

# B.Sc. Plant Science Co-op Work Term Report Guidelines

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## Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Reporting on your work term provides the opportunity to consider what you experienced and how you can apply your new capabilities. The objectives of the work term reports are to document your goals, experiences, and skill development and use them for future career planning. The work reports address seven learning outcomes: Outcomes one to three consider your understanding of the field in which you work and the skills and competencies you need to be employable. Outcomes four to six evaluate your understanding of your skill level and your ability to set goals and develop a plan to achieve personal objectives. Outcome seven includes an analysis of your strengths and areas of improvement.

### Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of Co-op work terms and associated reports you will have demonstrated that you are able to:

1. Explain what you learned during your co-op work term, articulating how the experience led to development of specific skills and competencies.
2. Describe the workplace culture you experienced and how it has influenced your future aspirations.
3. Articulate the skills, motivations, behaviours and knowledge necessary for employment in the industry.
4. Set short and long-term goals for developing skills, motivations, behaviours, competencies and knowledge, based on your self-assessment and job evaluation.
5. Evaluate your performance in the work term through self-assessment, incorporating feedback received from your employer and identify opportunities for yourself.
6. Create a plan to participate in any academic or co-curricular networking, training and professional development experiences that will assist you in achieving your professional goals.
7. Reflect on your learning experiences, critically analyzing your strengths and successes as well as areas in which you require additional skills, knowledge or experience.

## Assessment Structure

The assessment structure and alignment of learning outcomes for the four work-term reports are indicated below (Table 1). Learning outcomes are introduced sequentially. The second and third reports are submitted with the final summative reflection, but students are encouraged to do the work throughout their work terms.

Table 1. Assessment Structure

	Form of Assessment	Content/Activity	LO	Timeline/ Due*
Work Report 1:	Presentation & Summary Paper	Presentation with supporting written summary.  Emphasis on understanding the field in which you work.	1, 2, 3	After COOP*1000 Due 5 <sup>th</sup> day of class.
Work Report 2:	Journal Reflections & Summary	Students document their work experiences through biweekly journals (written reports, blog, social media posting, vlog, podcast, etc.).  Emphasis on setting goals.	1, 2, 3, 4	Completed throughout COOP*2000
Work Report 3:	Journal Reflections & Summary	Students document their work experiences through bi-weekly journals (written reports, blog, social media postings, vlog, podcast, etc.)  Emphasis on evaluating performance, using feedback, and creating a plan.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Completed throughout COOP*3000
Work Report 4:	Summative Reflection Written Paper	This is the final summative written reflection, includes report 2 and 3 as an appendix.  Emphasis on considering the future impact of the experience and what else they might do differently, in the future, in a different context etc.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 6, 7	After COOP*4000. Due 5 <sup>th</sup> day of class.

## Submission Requirements & Grading

- **Due Dates:** Co-op work reports must be submitted to the Co-op Faculty Advisor by the 5th class day of the semester following the co-op work term.
- **Final Submission:** Since work terms two to four are sequential the reports for two and three should be included with the final submission as three separate reports.
- **Grading Criteria:** The reflective papers and presentation will be graded according to the criteria provided in the grading rubric included in this guide. You will be assessed on:
  - The level of clarity in your writing and presentation.
  - The relevance of your reflections, i.e., are they meaningful and connected to your goals?
  - Your ability to move beyond describing your work term, analyzing how the experience contributed to your development.
  - The connections you make between your work experience, classroom learning, and your goals.
- **Final Grade:** The grading scale is Outstanding, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory (resubmit). This grade will appear on the student's official transcript.

## Work Report 1: Presentation and Summary Report

Work report 1 has two components: a presentation, and a written submission.

### Part 1: Written Component

Reflect on your skills, motivations, knowledge, goals and professional development in relation to the first co-op work term. In no more than three pages summarize your work term experience. Consider the using the following structure for your reflection.

#### A. Introduction

- Include where you worked, a summary of your job responsibilities, and an acknowledgement of the supervisors who helped you during your co-op term.

#### B. Body of Paper

##### 1. Position and responsibilities:

- What were the main responsibilities of your position?
- Which tasks recurred regularly or were new/non-routine?
- Describe the written documentation or formal training you received regarding regulations, operating procedures, internal and external communication, and supervision relevant to your position?

