

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
GUIDELINES FOR THE CO-OP WORK TERM REPORT

PLANNING YOUR WORK TERM REPORT

Objectives & Expectations

The work term report is designed for you to blend what you learn in school (theory) with “real world” experience (practice). In the creation of your work term report, it is important that you consider the following factors:

1. The work term report is built into your work experience;
2. It ensures that you are “thinking” about what you are learning, not just “doing” your work;
3. The work term report should not just be a report written as a component of your responsibilities at work; there needs to be additional research that is included in your work term report.

This additional research needs to put your work experience into a political science framework using concepts and theories from your political science courses. For example, if your co-op job was with a government department, then your work term report could include additional research on bureaucratic organizations or analyses of public policy development and implementation.

If your co-op job is in the private sector, then your work term report could include research about the relationship between your company and the broader industry with the provincial and/or federal levels of government (i.e., the substance of business-government relations). This might include an analysis of how the government currently regulates your company or industry or how your company or industry has been lobbying the government for a particular legislative change. Another approach would be to examine the government’s industrial, trade or competition policy and analyzing how that pertains to the company that you are working for and the industry in which it is situated.

If your co-op job is with a non-governmental organization, then your end of term report could include research about human rights and development, or social welfare policy development, or the governance challenges and opportunities of the “third sector.” In the latter instance, this might include an analysis of how the voluntary sector has responded to a retrenchment of the state as part of the new public management movement or how it has increasingly been used to deliver programs and services in conjunction with governments in various types of partnerships.

Regardless of the specific nature of your co-op work term, you will also need to demonstrate the governance context of your employment. Which level or levels of government regulate your organization? Are there any international institutions or treaties that have an impact on your

organization? Are there major interest associations to which your organization belongs if in the private or third-sectors?

The work term report should clearly allow the reader to see links between your work experience and the learning outcomes related to the political science co-op program. The specific co-op learning outcomes are as follows:

- Communicate effectively to diverse audiences, in diverse formats, both written and visual, using relevant technologies, within workplace settings.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic institutions and processes of the different levels of government as they relate to your work term organization (be it public, private or non-profit with its local, provincial, national or global focus). This includes how various economic, social and regulatory policies impact on your employer and the broader impact on its clientele or customers and beyond.

A work term report is required for each four-month work term that you complete as part of your degree program. However, if you complete two consecutive four-month work terms *with the same employer*, then you are only required to submit one work term report. If you complete two consecutive work terms at different employers, then you will need to submit a report for each coop work experience.

Planning & Approval Process

1. Brainstorm work term report ideas

Ideally, we would like the work term report to also add value to your work place employer. As such, begin by identifying how your work term report might be useful to the organization in question. Does your employer have any projects, reports, surveys, handbooks, manuals or other such documents that it may find useful to have completed that were not part of your co-op work assignment? *This is important: the report cannot be part of the duties you are assigned as part of your work term.* It may be difficult for you to make this determination on your own, so approach your work supervisor and have a conversation about what would be most helpful to the organization. Come to a tentative agreement about the nature and substance of your work term report.

2. Get departmental approval for your proposed work term report

Contact the Department of Political Science Co-op Faculty Advisor once you have a tentative topic for the work term report so that it can be formally approved. In that contact email, please include the following: 1) your co-op work term employer; 2) your position and your primary responsibilities; and 3) a comprehensive description of the work term report that you are proposing. It is likely that the faculty advisor will provide some further guidance regarding your topic and how it should be approached in the work term report.

The departmental faculty advisor will change from year-to-year, but it is currently Professor Julie Simmons (simmonsj@uoguelph.ca). If you would like to discuss the proposed work term report, then you should email Professor Simmons first and she will arrange a time to have a Zoom or MS Teams call with you.

Preparing the Work Term Report

It is difficult to provide definitive direction with respect to structuring and writing your work term report. It will depend in large part on the type of work term report that you are completing (i.e., a manual, handbook, survey, standard operating procedures, or policy/positional paper). Some work term reports will be more conducive to incorporating an academic component (for example, a policy paper) than would the preparation of a work place manual or handbook. In these latter instances, you might have to include the academic component as an addendum to the report or manual that you developed for your employer.

In other words, the work term report potentially needs to speak to both the employer as well as the departmental faculty advisor. The report should clearly link your work experience back to the learning outcomes for the Department of Political Science Co-op Program.

With respect to the *academic component*, as noted above, you are required situate the work term report in some body of relevant academic literature. This involves conducting research to determine what has been previously published that is related to your project. In the case of a manual or handbook, you might want to explore the human resources management literature to analyze how these types of documents can contribute to enhanced organizational efficiency and/or effectiveness or how they represent an example of “good” or “best practice.” Other types of work term reports will be more conducive to the use of a number of studies in the public administration and policy literature.

