

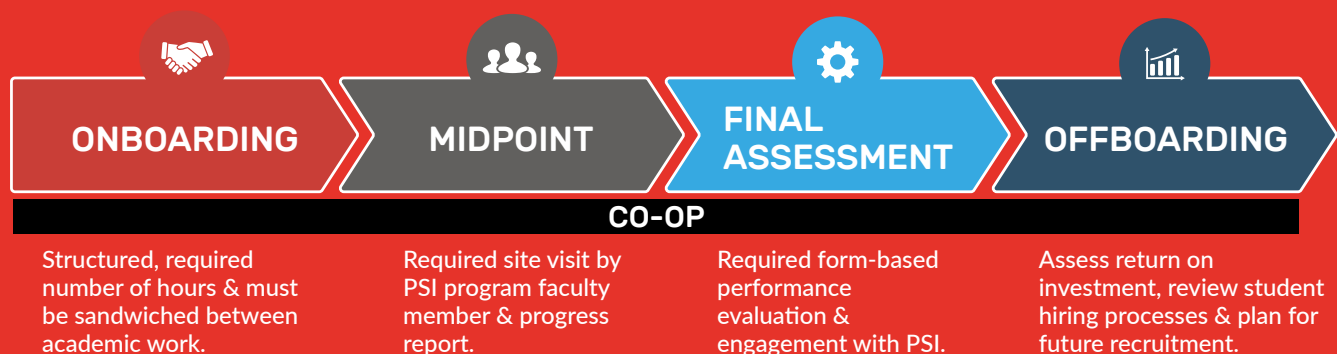
CO-OP

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION
For WIL partners

Co-operative education (Co-op) alternates a student’s academic studies with paid work terms. Picture a double-deckered sandwich, where the bread slices are the time spent learning formally and the sandwich fillings are the relevant workplace experiences.

Co-op is one of the most well-defined types of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in Canada. Co-op is also the only type of WIL currently accredited by CEWIL Canada. Co-op work terms have specific requirements; the student must be engaged in productive work for which they receive remuneration, the student’s performance in the workplace is supervised and evaluated by their employer, and that the work term lasts for a minimum of 12 weeks and/or 420 hours. Co-op is intentionally designed to ensure that the skills the student learns are relevant to today’s job market.

WIL PHASES

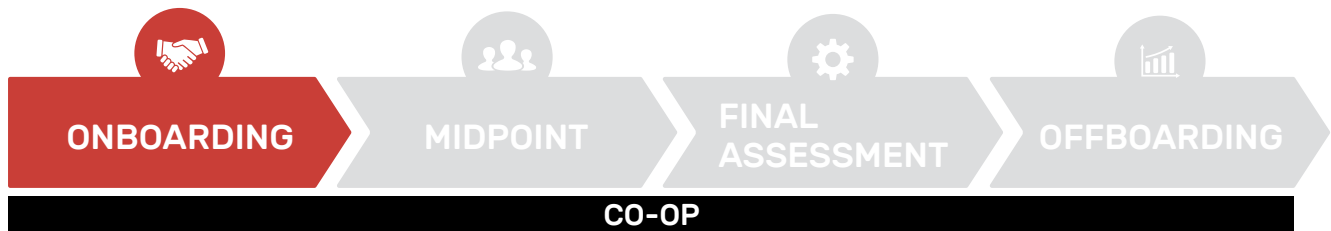


SUPPORTING BUSINESS OBJECTIVES WITH CO-OP

Top 5 ways Co-op can support your business objectives

1. Fill short term staffing needs
2. Leverage day-to-day business operations support
3. Increase resource capacity during peak business times
4. Access resource support for new or existing projects
5. Build your talent pipeline

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ONBOARDING & PRE-ENGAGEMENT

Before bringing Co-op students onboard, WIL partners need to plan and prepare for a structured experience. A planned, well-implemented, organized Co-op WIL experience provides your organization with unmatched access to specific skills and talent through co-collaboration, co-education and skills development.

Steps to get started with a Co-op student

1. Determine your business goal, needs and timelines
2. Assess your budget
3. Appraise your capacity for involvement with a post-secondary institution (PSI)
4. Assess your ability to offer supervision and mentorship

BUSINESS GOAL & NEEDS

Review your business goal in coordination with Co-op's structured hours and timelines.

