

University of Guelph

School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management

Co-operative Education Work Term Report Guidebook

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Introduction

The Philosophy of Self-Development

The fundamental principle guiding cooperative (or co-op) education is that you gain the opportunity to learn ‘on the job’.

During your first two years in the program, you have been introduced to various management theories and professional practices. Co-op education provides you with an opportunity to experience how all these theories are applied, and during your work terms, you may well have occasion to apply some of these theories into action (e.g. improving control systems). Additionally, your work experiences will provide a springboard for your more advanced studies once you return.

However, you must understand that the nature of learning is quite different during co-op your work terms. Unlike classroom situations that are controlled and structured, there is no formal ‘teacher’ in the working environment. Should you be open and receptive, everyone you interact with during your co-op experience becomes your teacher, including your supervisors, co-workers, and even the guests.

The attitude and enthusiasm you bring to your work placement directly influences the value you will receive from your experience – you get out what you invest in, so what you learn is, in a large way, up to you.

If you opt to be a cardboard employee, simply punching a clock, expecting others to feed you your training, or if you bring to your placement an attitude of entitlement, then you will obviously learn much less than if you seize the opportunity to observe, analyse and evaluate the operation as the potential manager you are on the path to becoming. To get the most out of co-op, your focus has to be on your own self-development.

The goal of your experiences, as guided by the activities in this workbook, is to facilitate your self-development. All the work reports are designed to stimulating and enrich your development and education. The extent of your reward at the end of your journey is reflected in your investment in your learning process.

Everyone learns in different ways – some by doing, others by reflecting – and, as such, the academic assignments are intentionally varied in their approach. If you are not aware of your own preferred approach to learning, review Exhibit A-1 in this section for an overview of the various approaches to learning and see which resonate more with you. No doubt, you will see many of these styles being applied in your work placement.

In short then, we are here to encourage and guide your journey. However, it is a journey that you must take responsibility for; your growth, education and development are in your hands, influenced by your efforts and engagement. Make the most of your opportunities and adopt the approach of a curious and inquisitive apprentice.

Understanding the Experiential Learning Cycle

Like most people, there is not one single way of learning that completely describes your learning style. According to Kolb, each person's learning style is a combination of four basic learning modes. As learners, we are often pulled in several directions simultaneously in a learning situation. By being conscious of these various forces and using some tools of personal reflection during your co-op experience, you will gain insight into your own unique learning style and preferences. In turn, this will increase your learning power and allow you to get the maximum benefit out of your experiences.

KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL	
<p>Concrete Experience (CE)</p> <p>This stage of the learning cycle emphasises personal involvement with people in everyday situations. In this stage, you would tend to rely more on your feelings than on a systematic approach to problems and situations. In a learning situation, you would rely more on your ability to be open-minded and adaptable to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from feeling • Learning from specific experiences • Relating to people • Sensitivity to feelings and people 	<p>Reflective Observation (RO)</p> <p>In this stage of the learning cycle, people understand ideas and situations from different points of view. In a learning situation you would rely on patience, objectivity, and careful judgement but would not necessarily take any action. You would rely on your own thoughts and feelings to form opinions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by watching and listening • Careful observation before making a judgement • Viewing things from different perspectives • Looking for the meaning of things
<p>Abstract Conceptualization (AC)</p> <p>In this stage, learning involves using logic and ideas, rather than feelings, to understand problems or situations. Typically, you would rely on systematic planning and develop theories and ideas to solve problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by thinking • Logical analysis of ideas • Systematic planning • Acting on an intellectual understanding of a situation 	<p>Active Experimentation (AE)</p> <p>Learning in this stage takes an active form- experimenting with influencing or changing situations. You would have a practical approach and a concern with what really works, as opposed to watching a situation. You value getting things done and seeing the results of your influence and ingenuity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by doing • Ability to get things done • Risk taking • Influencing people and events through action

More information on Kolb's Experiential Learning Model can be found here:

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/kolb.html>

Framework of the HTM Co-op Experience

Your co-op experience is divided into three integrated phases:

- **Pre-employment Phase:** The co-op pre-employment course (COOP *1100) prepares students for the employment selection process. This course is supplemented by a pre-employment workshop to cover administrative, academic and other various workplace issues.
- **Employment Phase:** This phase consists of your work terms and three work term reports. The reports are designed to help you merge theories and knowledge gained in your course work with practice experiences in the workplace. The details of these reports are outlined within this workbook.
- **Post-employment Phase:** Following each of your work terms, you are required to complete three learning tasks:
 - Participate in an arranged co-op seminar that is designed for you to discuss your work experiences and share your learning outcomes with other co-op students
 - Have an individual meeting with your co-op faculty advisor to discuss your project
 - Complete the required 4000 level course for co-op students

