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CO-OP HIRING MANAGER HANDBOOK



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The Co-op Hiring Manager Handbook

If you are reviewing this handbook, chances are you are either considering hiring or preparing to hire a co-op student. The goals of this guide are to ensure hiring managers know how co-op positions can be posted and filled most effectively and efficiently, and how to develop a competitive edge within a limited co-op student pool.

The BC Public Service Agency can help you with the hiring of a co-op student. 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 the Co-op Program and Resource Office at coop@gov.bc.ca.

Benefits of Hiring Students

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

- Hiring students helps to develop a positive 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; and,
- 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.

Co-operative Education Training Program

Before we go any further, it is important to understand what the Co-operative Education Training Program is, and whether a co-op employee will meet your hiring needs.

The Program

The Co-operative Education Training Program is a corporate employment program defined by the BCGEU Collective Agreement (34.2). The program provides post-secondary students who are enrolled in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution with a work placement in the BC Public Service that allows them to explore careers available and to expand their skills by working on projects that augment their field of study.

Although co-op students who are participating in the Co-operative Education Training Program are BC Public Service employees, the co-op component of a student's degree is integral to their formal education; each co-op work term is worth academic credit and is reflected on the student's transcript. As such, the nature of the work is aligned with the student's academic discipline, and an extra level of emphasis should be placed on training, learning, development, growth, support and mentoring.

As a corporate employment program, Co-operative Education Training Program positions are unique in that the employee's [salary](#) is based solely on the current level of schooling that the applicant is enrolled in, and is not tied to the complexity of the work that is being done. Co-op students are hired at either:

Level 1: students working towards a diploma or bachelor's degree; or

Level 2: students working towards a post-graduate degree.

This makes the hiring process simpler and more cost-effective because you can omit the job classification process, and it allows you to provide the co-op employee with the opportunity to learn and develop by doing work above their salary level.

When determining the work of a co-op employee, the work assigned to employees hired under this program must augment their field of study. It is important to note that employees hired under the Co-operative Education Training Program cannot be employed where it would result in a layoff or failure to recall a qualified employee.

If a co-op employee will not meet your hiring needs, check out [MyHR](#) to explore some of the other hiring options available to you.

The Co-op Program and Resource Office

The Co-op Program and Resource Office is a corporate resource within Public Service Agency. The office supports any and all employees interested in or engaged in the Co-operative Education Training Program with the BC Public Service. The office was launched in May 2017, born out of our corporate plan, [Where Ideas Work](#), as one of the ways in which the

organization is looking to replenish the workforce, better reflect the citizens we serve, incorporate a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to enhance both creativity and innovation, and solve problems more effectively.

The Co-op Program and Resource Office organizes events and provides information, resources and tools to co-op employees, supervisors and hiring managers to support them through their co-op journey.

Timing

Once you have determined that hiring a co-op employee is right for you and you have the budget/approvals to hire, you need to be aware of the timelines around work terms.

Work Term

Most post-secondary institutions require students to complete a minimum of three or four co-op work terms in order to graduate with the co-op designation. While some programs/institutions are rigid in their students' availability for co-op work term, most students have flexibility in terms of which work term(s) they can work. This means that there are students available to start throughout the year, and that they may be able to schedule multiple co-op work terms (either back to back, or with a break in service) into their academic plans, depending on your needs.

There are typically three four-month work terms per calendar year: winter (January to April), summer (May to August) and fall (September to December). Co-op employees typically start within the first week or two of the work term, and work until the end of that same term. Some co-op employees can work multiple work terms back to back (i.e., eight or twelve months in duration) – if you wish to employ a co-op student for more than a four-month period, make sure you state this in your job posting. The minimum time commitment for a co-op work term is 12 weeks and/or 420 hours of full-time work.

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.

Work term

Winter (January to April)

Summer (May to August)

Fall (September to December)

Ideal time to post a job

Late September to early October

Late January to early February

Late May to early 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.