Engage your organization and consider what staffing or skills gaps you have. What projects or work do you want to complete? You will want to create a Co-op position that fits both your employment needs and the student's academic goals. **Choosing the Co-op WIL type means the role(s) you need to fill should align with 3 criteria:**

- What skills are needed?
- Length of time (4, 8, 12 months).
- Number of hours (420 hours).

Do you have a 4, 8 or 12 month role?

Determine specific skills the WIL student will need

in order to help you accomplish your goal. Co-op work terms are typically 4, 8, or 12 months long and take place in between the student's academic work, on a structured schedule dependent on the program of study. Once you have your business goal and have narrowed your needs down, reach out to a dedicated PSI Co-op Coordinator to go over the role, post your Co-op position, recruit students, hire and apply for WIL funding.

One Voice, an organization focused on process optimization excellence, community engagement, ethics, and education, and is structured as a brain trust with multiple business lines, assesses their goals and needs across each of their upcoming projects. Months prior to the start of each semester they determine where the gaps are and create an outline of where Co-op students could be integrated.

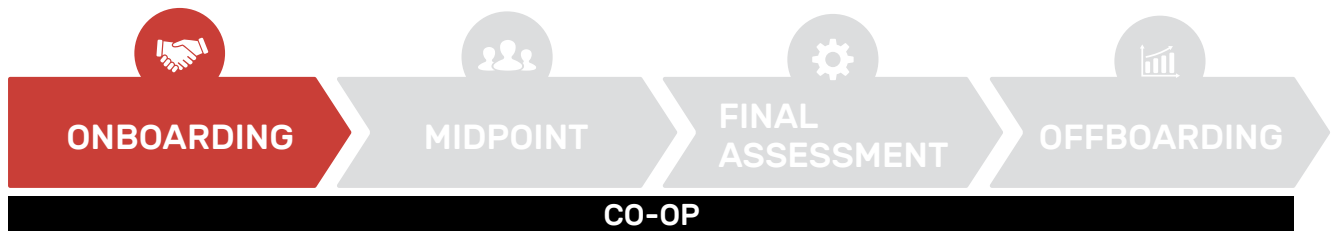
CO-OP WORK TERM HOURS VS. ACADEMIC STUDY HOURS

30% 70%

Co-op is the most structured form of work-integrated learning; the time spent doing practical paid work must be at least 25 - 30% of the time spent in academic study.



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Are you able to accommodate 420 hours in a 4 month time frame?

Independent of which PSI you intend to partner with, the accredited Co-op model requires that a WIL partner hire a student candidate for a minimum of 420 hours for each 4-month Co-op work term. Typically, each work term involves full-time employment at 35 hours per week.

BUDGET

Review your budget and capacity to pay a student for a 4-month Co-op work term.

Various federal and provincial funding programs are available to offset expenses so you can open your door to Co-op students. Co-ops are a low-cost way to increase capacity.

One Voice, with under 20 full-time employees and new to Co-op, leveraged both Federal and Provincial funding to offset hiring students' costs during the pandemic in 2020. They hired four Co-op and two intern students from across several programs. At 75% wage coverage, they could increase capacity at a low cost, benefiting both students and their business.

CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT

WIL partners who engage Co-op become co-educators.

Capacity to work with post-secondary Co-op Coordinators, Facilitators or Employment

Developers is a large component of a structured Co-op work term. A Co-op experience is designed such that WIL partners are considered co-educators.

The quality of the work term is monitored and formally evaluated, meaning your organization has an opportunity to engage the process of co-collaboration, co-education and skills development, where not only the student and PSI benefit, but also your industry and business.