PHASE	
Pre-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation Workshop
Employment	<u>Work Report #1 -</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Learning Objectives (completed in Experience Guelph) • Progress Review • Initial Skills Assessment • Weekly Journal Entries • Critical Incident(s) Report • Work Performance (employer evaluation)
	<u>Work Report #2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Audit • Weekly Journal Entries • Critical Incident(s) Report • Work Performance (employer evaluation)
	<u>Work Report #3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of Learning Objectives (completed in Experience Guelph) • Industry Project • Weekly Journal Entries • Final Skills Assessment • Work Performance (employer evaluation)
Post-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Employment Seminar • Personal Interview with Co-op Faculty Advisor • 4000 Level Co-op Course to be completed before graduation

Work Reports

Your work placement is divided into three 4-month semesters, mirroring your regular academic cycles. Co-op students are required to submit a work report every four months at the end of each work semester. Submissions will be made either through CourseLink or Experience Guelph, as required. Specific deadlines for submission are listed in the Undergraduate calendar in the Schedule of Dates section (see: “Last day to submit Co-op Semester reports”).

Note that the University has very strict procedures around important dates. Students who fail to adhere to the deadlines will receive an “unsatisfactory” assessment, resulting in the automatic removal from the co-op stream. It is in your best interest to collect and record ALL of your key dates for the entire co-op process very early (with automatic reminders), leaving yourself time to complete your required work to the very best of your abilities.

EMPLOYMENT PHASE
<u>Work Report #1 -</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial Learning Objectives (completed in Experience Guelph)• Progress Review• Initial Skills Assessment• Weekly Journal Entries• Critical Incident Report (x2)• Work Performance (employer evaluation)
<u>Work Report #2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership Audit• Weekly Journal Entries• Critical Incident Report (x2)• Work Performance (employer evaluation)
<u>Work Report #3</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critique of Learning Objectives (completed in Experience Guelph)• Industry Project• Weekly Journal Entries• Final Skills Assessment• Work Performance (employer evaluation)

Work Report #1

As you are in the early phase of your work placement, the focus of this report is on your movement in and adaptation to your new environment. Note that at the beginning of each work term, you must create and submit your learning objectives, input into your Experience Recruit Guelph profile. These learning objectives should be realistic and detailed to your current work term, and you will return to them at the end each semester for your reflection of your co-op work term experience.

The first report consists of the following:

Progress Review

The purpose of this review is for you to communicate how your work period is evolving so far. Consider and address the jobs you have held, the nature of work and departments, what you have learned, and any challenges you may have faced. At this point, you should (if relevant) mention any challenges you foresee completing Work Report #2. Additionally, you should begin to identify potential projects that you believe might be possible for Work Report #3. This section should be 1000 – 1500 words.

Initial Skills Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is for you to critically reflect on your current skills, knowledge and abilities as you begin your work experience. Be honest with yourself as everyone is on their own, individual journey. This section should be 300 – 500 words.

Weekly Journal Entries

The purpose of keeping a journal throughout your co-op work terms is that it provides a means for you to track significant events and observations that have occurred in the workplace. By completing journal entries on a regular basis (at least twice a week and when significant events happen creates an excellent routine), your experiences cease to be reviewed using a haphazard method requiring good memory and becomes a conscious and reflective learning process. Journaling can be a very individual system, typed or hand written; whichever system you adopt should work for you while also, when required, easy enough to submit electronically as part of your work report.

Good journal entries have three aspects: a description of events, a reflection on the underlying importance and opportunity for learning, and some intentional action for positive change. Notice the example below contains all three aspects, while remaining clear and concise.

Entry Details: May 3-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Took part in the hotel orientation tour. It did not seem very thorough and our guide did not provide any time for the new staff to introduce themselves.• I am slowly getting to know the names and faces of the others on my own. The people working here seem real friendly right now.• I'm currently working as both a server and bartender. They are clearly giving me some 'special treatment' until I learn the ropes.• The work is actually quite different from what I was expecting but I think I'm going to like it once I adjust. It sure isn't like going to school!
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Reflection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think a number of the new employees, including me, are quite nervous and anxious. It's important for managers to be sensitive to these feelings in the first few weeks.
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather the department organizational chart and write down the names of people; this should help me learn names faster and avoid being embarrassed forgetting who people are.