Planning for Hiring

There are many things that should be considered before hiring a co-op employee. In addition to considering the immediate needs of your work unit, you should also think about the longer term opportunities that may be available. You may want to have a conversation with your ministry's Strategic Human Resources (SHR) branch to discuss succession management, and potential long-term opportunities for a co-op employee once they have finished their academic studies.

The Work Itself

Co-op employees 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, most co-op employees expressed that they want practical work experience and challenging assignments. In order for you to create a position that empowers your co-op employee to build their résumé and skill set, identify projects that develop key competencies.

It is also important for co-op employees, 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, co-op employee projects should have a beginning and an end, and clearly contribute to the overall goals of the work unit.

Examples of past co-op employee assignments:

- Design and create a user manual for a new database (Database Co-op).
- Coordinate a ministry's Green Team including events, communications, etc. (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).

Work Term Duration

With a bit of upfront planning, there are ways that you can hire a co-op employee into the BC Public Service that will significantly reduce the amount of time and effort required of you later on down the road.

Currently, most hiring managers hire a co-op employee for a single four-month appointment and repeat this process each time they hire a new co-op employee to do similar work. If you know that you might need a co-op for more than one term, you can hire a co-op to do either back to back work terms, or work terms broken up by a term spent in classes. This is also beneficial to the co-op employee as it saves them from having to search for another job when

their next co-op term arises. If you choose to hire for multiple terms, please contact the [Co-op Program and Resource Office](#) about how to structure your offer letter.

The examples below outline some models of co-op hiring that you may wish to consider when doing planning for hiring. The examples below use a three-term co-op cycle (they do not have to be back to back), however you could hire a co-op employee for two or four terms depending on your needs.

MINISTRY SPECIFIC CO-OP EXPERIENCES

You can work with other divisions of your ministry to provide co-op employees with exposure to the diverse work available within your ministry.

Ministry	CO-OP TERM 1	CO-OP TERM 2	CO-OP TERM 3
Public Safety & Solicitor General	RoadSafetyBC	BC Coroner's Service	Community Corrections
Children & Family Development	Youth Justice	Mental Health	Adoption Services
Municipal Affairs & Housing	Gaming Grants	Housing	Agencies, Boards & Commissions

CROSS MINISTRY CO-OP EXPERIENCES

You can work with other ministries to develop a comprehensive co-op experience that gives the co-op employee exposure to similar work in different ministries.

Position	CO-OP TERM 1	CO-OP TERM 2	CO-OP TERM 3
Strategic Human Resources Assistant	Social Development & Poverty Reduction	Labour	Education
Policy Analyst	Tourism, Arts & Culture	Attorney General	Mental Health & Addictions
Engineering Specialist	Energy, Mines & Petroleum Resources	Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development	Agriculture

CAREER STREAM SPECIFIC CO-OP EXPERIENCES

You can also work within your own ministry or with other ministries to develop a comprehensive co-op experience that gives co-op employees exposure to the range of careers in their field of study that are available within the BC Public Service.

Career Stream	CO-OP TERM 1	CO-OP TERM 2	CO-OP TERM 3
Human Resources	Hiring	Strategic Human Resources	Learning
Policy	Research	Policy	Legislation
Scientific & Technical	Field Work	Technician	Data Analysis
Finance	Accounting	Budgeting	Procurement
Compliance	Corrections	Sheriffs	Conservation

PROJECT BASED CO-OP EXPERIENCES

Working within your team, you can develop a comprehensive co-op experience for an employee that gives them exposure to the full project management lifecycle.

CO-OP TERM 1

Planning and development

CO-OP TERM 2

Implementation and training

CO-OP TERM 3

Evaluation and review

Academic Program Details

There are thousands of students across the province who participate in co-operative education programs through their post-secondary institution, and thousands more from outside of BC. With the intention of long-term retention, we want to recruit the top talent into the BC Public Service, and this starts at the co-op hiring level. When deciding who should fill the position, and which post-secondary institutions the job will be posted at, there are a few things to consider:

Level of Schooling: Co-operative education programs are available for students completing certificate, diploma, undergraduate degree, master's degree and PhD level programs. As outlined [above](#), the Co-operative Education Training Program with the BC Public Service has translated the level of schooling into two different levels for salary purposes. It is difficult to determine whether a level 1 co-op employee or a level 2 co-op employee would meet your business needs; as such, we recommend that you do not make that call until you have selected the successful applicant. It is recommended that you obtain approval to hire a level 2 co-op employee (Master's Degree or PhD), and open the job up to students that would fall in both the level 1 and level 2 salary ranges. Once the position is filled, you can confirm the appropriate salary is applied to that position through a MyHR service request.

