



Where ideas work

How to Hire a Student

Guide to Hiring Co-op Students

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Overview

Welcome! If you are reviewing this guide, chances are you are either preparing to hire or considering hiring a co-op student. The BC Public Service Agency can help you with services and tools to provide a successful work term for your co-op student.

The goal of this guide is to ensure hiring and supervising a co-op student is a straightforward process, providing everything you need in one location. If you require further clarification on something that is mentioned here, or have a suggestion for additions to this guide, please do not hesitate to contact MyHR@gov.bc.ca.

Objectives

The three main goals of this guide are to:

- Ensure managers are knowledgeable of the process through which student positions can be posted and filled most effectively and efficiently.
- Ensure that the employee's time with the public service is a success through mentoring and adequate support.
- Develop a competitive edge within a limited employee pool.

Benefits of Hiring Students

Preparation for upcoming changing demographics within the workforce will help the BC Public Service fill job vacancies, and remain a desirable employer.

- Hiring students is advantageous in developing an early relationship between the BC Public service and younger generations.
- Student employment programs allow the employer to “try before they buy” by creating a cost-effective means to evaluate potential new hires.
- Whether they are co-ops or recent graduates, students:
 - ease the workload of current employees;
 - provide fresh perspectives;
 - receive developmental experience in order to seek further work experiences.

Together, the student and the BC Public Service establish opportunities to create relationships between today's employers and tomorrow's employees.

Types of Student Employment

This guide focuses primarily on co-op students, but this is not the only kind of student employed by the BC Public Service. Here are some definitions that can help you determine what kind of student you are seeking to employ:

Co-op Student: Co-op students are students registered in a recognized cooperative education program at a participating post-secondary institution who are working towards a diploma or degree. *Please note: Only those registered in a recognized co-op program can be considered for a co-op position.*

Youth Employment Program Student: A Youth Employment Program student is someone enrolled in a secondary or post-secondary institution within the last six months, but not registered in a co-op program. These students may be looking for short-term opportunities, usually in summer. To learn more about the Youth Employment Program, please refer to Article 34.3 in the [BCGEU Master Agreement](#). To learn details about pay, please refer to [Appendix 3F](#).

Intern: An intern is someone who is employed in an internship program within the BC Public Service. Usually, but not always, interns are recent post-secondary graduates. Examples are the Legislative Intern Program, Aboriginal Youth Internship Program and Work-Able.

Aboriginal Youth Internship Program: Created by the BC Public Service Agency and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program provides Aboriginal youth with nine months of work experience in a provincial ministry followed by three months of work experience in a selected Aboriginal organization. For more information, see the [Aboriginal Youth Internship Program](#) page on MyHR.

Work-Able: Work-Able is a twelve month BC Public Service work experience program for recent post-secondary graduates with disabilities. This unique program provides learning, coaching and mentorship throughout the internship and interns will gain valuable skills and public service experience. See the [Work-Able](#) page on MyHR for more information.

Note: Students hired under an existing program, such as the Co-operative Education Training Program, Public Service Internship Program or Youth Employment Program do not require job descriptions to be classified by the BC Public Service Agency. Salary assignment for each employee depends on the level of education and can be found in the [BCGEU Master Agreement](#), Appendix 3F.

If students are hired to perform ongoing work in the public service, their duties need to be described and classified so a salary assignment can be made. If the student is hired for an ongoing position, a meritorious job competition needs to be conducted in accordance with the *Public Service Act*.

Hiring Co-op Students: Everything You Need to Know

Budget

Your first step in determining whether or not you can hire a co-op student should be identifying dollars in your STOB 50 budget. Since funding for all student hiring (co-op, YEP, Aboriginal Youth Interns and other internships) is done at the ministry and/or branch level, it is necessary for you to first confirm you have the budget dollars available to proceed. You will need to follow the approval processes currently in place within your ministry for any new hires.

Salary Levels for Co-op Students

Something that may help you “make a case” for hiring a co-op is to know the cost of a co-op term (four months). Co-op student salary varies, depending on the level of student you hire:

- Co-op Level 1 (working towards a diploma or Bachelor’s Degree – paid at Grid 5, Step 3)
- Co-op Level 2 (working toward a post-graduate degree – paid at Grid 11, Step 3)

Please see the [Salary Look-up Tool](#) on MyHR for current salary levels.

