

REAL ESTATE CO-OP

CO-OP ESSAY

Revised Summer 2021

Your co-op work term is designed to give you practical exposure to and experience in the discipline that you are studying. It also ensures that you are “thinking” about what you are learning, not just “doing” your work. The first work term will develop your awareness and abilities in the following crucial areas:

- general business practices
- your area of specialization
- transferable or “soft skills”.

Your first work term report delves into one of these topics in more detail. The following offers some guidance for your first work term report.

For more general advice on content and grading across all work terms, please see a file entitled “General Advice”.

WORK TERM ONE

Your first work term includes the many and unexpected challenges of transitioning from school to work, and you will learn several skills essential to your later success when working full-time. Your first report, therefore, will give you a chance to learn more about an aspect of your work experience that interests you. Choose a topic from the following list (or suggest a similar topic to your faculty advisor).

- Business communication
- Change management
- Confidentiality within the workplace
- Diversity
- Ethical issues in the real estate industry
- Leadership/Motivation
- Conflict: Sources, Resolutions and Solutions
- Networking
- Millennials vs. Baby Boomers
- Success factors for this segment of the real estate industry
- What is unique about Real Estate, relative to other sectors of economy?
- Career paths in this sector of the real estate industry

You may also want to look at the Performance Evaluation form given to the employer, to consider the criteria listed: why are some good and well-intentioned employees not considered to be “Outstanding” in some or all of them? Which criteria are most important for which kind of job?

Do some library research, some investigation within the firm where you are working and submit a paper (approximately 8-10 double-spaced pages in length excluding cover page and cover letter) on that topic.

Locating your references. Your work term report must have an academic and/or research component to support the conclusions or opinions expressed in it. This component involves

searching for conclusions that others have proposed for your topic. For reasons discussed in the file entitled “General Advice”, your report should have two bibliographies. The first bibliography (“Leading Ideas”) would include the better quality sources: e.g. academic research, government reports, reports issued by the research departments of larger industry organizations, better trade journals, books, ... This list could also include any structured interviews which you conduct. (Information interviews are also a good way for you to extend your network.) In most cases, none would be older than 10 years and it would be odd if all were published during the last two years. The second bibliography (“Other”) would include any other sources that you cite: such as media reports (including even high quality business media such as *Forbes* or *Canadian Business*), blog postings, and so on.

You may use the University of Guelph Library website, Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.ca/>, textbooks and specific information you have learned in courses as well as any other sources you may discover. You can find this material in many places:

- **Access to University of Guelph Library Resources.** To assist with your work term report, you can access the Library’s electronic resources (databases, electronic books, etc.) from off-campus. Click on the “Off-campus Log in” link from the Library’s home page (<http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/>) and sign in using your central ID and password. Key business literature databases (e.g. ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete) can be found under the “Journal articles” link. Being a student at this university may allow you to use the libraries facilities at other universities in Ontario.
- **Getting Research Help.** If you need help with researching your topic, the Library provides many avenues for assistance. You can chat, instant message, email, phone or visit with a librarian. For complete contact information, visit: http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/ask_us/.
- **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is presentation of the ideas or work of others as your own. It includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and representing these as your own thoughts by not acknowledging the appropriate source or by the failure to use appropriate quotation marks. For more details, please see <http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/> There are methods to detect plagiarism and penalties, but the most important reason to not plagiarize is educational. No project that you will see in the real world will look exactly like the exercise that you are being graded on. The most interesting projects in the real world will involve things that are too new to be included in any textbook. The best students take advantage of these guided opportunities. Finally, I note that many instances of academic integrity result from poor time management or from carelessness; since potential employers are also concerned about these habits, any concerns about academic integrity are not isolated to the university.

While looking for these sources, you should also be evaluating the quality of the arguments and finding related sources. Learning to search for references by looking backwards and forwards in time (using the available software) is a useful skill.

Components of your report:

- **Cover page.** Please include your name, student ID, your employer, the title of your report and the term that you worked for the employer (i.e. Summer 20xx). The cover page should also include an Executive Summary with about 200 words, single

spaced. That Summary should include one thing which you found surprising about the topic (i.e. to attract the reader's attention) plus the most important "take-away" from your report (since the Summary is written for a reader who has little time).

- **Cover Letter.** Your single-spaced letter should be addressed to your Faculty Advisor using a proper business style. Include in your letter: information about where you worked, your position title, your main responsibilities/projects, the topic of your report, and finally acknowledge your employer for his/her assistance during your work term.
- **The report.** This section should be 8 pages at least, double spaced. As a matter of style, note that your report is not written for academic audience but for a business audience. The style should be consistent and, although there is some flexibility, it should be similar to what might be seen in a professional document. Please use subheadings and ensure that you cite all of your references within the body of your report.
- **References.** "Leading Ideas" and "Other".
- It should not be necessary to include a Table of Contents in a short report, if your argument is clearly written.
- **Employer Work Report Evaluation Form.** It is important that your employer review your work term report prior to submission to your Faculty Advisor on-campus. 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 available in the forms section of the CECS web site at <https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/co-op/co-op-forms>

Submitting your work term report

Work term reports are due 5 class days following the work term. It is strongly recommended that you start the report early and complete it prior to the end of the 4-month work term. The work term report and Employer Comments Form must be submitted in PDF format and uploaded to the Real Estate & Housing Co-op Courselink Dropbox for grading.

A final thought: in your final work term report, you will be asked to reflect on your time at the university and in the co-op program. Therefore, you might want to pose some questions for your future (more experienced, more mature) self to answer when you re-read this document at that time.