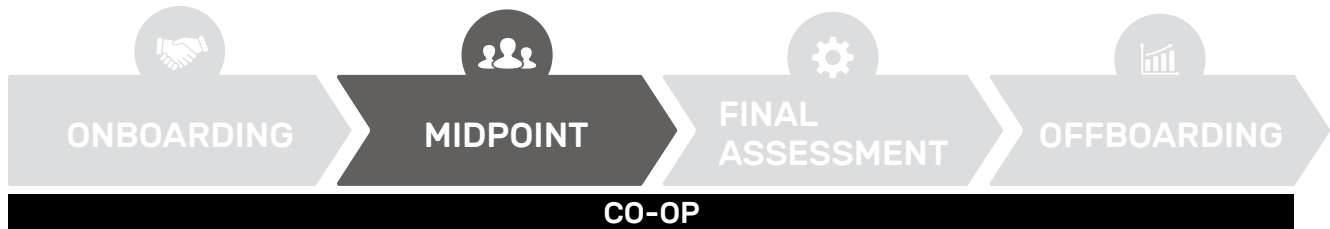
SUPERVISION & MENTORSHIP

Consider your capacity to offer supervision and mentorship.

You are required to assign a specific manager, supervisor or staff mentor to be responsible for the student's experience, progress and work plan during their time with your organization. There are different academic requirements for each co-op program and the student's mentor/supervisor may be required to support some of those requirements.

"During their work terms, students are immediately integrated into the inclusive organizational culture at One Voice, wherein they join morning scrums, participate in sprint reviews, and retrospectives, all while receiving valuable mentorship and support." ~ Rosanna Pittella, Director, One Voice

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MIDPOINT CONSIDERATIONS

Co-op work terms typically include a midpoint review with the WIL partner and a program faculty member.

From Day 1 to this point, you will have been coaching your student to help them develop more competence and to reach their learning goals. Creating opportunities for students to apply their skills and achieve their goals will make the WIL journey beneficial to you as well as to the student. Along this journey, it's important to set clear expectations; connect students with key support people; provide regular feedback and a range of challenging work and responsibility levels; encourage students to research and ask questions of colleagues; and acknowledge achievements.

Query Technologies in Victoria, BC works with companies to align their people, processes and technology to achieve their overall customer and user experience objectives. With several remote UVIC Co-op students in 2020, they participated in a variety of virtual midpoint evaluations with different Co-op Coordinators.

As you approach the midpoint of a Co-op work term you should expect engagement with the student's program faculty member for a check-in, usually referred to as a work site visit. The midpoint provides an opportunity for the organization to discuss the student's performance and progress.

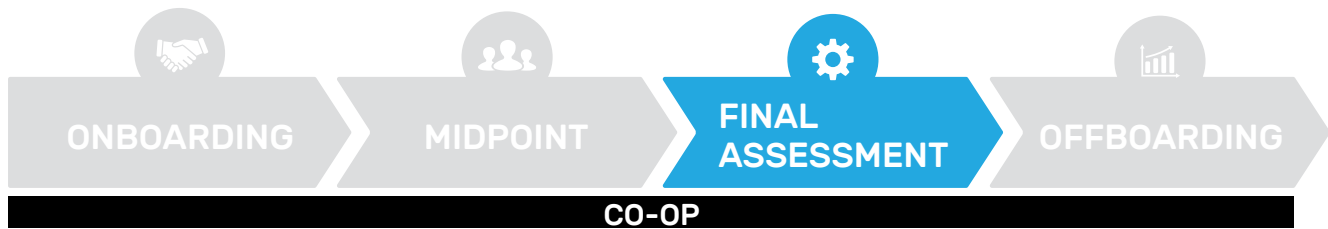
"It was an easy process. Since we are working remotely, all 3 parties were on zoom which worked really well. The midterm form was straightforward, and not onerous." ~ Mark Smith, Owner, QueryCX

Worksite visits by the faculty member may be conducted in person, via telephone, or virtually. To make sure the work term is meeting both your and the student's goals and expectations, the program faculty member will typically ask for feedback on:

- How the student's work term is going
- Their work projects and responsibilities
- The skills and knowledge they're developing
- Their goals and what they'd like to learn

In true Co-op spirit, the midpoint evaluation is also an opportunity for the PSI to learn more about your needs as a WIL partner.

WIL PHASES



FINAL ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Co-op work terms typically conclude with a formal work term evaluation.

In Co-op, both you and the student are required to complete an evaluation form after the work term has ended and depending on the PSI, you may have another meeting with the faculty member overseeing the program.

Co-op students welcome feedback on their job performance and see it as a vital part of their learning process and professional development. If your organization has acquired funding for the work term you may also need to provide an evaluation to the funding delivery partner.

