

REAL ESTATE AND HOUSING CO-OP REPORT

Revised Winter 2016

WORK TERM REPORT THREE

The work term report is designed for you to blend what you learn in school with “real world” experience. This report should link the academic literature to your current work experience. When creating your work term report, consider the following factors:

- The work term report is built into your work experience to ensure that you have undertaken an independent project.
- The work term report ensures that you are “thinking” about what you are learning, not just “doing” your work. There is a link between the work terms and the academic terms.
- The work term report becomes more purposeful when the report is a value-added document for your employer. If so then your report can be used by your employer and you have an opportunity to hone your professional skills and business writing ability.
- **However, the work term report should not just be a report written as a component of your responsibilities at work; it needs to include additional research.** For example, if the report is an analysis of the office market in Toronto, you could add information on the various methods used by academics to forecast demand in the future, issues with data availability and reliability, etc. Or, to reinforce the ideas in the previous bullet point, you could use this report as an opportunity to research a feature of a quarterly report which your employer worries about but does not have the time to study deeply.
- The work term report will allow for you to build your professional portfolio. You will receive feedback on it from your faculty advisor. Please make a point of picking it up the semester after you have submitted it (or later).

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

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

Examples of projects that students have worked on in the past include:

- Sample appraisal of a property along with background as to why this type of valuation approach is applicable for this type of property and issues commonly faced when completing this type of valuation technique.
- Training manual for other co-op students coming to work for this organization, along with background on how effective training manuals should be developed.
- Property management issues for the organization and how they are addressed, referring to the literature on property management for the types of properties this organization manages.

- Expropriation of real estate and the associated valuation issues.
- Analysis of data and implications for a segment of the real estate industry (e.g. aging of the population and implications for the home building industry).
- Implications of technological change: Social media, building information systems, LEED, combining new software with old business practices in one aspect of a business or integrating the output of various types of software for use in the C-suite.

You can write about almost any topic, provided you relate it to your academic studies. If, for example, your report is a training manual for new staff, then you might consider discussing traits and skills that are important in this sector of the real estate industry, important qualifications for the job, how this segment of the industry relates to other segments, and what features need to be incorporated into any training manual to make it a more effective document. Or, your report could compare current practices at your employer with “best practices” in the industry or compare them to a benchmark based on other companies. **Please note that your report is *not* a diary of your activities during your work term.**

APPROACH TO WORK REPORT DEVELOPMENT

- **Determine your work term report topic.** Approach your employer. Does your employer have any projects, reports, surveys, etc. that it would find useful to have completed even if they were not part of the original work for the term? Is there an area of the real estate industry or a trend which they suggest you research?
 - **Contact your Faculty Advisor.** Once you have a topic in mind, contact your Faculty Advisor. In your e-mail, please indicate your co-op work term employer, your position and your primary responsibilities. Describe your ideas for your work report. He or she will contact you with specific suggestions or refinements to your topic.
- **Add the Academic Component.** 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. 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.
 - 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.

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.

FORMAT OF THE WORK TERM 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 at least 12pages 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".
- **Table of Contents.** In general, the logic of your report should be clearly laid out in the

second half of the Introduction. A short table may be appropriate for a longer report. It could note the main sections (but not subsections) as well as any appendices, tables, graphs, or illustrations that you include.

- **Employer Work Report Evaluation Form.** Attach your employer's comments on your report: [https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/recruitguelph.ca.cecs/files/Co-op Work Term Report Employer Comments-Fillable Form.pdf](https://www.recruitguelph.ca/cecs/sites/recruitguelph.ca.cecs/files/Co-op%20Work%20Term%20Report%20Employer%20Comments-Fillable%20Form.pdf)

MISCELLANEOUS

- Generally, the body of the final report is no less than 12 pages in length, double spaced.
- Any e-mail correspondence to Co-op Faculty Advisor should include the word *Co-op* in the subject line. This will help him or her to identify your e-mail more quickly and to respond more efficiently. If you have not heard back within one week, please resend your email.
- Please ensure that you keep a copy of your report until you have received a grade.
- 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.

DEADLINES . . . WHAT GOES WHERE AND WHEN

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, with enough time for your employer to comment on it. 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.