
- **Returning to class:** Co-op is an integral part of a student's educational experience. The experiential learning model is cyclical and requires that students take the knowledge they gain in the classroom and incorporate it in an applied setting, and vice versa. As such, Northeastern's policy is that students must return to campus for classes at the end of co-op.

Addressing Student Issues & Co-op Coordinator Support

Unless you have offered the student a contract that says otherwise, co-op employment is assumed to be at will. ***While we don't anticipate an issue with our students, because co-op is a learning experience, we ask that you use us as mediators between you and the student in the event that an issue does arise.*** No issue is too big or too small to discuss with us, and whether a student seems disengaged, isn't showing up on time for work, or not performing to your expectations, we want to hear about it.

Our goal is to achieve a healthy working relationship between you and the student. Should an issue arise, the sooner we learn of it, the sooner we can help you resolve it. Some ways a co-op coordinator can help include:

- Speaking to the student about the issue
- Working with you behind the scenes to help coach you through your discussion with the student
- Attending a meeting you have with a student
- Connecting you to other resources if needed

Additional Information

Should you need additional information, you may find the following resource helpful:

- [Northeastern University's Employer Handbook](#)