Critical Incident Report (x2)

The purpose of reporting “critical incidents” is to provide you with an opportunity to reflect in depth about a specific event. By describing and then evaluating a particular impactful (positive or negative) incident, you can examine the underlying issues and influences around an event, as well as the relationship between theory and practice. Note that it is not necessary for you to have been directly involved in the event to report on it. Critical incidents may include (but are not limited to):

- A time you noticed that employee’s behaviour was either positively or negatively affected by the comments of a supervisor, e.g., dress code, helpfulness to peers.
- An approach adopted by a supervisor to discipline an employee, for say lateness, and assess its effectiveness
- How management handles cliques, groupings, or power struggles (social, gender, ethnic) within a department
- Behaviours that seem to stem from stress and how those situation might be alleviated
- Time management skills of your supervisors, e.g., running a meeting, and discuss your own application of time management techniques
- Assertive communication techniques being used, as between department heads, and their subsequent impact
- Approaches that may be used to resolve conflicts e.g. personality clashes
- The impact of tipping on employee behaviour and consider whether or not the system is dysfunctional, and how might any adverse impact be mitigated

See the blank Critical Incident Report form in this workbook as the format to be followed.

Work Performance Evaluation

This will be emailed to your supervisor for completion and submitted electronically to the University from your employer. The completed document is viewable by you, in your Experience Guelph profile.

Work Report #2

You are in the middle phase of your work experience and the focus of this report expands on your knowledge and skill development. Based on your experiences and observations, you will begin to assess the leadership skills of those in your organization, learning from the actions and results of others.

The second report consists of:

Leadership Audit

In this audit, you will assess various leaders that you work with at your placement. You will be asked to assess the most effective and least effective leaders that you have come across in the organization.

(Please do not name these people or state what position they hold.)

The audit is in three sections. For sections I and II, the leaders you audit need not be your 'immediate supervisor'; however, they do need to hold a formal supervisory position within your organization and you require enough information to sufficiently complete the audit section.

Section I: Most Effective Leader (500 – 750 words)

- Identify the skills that make this leader effective
- Explain the behaviours that make this leader effective
- Summarize how employees respond to this leader
- Recognize the leadership trait(s) this person possesses which you would want to emulate and why

Section II: Least Effective Leader (500 – 750 words)

- Identify the skills that impede this leader from being effective
- Explain the behaviours that make this leader ineffective
- Summarize how employees respond to this leader
- Summarize a specific incident that you have observed or experienced that demonstrates this leader's ineffectiveness and why

Section III: Your Leadership Experience (500 words)

Write about a situation at your work placement that has put you in a leadership position; this may be as either a formal or informal leader. Reflect on the characteristics of this situation and the outcomes of the experience that made it either positive or negative.

PLUS, Work Report #2 includes:

Weekly Journal Entries

Critical Incident Report (x2)

Work Performance Evaluation

Work Report #3

You are now in your last phase of your work experience and the focus of this report should be on higher level issues and observations. During this phase, you will take on a project of value to the organization you are working for. As well, near the end of this phase you will complete a critique on your initial learning objective through Recruit Guelph.

The final report consists of the following:

Industry Project

The project is one of the major learning outcomes of your co-op education. To successfully complete this, there are two criteria which you need to follow.

First, the project must be of value to the employer and of interest to you – this needs to be a “win-win” situation. Second, it must be reasonably substantive or challenging. For example, collecting standard recipes into a manual, or editing existing check-in procedures may be a valuable exercise, but it is unlikely to be challenging.

Usually, management has a backlog of projects they would like to do “if only we had time”. It is in your best interest to connect with your management team about this project EARLY in your work terms to allow time for an appropriate project to come together. Additionally, you are likely to encounter problems in your job which you might like to take on as a project for the organization’s benefit.

Some examples of project topics are listed in at the end of this workbook, containing examples from several successful projects from the past. It is important to note that previous co-op students have asked us to specifically stress that the project often provides an opportunity to make a lasting impression on management. A well researched and professionally presented report reflects well on you and also on the calibre of students graduating from the University of Guelph.

Final Skills Assessment

This section should reflect on the skills and knowledge that you have gained throughout your work placement. (500 – 750 words)

PLUS, Work Report #3 includes:

Weekly Journal Entries

Work Performance Evaluation

APPENDIX

A - Critical Incident Report (form)

(Sections can be expanded to the required size so that the appropriate level of detail is included for each incident reported)

ISSUE:
KEY / RELEVANT PLAYERS:
BACKGROUND:
STRATEGY USED & OUTCOME:
RELEVANT THEORY & CRITIQUE:

B - Inspiration for your Industry Project

As a manager, you will not be expected to be competent in a wide range of technical skills. However, your effectiveness as a manager can be facilitated if you are familiar with the salient characteristics of the tasks undertaken by your employees.