Note: As auxiliary employees, students receive an additional 70-74 cents per hour in lieu of health and welfare benefits and vacation pay at a rate of 6% of their base salary. See the BCGEU Master Agreement Article 31.7 for current health and welfare benefit rates.

Timing

Once you have determined you have the budget to hire a co-op student and any necessary approvals, you need to be aware of timelines around work terms. There are typically 3 four-month work terms per calendar year: Spring (January to April), Summer (May to August) and Fall (September to December). Some co-op terms are eight months in duration – if you wish to employ a co-op student for an eight-month period, make sure you state this in your job posting. The minimum time commitment for most co-op work terms is 13 weeks.

Co-op students traditionally seek to solidify upcoming work terms at key times throughout the year. To ensure that you are able to attract and hire the top students, it is important that you be aware of these key “search” times and when they occur.

<u>Work term</u>	<u>Ideal time to post job</u>
Spring (January to April)	September - October
Summer (May to August)	January - February
Fall (September to December)	May - June



Co-op students are encouraged to apply to and commit to jobs early on. Although the process is ongoing, the quality and size of the applicant pool is often better at the beginning of the semester.

Identifying projects for your student

Students are looking for an attractive job experience that will complement their education and provide a beneficial learning environment. When asked what they want most out of their work term, a vast majority of current co-op students expressed that they want practical work experience and challenging assignments. In order for you to create a position that empowers your student to build their résumé and skill set, identify projects that develop key competencies.

It is also important for students, as for any employee, to see how their work contributes to the goals of the branch/ministry and BC Public Service as a whole. Take the time to identify these links and communicate them in the job description. Ideally, student projects should have a beginning and an end and clearly contribute to the overall goals of the work unit.

Examples of co-op student assignments:

- Design and create a user manual for a new database (Database Co-op).
- Coordinate a ministry's Green Team including events, communications, etc. (Coordinator, Green Initiatives Co-op).
- Write new content for the ministry's intranet site (Internal Communications Co-op).
- Work with field teams to catalogue local data sets (Forestry GIS Co-op).
- Assist in interpreting and summarizing air and water quality results (Environmental Assessment Co-op).
- Collect and analyze data, and prepare briefing notes (Research Assistant Co-op).

Posting your position

Once you have been granted approval by your ministry to hire a co-op student, you can create a hiring requisition to get this process started. (Instructions are found on MyHR under [Jobs and Hiring](#)). You will be contacted by a Hiring Advisor to determine the level of service you would like from the Hiring Centre. Your Hiring Advisor will be happy to answer any questions you have about the hiring process.

You may also wish to target your co-op recruitment by contacting specific post-secondary institutions with academic co-op programs relevant to your co-op opportunity; for example, institutions with co-op communications programs. Post-secondary institutions can provide you with co-op program contact names, timelines and may have a job board or other means of advertising upcoming positions to their co-op students.

Assessing and Selecting the Top Candidate

While a full job competition process is not required for co-op and summer employment positions, it is still beneficial to conduct a process designed to assess skills, competence and cultural alignment for the assignment.

Screening tips

Assessing eligibility

- Applicant must be over 15 years in age.
- Applicant must be eligible to work in Canada.
- International students must have a “Co-op Work Visa” to be eligible for co-op employment with the BC Public Service.

Assessment options

Assessment options should be selected based on your business needs and what aligns closest with the duties of the position. Assessments may include oral interviews and simulations, written tests and work samples. Past work performance must be assessed with a previous supervisor or someone who has observed the student’s work (paid or volunteer).

Assignments (Written and Oral)

- Questions are asked of the candidate and they must respond either in writing or orally.
- Useful in assessing written and oral communications, specific knowledge, analytical skills, problem solving.

Behavioural interviewing

- Questions asked of the candidate are based on specific competencies considered critical to the position.
- Asks the candidate for an example from past experience of when they have demonstrated the behaviours described in a competency. Behaviours from the past help to more accurately predict future behaviours.
- Students may not have had the opportunity to demonstrate the competencies that an employer may consider predictive of success. Also consider using situational interview questions when hiring students.

Situational interviewing

- When hiring people with limited experience, situational questions are equally specific and predictive of future actions.
- Asks the candidate what they would do in a situation relevant to the job instead of how they have dealt with it in the past.