At the same time, to attain a satisfactory grade in their Co-op work term, students may be required to complete a final report, project or presentation on their work term. Often, this provides the student with an opportunity to reflect on the skills they have developed, as well as summarizing their accomplishments and aiding them in articulating a career plan. The report will not contain any confidential workplace information. Submissions usually take on the format of a written work term report - if you are interested in reading your student's submission, please feel free to ask them to provide you with a copy.

In order to create the greatest amount of value to your business and the student, it is recommended that you take time to evaluate the work term from your own standpoint. Reflect on your meetings

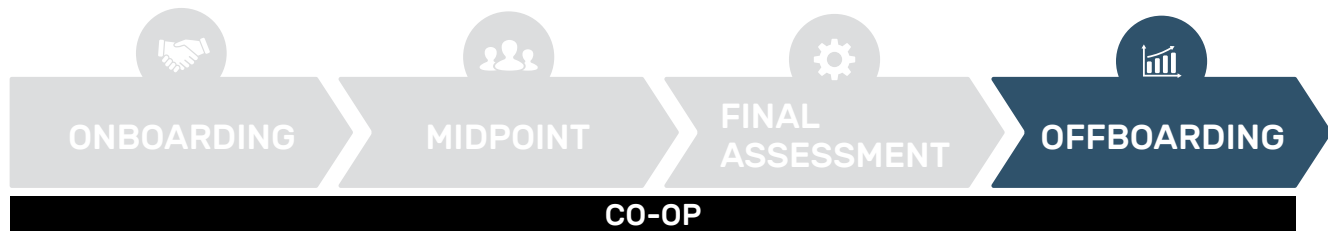
with the student, were the learning and business goals you set out in the beginning met? How about the student's career development goals? What feedback did you receive from other employees, formally or anecdotally? Did the student have the necessary requirements? Who was involved in supporting the student? What is their assessment of the value of the program?

"We ask that supervisors provide an exit interview to their students at the end of their work term. These can be informal in nature but still an excellent space to look back at their many accomplishments over the term. Often we get so busy in the work, we don't get a chance to pause and celebrate our progress." ~ Jonas Bambi, Work Term Supervisor and Instructor, School of Trades and Technology

What did the student contribute to the company, in terms of deliverables, energy, ideas, or perspective? Did other employees engage in the WIL process? Did the wider community within the company notice? What about the external community? What were the actual costs, in terms of money and time, of the work term?

At the end of the work term you should have a clear sense of the impact of the internship on the student, on your organization, and on the employees who played a role in it.

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**OFFBOARDING CONSIDERATIONS**

Assess your return on investment, review student hiring processes and plan for future recruitment.

When your organization participates as a partner with a PSI to offer a high-quality Co-op experience you are preparing students to transition to the workforce and contribute to a resilient skills-based Canadian economy, one that is increasingly changing and adapting at an unprecedented speed.

“One of the students has stayed on part-time and will move into a full-time permanent role after graduation. This is a real benefit in hiring Co-op students, as they can fill future recruitment needs.” ~ Rosanna Pittella, Director, OneVoice

Canadian businesses and organizations continue (even despite COVID-19) to struggle to find and recruit qualified talent with the right mix of changing skill sets in a timely manner. Research shows that employers who coordinate more frequently with education providers have better results in their search for talent. Organizations who continue to partner with PSI programs through involvement in Co-ops report positive business outcomes.

At the end of the Co-op experience, you will have a roadmap of how to build WIL into your organization, you’ll have structured feedback and assessment, and you’ll have clear guidelines for hiring. Consider how this roadmap could help you in hiring other types of WIL students, or more of the same to meet your organization’s needs.

“Being such a new industry, we have to continually problem solve, learn new things and invent new ways of doing things. Co-ops are open to learning, experimentation and creative problem solving yet they have the rigor of a sound university training and guided methodology. If you consider that most of the technologies we work with are less than a year old, it is amazing that our co-op students have made some of the first commercially available games for these medium.” ~ Virtro, a female led VR/AR content studio, based in Gastown, Vancouver.

For more information about Co-op for WIL partners visit the [CEWIL Resource Hub](#).