Your co-op work experience provides you with an excellent opportunity to “intelligently” observe many tasks and activities that are technical in nature. By “intelligently” we mean that you should look beyond the surface and by a mere observer. Rather, we hope you will critically evaluate them by asking such questions as:

- Are these practices effective?
- Do they coincide with what I have learned in class? If not, why not? Should the theory be modified?
- If I were the manager, would I do it the same way?
- How do employees view this task/activity? What differentiates a superior from a mediocre employee?
- What are the salient characteristics of this activity? What will help me empathize with employees in the future – e.g. physical fatigue in making up rooms?

Hopefully, these guiding questions give you a better idea of what it means to “intelligently” observe. The following checklist, which is by no means complete, highlights many of the major professional practices you may encounter. They can also be used as an aide-memoire in developing your own individual list of professional learning objectives.

NOTE: Many of the larger chains encourage employees to obtain certification in one of many occupations e.g. food server, front office etc. You are strongly encouraged to pursue any certification opportunities made available by your employer-they will become increasingly important and will add considerable value to your resume. These national certification programs are offered through the Provincial Training and Education Councils (TECs). The certification programs can be taken by individuals outside of a company- the cost is approximately \$300.

Foodservice

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- Appropriateness of product concept to target markets e.g. coherence between customer needs, menu, decor, service methods etc.
- Configuration of seats, capacity management including reservation systems, seat turnover
- Adherence to customer service training practices, customer feedback and complaint handling, empowerment
- Service delivery methods and their effectiveness
- Merchandising/salesmanship/up selling and promotional activities and techniques
- Alcohol service and smoking restrictions
- Opening and closing procedures, inventory control

- Employee scheduling, payroll control and productivity standards
- Training in service protocols, employee performance, evaluation and feedback
- Order-taking/checking/cash control
- Appropriateness of operating equipment e.g. linen, china, glasses etc. Dress code and uniform control
- Tipping policies
- Room service practices especially breakfast delivery times, control of mini-bars and liaison with housekeeping
- Conferences and catering: booking procedures, pricing and billing policies, marketing and promotion, staffing arrangements, room layouts, buffet, special equipment and facilities, live entertainment issues such as royalties
- Vending-item selection, replenishment, control, maintenance, security etc.
- Initiative specifically taken to improve profitability

Beverage Service

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible.

- Licensing laws
- Service protocols and server intervention programs
- Opening and closing duties
- Control practices e.g. issuing, portion controls
- Bar set-ups and controls
- Management of keg beer
- Selection of beer, wine , liquors
- Storage of wine
- Key reports generated e.g. standard/potential sales reconciliation
- Physical inventory practices and separation of duties
- Customer services, up selling, complaint resolution
- Initiatives specifically taken to improve profitability

Food Production

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- Menu planning process e.g. determining customer needs, tracking menu popularity, menu item selection, recipe development, recipe costing, use made of market prices and seasonality, appropriate use of pre-prepared foods etc.
- Food production planning e.g. forecasting, purchasing and requisition, inventory, production schedules, adherence to standard recipes and portion sizes etc.
- Control of pilferage, spoilage, and security issues
- Health and safety practices
- Sanitization training and practices (HACCP); conduct sanitation inspection and certification
- Equipment configuration, utilization rates, maintenance practises, work flows etc.

- Methods to improve and control quality (TQM)
- Dishwashing equipment, work flows, breakage, storage, hygiene and maintenance, WHIMIS
- Daily, weekly and monthly reports used to monitor cost percentages, the budgeting process
- Employee scheduling, payroll control and productivity measures

Front Office

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- Reservation practices including CRS, global distribution systems, yield management systems, blocking etc.
- Walk-ins, up selling, overbooking and no-show practices
- Daily, weekly and monthly reports. Key statistics used
- End of shift balancing
- Check-in, check-out, (including provisions for “express” service) credits, late charges, foreign exchange practices etc.
- Use made of guest histories and profiling systems (database marketing)
- Forecasting effectiveness on daily, weekly and monthly basis
- Room assignment practices
- Method of setting and adjusting room rates
- Appropriateness of advertising to various target markets e.g. guaranteed time for check-in, fitness facilities, child care etc.
- Concierge services and their effectiveness
- Communication services, fax delivery, telephone messages, operator responsiveness, wake-up calls etc.
- Security services regarding hiring checks, key control, physical security, theft deterrence, emergency procedures, guest safety (e.g. parking) etc.
- Tour check in/outs, liaising with tour personnel
- Initiatives specifically taken to improve profitability