##### 2. Context of your position and organizational structure of employer

- Illustrate how the employing organization is structured. An overview, without excessive detail is sufficient.
- What is the geographical distribution/presence of your employer? Is your employer part of a large, province-wide, national or international organization?
- What are the main functions and responsibilities of your unit?
- How is your unit connected to others in the employing organization? What would happen, if your unit stopped working (properly)?

### 3. Identification of skills, motivations and knowledge

- Were the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the job identified in the job interview?
- How did you present your skills, knowledge, and motivations?
- How important are/were soft skills, such as initiative, teamwork, and communications?
- Describe the specific work ethic or spirit in your unit or organization, or lack thereof.

### C. Conclusion

- Summarize your experience, what you have taken away, and how you think this influences your future.

## Part 2: Presentation

Develop a presentation on your work-term experience and reflections. This should be a maximum of three minutes. You decide on the format, but a recorded video with a visual element is recommended. You can use PowerPoint or do something creative. The most important thing is that the presentation effectively summarizes and complements your written report.

Consider organizing your presentation in the following format.

1. What happened? (Introduction, Your Employer, Your Position)
  - a. Describe the organization, your position, and illustrate what function your unit has in a wide organizational context.
  - b. What were your responsibilities?
2. So what? (Highlights, Lesson Learned, Challenges etc.)
  - a. What were the highlights of your experience? What did you learn or what was most interesting?
  - b. Describe connections between your coursework/classes and the work?
3. Now what? (Reflections)
  - a. How can you apply what you have learned?
  - b. What additional learning topic would you like to pursue related to this project or issue?
  - c. What is one thing you have taken away from this experience?
  - d. How has this work term changed your goals and objectives for the remainder of the program?

## Report 2: Reflection Journal

During your second work term keep a weekly or bi-weekly journal of your experiences. Choose whatever format you like (i.e. a blog or social media postings, vlog, pictures, written journal, etc.). Journal entries should only take a few minutes. Record what you did, what you are learning, note the challenges, and things that you enjoyed, accomplished etc. At the end of the term write a reflective summary using the questions below (focus on questions 2,3, and 4). The summary should not exceed four pages. You will submit the written summary with your top three journal entries after the fourth work term. The journals should be included as an appendix to the written component.

The summary for work term two should have the following structure and incorporate some of the reflective questions outlined.

1. Describe your job and role.
  - Describe your position and your employer.
  - Why does the organization you are working for exist?
  - What is your role in your current job?
  - What specific skills have you used during your job?
  
2. Explain what was important and impactful about your experience, using your journal entries to illustrate your point.
  - Do you see benefits of doing this type of work? Why or why not?
  - What institutional structures are in place at your job? How do they affect the people with whom you work?
  - What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in your job?
  - What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
  
3. Evaluate your work experience and connect it to what you are learning in the classroom.
  - What were your initial expectations? Have these expectations changed? How? Why?
  - Did anything about your work involvement surprise you? If so, what?
  - What are the differences and similarities of theories learned in the classroom compared to those in the workplace?

- Reflecting on your experience gained from the co-op program, how has the practical application of classroom knowledge in the workplace affected your evolution as a student?
4. Identify two to three short term goals and one or two long term academic/professional goals that are specific and achievable. You will revisit these goals in work reports three and four, so you can revise them and develop a plan to achieve them at a later time. Revisit your reflection from Work Report 1 and discuss if your goals or ideas have changed.
- Have you developed greater clarity about your academic goals throughout your co-op work term? What does that mean to you?
  - Are there particular courses that you have completed that prepared you for this position or courses that you will take in the future that you now feel will be relevant/useful?
  - How will you prepare for your next work term?



## Work Report 3: Reflection Journal

Throughout your third work term continue with your weekly or bi-weekly journals. You can choose how you record your experiences and can experiment with different formats. If you are doing this every week, it should only take a few minutes to document what you are doing, any lessons learned, challenges, accomplishments, etc. At the end of the work term write a reflective summary that addresses the questions below. This should not exceed four pages. The summary with your top three journal entries (included as an appendix) will be due after your last co-op term. You are going to use this work to help you complete the final work report.