Field of Study: The Co-operative Education Training Program is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain work experience that augments their field of study. Once you have determined the scope of [the work itself](#), consider all of the academic programs your opportunity could align with. Check out the [Co-op Connect Hub](#) for a list of all fields of study at post-secondary institutions in BC with recognized co-operative education programs.

Post-Secondary Institution: There are 16 public post-secondary institutions across the province with recognized co-operative education programs (see list [here](#)). When considering which institutions to send your job posting to, we recommend that you send it to every post-secondary institution with a relevant field of study, even if the position itself must be located in a particular geographic region. You are permitted to send your job posting to co-op programs at post-secondary institutions outside of BC (you can use the [Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada Program Directory](#)). While the BC Public Service does not typically cover relocation expenses for co-op opportunities, students may be able to relocate for the duration of the work term.

The Hiring Process

Co-op employee hiring, as auxiliary terms, may be done without a full competitive hiring process, but must be based on the principle of merit. However, to help students gain confidence, skills and the experience to navigate the BC Public Service hiring process, we encourage you to design an assessment process using a similar format to your regular hiring processes (e.g., screening, written assessment, behavioural competency interview, reference check).

Principle of Merit

Hiring decisions are based on the principle of merit to ensure they are non-partisan and reflect competence and ability to do the job.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Co-operative Education Training Program, co-op students must be registered in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution. Check out the [Co-op Connect Hub](#) for a list of all recognized co-operative education programs in BC along with the post-secondary institution contacts. Students registered in a co-op program at a post-secondary institution located outside of BC are also eligible for the Co-operative Education Training Program (check out the [Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada Program Directory](#) for the participating co-op programs across Canada).

Qualifications

Qualifications are the criteria (e.g., education, skills, knowledge, experience, behavioural competencies) required to perform a job.

While it is common for hiring managers to want employees coming in the door with considerable work experience, this is not the case for co-op jobs. The Co-operative Education Training Program is designed to integrate academic studies with related hands-on work, and provide students with the opportunity to gain the work experience to find permanent employment upon graduation. As such co-op job postings should not require much (if any) previous work experience, and most of the assessment of qualifications should be placed on ensuring the job opportunity aligns with the student's field of study. If additional qualifications are included in the job posting, we recommend that they are skills that an applicant could obtain in an academic setting (e.g., experience conducting research, experience summarizing qualitative and quantitative information, experience creating pivot tables in Microsoft Excel).

Assessment

Assessment describes any type of activity that determines the extent to which applicants possess the qualifications required for the job. Hiring managers should design an assessment process that will ensure they are hiring the right person for the position, but one that will also

ensure they are hiring a co-op student into a position that will complement the student's academic studies.

During the initial screening of applications, importance should be placed on the educational requirements of the position (i.e., field of study), with less emphasis on previous experience. This means that your first round of assessment should screen in all candidates who meet your educational requirements. Subsequent assessments may evaluate other qualifications outlined in the posting, job specific skills, knowledge and behavioural competencies.

Some assessment options that work well include:

- Interviews: Oral interviews, situational (hypothetical) and behavioural
- Simulations: In-baskets, role plays, oral presentations, assessment centres, written performance, construction and identification assessments
- Written assessments: Multiple choice, short answer/completion, essay/long answer, true/false, checklist/matching and written performance assessments
- Past work performance checks: Reference checks, work samples and performance reviews
- Physical tests: Capacity or aptitude

When checking job qualifications to assess:

- Skills: use written assessments, on-line skills assessments, oral presentations, role plays, in-basket exercises, physical tests and hypothetical interview questions
- Knowledge: use written assessments, job simulations and knowledge-based interview questions
- Behavioral competencies: use behavioural interview questions, role plays, oral presentations and reference checks

The most common way to assess an applicant's skills, knowledge and behavioural competencies is to use a written assessment and an interview.