Assessment tips

It is important to consider limitations of your applicant pool when hiring students. In general, post-secondary institutions do not provide learning experience specifically related to government. This means that highly government-specific tasks, such as writing a sample briefing note, are unlikely to accurately reflect the candidate's capabilities. Any task or assignment you create should be general enough that the candidate can reasonably be expected to understand what is required.

Rating candidate responses

There are different options available to you for rating. Whatever you choose, establish a method that contains the following three characteristics:

- Objectively benchmarks against which observations can be compared and rated.
- Appropriately weighs the relative importance of the qualification being assessed.
- Differentiates between effective and ineffective performance.

Having a pre-developed plan for assessing candidates makes it easier and faster for the assessment team to rate candidates.

Contacting the candidates

Once the interview process and past work performance checks are completed, it is important to contact the top candidate as soon as possible. To complete the hiring process:

- Call the top candidate to congratulate them on being selected and to offer them the position. If the top candidate declines or does not respond, offer the position to the candidate who scored second highest through the evaluation process.
- The Hiring Advisor assigned to the job requisition can assist with the offer and regret letters. They will need to know the employee's name, birth date, address, SIN, payroll number, who they will report to and type of employment.

The majority of co-op positions other than those with the BC Public Service Agency are BCGEU positions. This status should be reflected in the offer letter. You can find offer letter templates on MyHR under the Jobs and Hiring section. (Use the New Auxiliary Appointment template.)

Preparing for and Welcoming Your Co-op Student

Before the first day

Before your co-op arrives, it is important to:

- Ensure administrative tasks are carried out prior to the student's arrival including computer and telephone set-up.

- Keep in mind some co-ops may find it intimidating to begin work at an organization of such scope and size as the BC Public Service. Ensure your co-op student knows exactly where to go on the first day of work. Ideally, plan either for yourself or someone else from your branch to be available to greet your co-op in the lobby of the building on the morning of their arrival.

The first day

Important tasks to complete on the first day are:

- A mentor or buddy (either yourself or someone else from your branch/division) should be assigned to the employee.
- Regular (weekly or bi-weekly) meetings should be arranged.

The first month

Every new employee in the BC Public Service is required under the *Public Service Act* to take the Oath of Employment within their first 90 days. [Welcome to the Public Service](#) orientation and oath sessions give new employees a chance to understand how government works, learn how their role supports the citizens of British Columbia and formally swear the Oath of Employment. See [New Approach to Oath Ceremonies](#) on @Work and [Resources for New Employees](#) on MyHR for more information.

Supervising Your Co-op Student

Co-ops and Employee Performance Profiles

All employees are required to complete a MyPerformance profile; co-op students, as auxiliary employees, are no different. If you have taken the time to design a work plan for your student, this will be a simple and straightforward process. If not, create two or three main work goals for the duration of the work term as soon as possible to be added to your student's MyPerformance profile. This will allow your student to focus on outcome-based efforts and also link their work to the overall goals of your branch, division and ministry. For more information on [MyPerformance](#) visit MyHR.

Mid-term review

At the six to eight week point, you may be contacted by your student's academic program to complete a mid-term review. For most co-op students, the mid-term review is mandatory for completion of the program. It is recommended that you use what you have already established in your student's MyPerformance profile for this review to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. The academic program may also have additional forms that need to be completed for the mid-term and final review.

At this point the following activities should be reviewed:

- With the employee, update the relevant sections in their MyPerformance profile.
- Discuss the successes, and what needs to be done to complete the remaining goals.
- A post-secondary co-op coordinator may visit around the same time as the mid-term review. Time permitting; it makes sense to schedule the review prior to this visit.

Final review

During the last week of the employee's term with the BC Public Service, the final review should provide:

- An opportunity to discuss the success of the term.
- A record of the employee's achievements.
- A completed final review on the MyPerformance profile.
- Any **additional** documentation required for the mid-term review.

Conclusion

As a manager of a co-op student, you hold the most pivotal role in creating a positive experience for their work term with the BC Public Service. Ideally, the co-op student's first-hand experience of working for the BC Public Service can set the stage for a successful future career, benefiting employer and employee alike. It is through your ability to provide clear direction and links between their contributions to the overall goals of the organization that can create a lasting impression of the BC Public Service as being an employer of choice and a place where ideas work.

Additional questions about hiring a co-op student can be sent to AskMyHR.

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