Guiding questions to consider in your journal entries and reflection:

1. Describe your work and role. If you are in the same position, be brief, if this has changed explain and provide the new details:
  - Describe your position and your employer.
  - Why does the organization for which you are working exist?
  - What is your role in your current job?
  - What specific skills have you used during your job?
2. Explain what was important and impactful about your experience, using your journal entries to illustrate your points.
  - Do you see benefits of doing this type of work? Why or why not?
  - What institutional structures are in place at your job? How do they affect the people with whom you work?
  - What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in your job?
  - What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?
3. Revisit your goals from work report 2 and make note of any progress, changes etc.
4. Reflect on your own performance in the work term including any feedback you have had.

- Did you get regular feedback on your performance? If so, what were the key insights?
- How helpful or instructive was the feedback? Did it help to improve performance and confidence in your tasks?
- What did you learn? What do you think your colleagues learned from you?
- What would you have done differently?
- Did this experience challenge you with respect to your abilities?

5. Reflect on your professional development during your work term.

- Have you identified weakness that you decided need improvement, or identified strengths which you would like to expand for academic or career development?
- How did your co-op experience influence your development as a professional?
- How did your overall work ethic and on-the-job performance progress throughout your work term?
- Do you approach work or studying differently now than when you entered the co-op program?

6. Draft a simple plan for what you could do to achieve your goals. Include any academic or co-curricular, networking, training and professional development experiences. You will be able to revise and change your plans as your experience develops in work term 4.

- Have you identified resources that you can/will use for advancing academic or professional development, such as career and job fairs, mentors and peers, support resources on campus or professional organizations and their information resources?
- Do you have a time schedule for deliverables, milestones and activities that are required for your development plan?

## Work Report 4: Summative Reflection Paper

Students who complete work report four will have demonstrated all of the learning outcomes with emphasis on outcome seven; Reflect on your learning experiences, critically analyzing your strengths and successes as well as areas in which you require additional skills, knowledge or experience.

Your final work report should be between six and eight pages, not including title page, references and appendices. It should highlight the skills and knowledge you have gained via your education, co-op program and other experiences here at the University of Guelph (UofG). Include reflections on each work term. You should be able to use all previous work term reports as a foundation to this report. You can also include discussion of your job search preparation, the work experience, your performance, and work report feedback. Focus on how you changed over the course of your education and co-op experience at UofG. What are your future plans and the steps you can take to achieve them?

### Summative Reflection Paper Structure

#### A. Introduction

- Include brief description of workplace activities, responsibilities, and duties performed.
- If you held different positions, you can describe and explain.

#### B. Body of Report<sup>1</sup>

##### 1. Reflective analysis of your experience.

- Describe your personal and professional learning goals.
- Reflect on your skill development, what specific skills have you used or developed?
- Discuss the applications of this experience to your future.
- What did you expect to get from your co-op experience when you applied for co-op initially? Was your experience what you expected?

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<sup>1</sup> You do not have to answer all the questions listed. These are provided to help you with your reflective analysis.

- What surprised you about your work terms and what have you learned about the environment in which you would like to work when you graduate?
  - If you were starting over would you want to do the co-op option again? Why or why not?
  - What was your most difficult work term? Why was it difficult?
  - Do you think your work term experiences changed how you approach your academic work? If so, how?
  - Describe disappointments or successes. What did you learn from this?
  - What did you learn about the process of looking for a job and building a career through your co-op experiences?
  - How will your co-op experiences influence your search for a permanent job?
  - What did you learn about yourself over the past 4 years?
  - What strengths/weaknesses do you have of which you were not aware?
  - What advice would you give to incoming co-op students to get the most out of the co-op experience?
2. How did your co-op experience influence your personal development? Many students identify that self-confidence increased, judgement matured, interpersonal communication skills improved, and that they learned to set high standards for themselves. Look back at your previous three work term reports. Can you see how you have developed?
3. Other areas which you could explore in the reflection include an understanding of what you want from a career, how you view yourself, and the perceptions others have of you. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the changes you have undergone and experienced as an individual.

### C. Conclusion

Summarize what you learned, what is next for you, and how you plan to move forward.