Co-op Employee Hiring Checklist

Requirements

- Identify a project(s) that will:
 - Contribute to the overall goals of the work unit;
 - Provide the student with practical work experience and a challenge; and,
 - Empower the student to build their résumé, skill set and key competencies.
- Determine the best approach to meeting your needs (see [Planning for Hiring](#))
- Define the [qualifications](#). The level of schooling will correspond directly to the salary cost of the co-op employee. Use the [Salary Look-up Tool](#) on MyHR to confirm current salary levels:
 - 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)

Approval

- Confirm that there are funds in your STOB 50 budget to hire a co-op student.
- Obtain approval to hire (per your ministry's process).

Position Details

- Draft the job posting (you may want to use the [Co-op Job Posting Template](#) as a guide). Ensure that the posting accurately reflects the scope of work that the co-op employee will be doing – alignment with the 'project' identified above is critical.
- If a co-op position number does not already exist within your work unit, you must create a position number through a [MyHR service request](#) (Jobs & Hiring → Hiring). In your MyHR service request, you must provide answers to the following questions:
 - What is the effective date?
 - What is the pay list/department ID number?
 - What is the expected classification level? *Co-operative Education Training Program Level 1 or Level 2*
 - Is this position included or excluded?
 - Is the position full-time or part-time?
 - What is the job title? *Select a job title that accurately reflects the work being done, and which the co-op employee will be glad to have on their résumé*
 - Is this a regular or temporary position? *Temporary*
 - Is a Job Store profile being used? *No*
 - Has the classification been approved by Classification Services? *Classification approval is not required for Co-operative Education Training Program positions as it is an employment program*
 - Who is the first level excluded manager for this position?
 - What is the work location (full address, including postal code)?
 - Who will the position report to?
 - Your organization chart (shows where this position is in the organization, includes the job classification and the classifications of whom it reports to/who reports to it)

Posting the Job

- Review the [List of Co-op Programs in BC](#) to identify the post-secondary institutions in BC that have fields of study relevant to your needs (see [Academic Program Details](#)). If your needs are highly specific and your pool of eligible co-op students from BC's public post-secondary institutions is limited, you may want to consider posting the job opportunity at [post-secondary institutions outside of BC](#) with a recognized co-op program.
- Send the job details and description to all of the relevant post-secondary institution contacts for posting on their co-op student job board (Tip: you can send one email to all the relevant contacts, saving you time!) You do not need to submit a MyHR Service Request, unless you also want to post the job on the BC Public Service job board.

Assessment and Selection

- Design and conduct a process to assess knowledge, skills, and behavioural competencies for the position (see [Assessment](#))
 - The only mandatory assessment requirements are that the applicant must be:
 - 15 years of age or older;
 - Eligible to work in Canada; and,
 - Registered in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution.
- Conduct reference checks to assess past work experience with a previous supervisor or someone who has observed the student's work (paid or volunteer).
- Select the successful candidate

Offer

- Call the top candidate and offer them the position
- Draft and send the offer (there is [Co-op Offer Letter Template](#)) and [regret](#) letters to the successful and all unsuccessful applicants, respectively. (Note: the five-day review period required in most competitive processes is not necessary when hiring a co-op student!)
- Complete a Criminal Record Check using the [Personnel Security Screening Office Online Service](#)
- If the results of the Criminal Record Check are "no risk", scan and send a copy of the signed and accepted offer letter and a copy of the Criminal Record Check clearance to MyHR, along with the successful candidate's Social Insurance Number and date of birth

After an employee number is received, there is a lot that needs to be done to prepare for your new co-op employee's first day. Check out the [Co-op Supervisor Handbook](#) for information on onboarding and orienting your new co-op employee.



Where ideas work

For more information, please contact:

Co-op Program and Resource Office

coop@gov.bc.ca

BC PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCY

Useful Links:

@Work: <https://gww.gov.bc.ca>

MyHR: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/>