A minimum of eight references must be used to write your work term report. At least four of those references must be scholarly references, that is to say refereed journal articles, scholarly books (for example, any of the numerous university presses, such as the University of Toronto Press, McGill-Queen’s University Press, University of Ottawa Press etc., or other reputable commercial publishers, such as Macmillan, Routledge, Sage, Lynne Rienner, Emerald and so on) and chapters in scholarly books. The remainder of your sources can include various other kinds of documentation, for example, government documents, think tank reports, judicial decisions, or archival documents. It may also be appropriate to supplement these sources with traditional newspaper articles to provide context and currency to your work term report.

Conducting the Research

A wide range of government documentation is available online from the federal (http://www.canada.gc.ca/main_e.html) and provincial (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/government>) government websites. Moreover, many of the websites of the various think tanks also have links to reports that are freely accessible (for example, the Institute of Public Administration of Canada www.ipac.ca; the Public Policy Forum <http://www.pppforum.ca>; Canada West Foundation <http://www.cwf.ca/>; Fraser Institute www.fraserinstitute.ca; C.D. Howe Institute www.cdhowe.org; Mowat Centre www.mowatcentre.ca).

Even if your co-op work term takes you out of Guelph, which in most instances will be the case, you will still be able to access numerous resources, such as databases, scholarly journal articles and electronic books, through your off-campus access to the University of Guelph Library.

Click on the “Off-campus Log in” link from the Library’s home page (www.lib.uoguelph.ca/) and sign in using your central ID and password. Most academic libraries are committed to the Canadian University Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement, which allows students to check out books directly from another university library. Within Ontario you should be able to check out books from other university libraries with your University of Guelph student card. There are some exceptions to this agreement of which the University of Toronto is perhaps the most notable. It does not lend to undergraduate students from other institutions. Complete details can be found at <http://www.coppul.ca/rb/rbhow.html>.

Getting Research Help

If you need help with researching your work term report, the Library provides many avenues for assistance. You can chat, instant message, email, phone or visit with a librarian. For complete contact information visit www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/ask_us/.

Format of the Work Term Report

1. Cover page

Include your name, student ID number, your employer, the title of your report, and the term(s) during which you worked for your employer. If the report is for a two-semester work term, then this needs to be clearly indicated.

2. Introductory letter

Your letter should be addressed to your Faculty Advisor, and should include the following information: where you worked; your position title; your main responsibilities/projects; the topic of your report; and finally, you should acknowledge your supervisor for his or her assistance during your work term.

3. Executive Summary

Provide a succinct summary of the contents of your work term report. This summary should not exceed half of a page single spaced.

4. The Report

For a four-month work term, the work term report should be between 2500 and 3000 words, exclusive of the executive summary and references (approximately 8-10 double-spaced pages using a Times New Roman 12-point font).

If you are completing a report for an eight-month work term with the same employer, then it should be between 3500 and 4500 words, exclusive of the executive summary and references (approximately 12-15 double-spaced pages using a Times New Roman 12-point font).

It is expected that you will use a recognized citation style as per the expectation for all political science courses. Please see the *Department of Political Science Writing Guide* for additional guidance.

5. References

The list of the sources that you used to write your report should be included using the APA citation style.

6. Employer Work Report Evaluation Form

It is critical that your employment supervisor reviews your work term report prior to submitting it to the Department of Political Science Faculty Advisor. The Employer Work Report Evaluation Form invites employer feedback, and requires your employer's signature. Comments from your employer are useful for revising your report before submission. Additionally, your employer will be able to ensure that confidential information is not leaving the organization. The form is accessible from the Co-op Forms section of the CECS web site

[https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Co-op Work Term Report Employer Comments-Fillable Form.pdf](https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/uoguelph.ca.cecs/files/public/Co-op%20Work%20Term%20Report%20Employer%20Comments-Fillable%20Form.pdf).

Please note: If you do not submit an employer evaluation of your work term report you will be given an automatic grade of "UNSATISFACTORY."

Submitting the Work Term Report

Work term reports are due 5 class days following the work term and they should be emailed to the Department of Political Science Co-op Faculty Advisor. It is strongly recommended that you start the report early and complete it prior to the end of the 4 or 8-month work term.

The co-op faculty advisor will evaluate the report assigning one of the following grades: *Outstanding*, *Very Good*, *Good*, *Satisfactory*, and *Unsatisfactory*. This grade will appear on your official transcript.

A final grade of *Unsatisfactory* on your work term report will require resubmission. If you receive a grade of *Unsatisfactory* on the resubmission, you will be required to withdraw from the co-op program.