## Appendix 1. Grading Rubric for Reflection

	Reflective Practitioner	Aware Practitioner	Novice	Significant improvement needed
	“Outstanding”	“Very Good”	“Satisfactory”	“Unsatisfactory”
<b>Clarity</b>	<p>The language is clear and expressive. The reader can create a mental picture of the situation being described.</p> <p>Abstract concepts are explained accurately. Explanation of concepts makes sense to an uninformed reader.</p>	<p>Minor, infrequent lapses in clarity and accuracy.</p>	<p>There are frequent lapses or contradictions in clarity and accuracy.</p>	<p>Language is unclear and confusing throughout.</p> <p>Concepts are either not discussed or are presented inaccurately.</p>
<b>Relevance</b>	<p>The learning experience being reflected upon is relevant and meaningful to the student and learning goals. The student goes above and beyond the assignment reflecting on one’s ability to work efficiently, effectively and independently.</p>	<p>The learning experience being reflected upon is relevant and meaningful to student and learning goals.</p>	<p>Student makes attempts to demonstrate relevance, but the relevance is unclear to the reader. There is difficulty in making links to learning goals. This may involve reflecting on one’s ability to work efficiently, effectively and independently.</p>	<p>Most of the reflection is irrelevant to student and/or learning goals. This may involve almost no reflection on one’s ability to work efficiently, effectively and/or independently.</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>The reflection moves beyond simple description of the experience to an analysis of how the experience contributed to student understanding of self, others,</p>	<p>The reflection demonstrates student attempts to analyze the experience but analysis lacks depth. i.e. able to make some connections between describing the experience and the understanding of self,</p>	<p>Student makes attempts at applying the learning experience to understanding of self, others, and/or course concepts but is unable to demonstrate the</p>	<p>Reflection does not move beyond description of the learning experience(s).</p>

	and/or academic concepts.	others, and/or academic concepts	connection, or depth of analysis.	
<b>Interconnections</b>	The reflection demonstrates clear and specific connections between the experience and material from other courses; past experience; and/or personal goals.	The reflection demonstrates some connections between the experience and material from other courses; past experience; and/or personal goals.	There is little attempt to demonstrate connections between the learning experience and previous other personal and/or learning experiences.	No attempt to demonstrate connections to previous learning or experience.
<b>Self-Critique</b>	The reflection demonstrates ability of the student to question their own biases, stereotypes, preconceptions, and/or assumptions and define new modes of thinking as a result.	The reflection demonstrates ability of the student to question their own biases, stereotypes, preconceptions.	There is some attempt at self-criticism, but the self-reflection does not demonstrate a new awareness of personal biases, etc.	No attempt at self-criticism.

**Presentation Rubric for Work Term 1**

	<b>Reflective Practitioner</b> “Outstanding”	<b>Aware Practitioner</b> “Very Good”	<b>Novice</b> “Satisfactory”	<b>Significant improvement needed</b> “Unsatisfactory”
<b>Presentation Skills</b>	The presenter was prepared and rehearsed, using regular eye contact, appropriate speaking volume, and body language.	The presenter was well prepared but could have rehearsed more to improve the overall presentation.  Eye contact, body language, and speaking tone were fine, but could have minor improvements.	The presentation was informative, but some elements were missing.  The presenter could improve use of eye contact, volume, and gestures.	The presenter was not engaged. Effort was lacking to answer all the questions. Minimal eye contact and body cues.
<b>Comprehension &amp; Content</b>	The presentation content was well organized, clear and concise. All reflective questions were answered.	The presentation gave a good summary of the topic. Most important information was covered.	Some topics were left out. Lacking logical flow and organization.	Many topics were left unanswered. Significant points were left out.  No logical flow and organization.
<b>Visual Appeal and Creativity</b>	Visuals were free from error, easy to read, connected to the content and engaging.  Choice of presentation medium was creative and original and captured the audiences attention.	The visuals were simple, mostly free of error and connected to content.  Some creativity and originality, reasonable use of medium.	Some issues with visuals being difficult to read or comprehend and little connection with content.  Material presented with little originality or interpretation.	Minimal effort put into making visuals interesting and no connection to content.  Repetitive with little or no variety; poor use of media.