Housekeeping

- Participation in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:
- Preventative maintenance routines
- Making up guest rooms
- Public area cleaning
- Total quality management practices
- Linen control and handling of all cleaning materials (WHIMIS)
- Environmental practices
- Safety, fire and emergency practices and procedures
- Upkeep of physical facilities elevators, pools, gym, back-of-house etc.
- Laundry operations including guest laundry
- Communication effectiveness with front office and maintenance

- Training, training follow-up, room inspection and daily room assignments
- Cleaning procedures for occupied and non-occupied rooms
- Features of room type e.g. suites, executive floors, physically challenged, mix of smoking and non-smoking rooms etc.
- Room renovation practices and interior design issues
- Housekeeping responsiveness to guest request for services
- Employee scheduling-payroll control and productivity measures

Marketing

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- Undertake sales analysis
- Conduct a sales blitz
- Assist in advertising design and placement
- Develop and implement promotional campaigns for new menu items, room packages etc.
- Evaluation of promotional initiatives
- Customer satisfaction survey procedures and their effectiveness
- Telephone selling (e.g. cold calls)
- Personal selling and participating in initial customer contact through to bill payment and customer service follow-up
- Forecasting practices, their use and effectiveness in controlling future costs
- Product/market mix for each revenue producing outlet
- Promotional mixes for each product
- Initiatives specifically taken to improve revenue performance

Human Resources

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- The recruiting and selection process of an employee(s). (Practise interviewing if possible)
- The orientation and training of new employees. (Lead training sessions, if possible)
- The performance evaluation process and giving negative as well as positive feedback
- The nature of union representation compensation practices in all its forms
- Disciplinary procedures and grievance procedures
- The management of absenteeism and staff turnover
- Use made of cross training, employee empowerment, suggestion schemes etc.
- Initiatives specifically take to improve employee motivation and performance

Management Information

Participate in or become familiar with and critically evaluate the below activities insofar as possible:

- Consistency between actual practices and standard operating practices (S.O.P.'s)
- Major jobs/tasks in the Accounting Department

- Monthly reports produced and management indicators that are used to monitor organizational performance
- Identify 10 critical internal controls
- Physical inventory procedures, par stock levels and their appropriateness
- Calculation of inventory levels and consumption
- Capital an operating budgeting processes
- Accounts receivable control procedures
- Night audit practices and revenue conciliation
- System of purchase request, vendor bidding, purchase payment system
- Audit trail of goods received, through storage to usage and billing
- Managers Daily Report (MDR)
- Cash controls including POS terminals used, price change procedures, policy on shortages/overages, credit card procedures, tipping , taxes, cashing in/out procedures etc.
- Product testing, vendor selection and make or buy decisions
- Purchasing office structure, division of duties, purchasing procedures e.g. use of standing orders, purchase specs, receiving practices, etc.
- Initiatives specifically taken to improve financial performance

Final Thoughts

These comments were all expressed to us by former co-op students and employers as words of advice:

- You will be expected to do work as good as, if not better than, other employees.
- You will be expected to work on public holidays if scheduled and do your share of “grunt” work. This is not a 9 am to 5 pm job, five day a week experience.
- Try to network in the operation, e.g. get involved in sports teams, safety committees or writing for an In-House Journal etc. Increased visibility and enthusiasm may open up some promising opportunities.
- You will need to be prepared to take negative criticism, quite possibly when you are doing a good job. You may be fortunate enough to have a nurturing supervisor, but you will probably need to “manage your boss” (i.e. identify what is and is not important to him/her.)
- Often supervisors like to “discover” someone. Negative stereotypes can precede a student (i.e. obnoxious, pushy, know-it-all, wet behind-the-ears student taught by out-of-touch teachers in an ivory tower). From a supervisor’s perspective, it is refreshing to find a hard-working, enthusiastic, and conscientious individual willing to learn about the job and its challenges.
- Get in contact with us if you see a situation developing that may result in confrontation. Problems can often be resolved if they are caught in the early stages.

Remember that every experience is an occasion to grow, whether it is positive or challenging. Make the most of your opportunities at your work placement to develop your skills, knowledge and abilities.

Good Luck!