Coop Work Term Requirements
Guidelines for Learning
BASc degree programs in Child Youth and Family, and Adult Development
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1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

Students prepare a work report for each of the three work terms. Students are advised to choose a topic that is of interest to them, and that will advance their professional development (or be in line with their career path). Sometimes suggestions are provided to students that deal with contemporary or emerging issues. Students often choose a topic at the micro-level for their first report; however, they are encouraged to expand their scope in each subsequent report. The work report offers students the opportunity to merge understanding derived from research with their actual work in the coop program. In the report, students are to demonstrate their knowledge of the scientific and professional literature, their ability to integrate such information and knowledge, and conduct an application to their work placement. Students are also provided with the opportunity to develop report writing skills.

Students also gain breadth and depth of knowledge of their own skill acquisition, learning objectives, career interests, and strengths and weaknesses. They work closely with the Coop Coordinator who facilitates the development of understanding of these aspects of student learning. Students have the opportunity to develop a wide range of professional and interpersonal skills that are transferrable to other settings and to other professional activities (e.g., occupation, volunteer work, etc.).

It is hoped that students develop comprehension of the purposes of the work activities, and how these activities contribute to a broader purpose. Students are also encouraged to begin to take responsibility for their own learning.

2. Knowledge of Methodologies

In their review of the scientific literature, students begin to acquire an appreciation of research methodology as the avenue for knowledge development. The application of knowledge to their work placement requires students to observe and analyze components of the work they do, or the work of others, or the clients they serve. Students must develop a method for merging their understanding of the research literature with their work in placement. Students may further develop knowledge of methodologies through their work or report by conceptualizing a (research) question and developing the methods to answer it, such as developing data gathering strategies (e.g., questionnaire).

Students refine their abilities to successfully search for, access, retrieve and evaluate research or information, which fosters research skill development. Students may begin to develop the capacity to critique the literature on methodological grounds.

Students also engage in problem solving during their work placements as part of their work performance.

3. Application of Knowledge

In their work reports, students are required to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic through review of the relevant literature. They are also encouraged to demonstrate critical thinking abilities and independence of thought through expression of original ideas, novel ways of solving problems, or recommendations. Students work independently and are encouraged to make decisions regarding their topic, and the literature to be reviewed and evaluated. Students have the opportunity to develop and strengthen their independence of thinking in each subsequent report.

In their work terms, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their moral maturity, integrity and adherence to ethical codes of conduct (these are evaluated by the employer and coop coordinator). Students may also develop insights into the lives of others. For example, students can develop an appreciation for the hardships that many families endure, and ways that coping can be effective or strategies that might be effective if they were available. These strengths and insights are often reflected in their work reports.

Students are provided with the opportunity to hone their skills in project and time management with respect to their work report, and in their specific work-related activities.

4. Communication Skills

Students demonstrate their communication skills in their interactions with the Faculty Advisor prior to completion of their work reports, and in their work reports. For each report, students receive detailed comments and general suggestions for improving their written communication. Students are encouraged to employ academic language to enhance their literacy skills. Numeracy skills are developed in required Statistics and Research Methods courses, and can be demonstrated in reports in which data have been aggregated or analyzed. Students may enhance their ability to conceptualize and organize ideas into coherent displays of knowledge (or arguments). For the work report, students are evaluated in terms of their written communication skills.

In their work terms, students often have the opportunity to develop or refine interpersonal skills and interactional skills, and to develop skills to work collaboratively as part of a team.

Students are evaluated in terms of their communication skills, including oral communication skills by their employer or supervisor.

5. Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge

Students should develop an awareness of the limits of their disciplinary knowledge and their own knowledge and the implications of these limitations, and develop an awareness of the limits of practice knowledge in their placements. Students have the opportunity to develop an appreciation of the limits of knowledge and resulting ambiguity and uncertainty in work and academic environments.

Students may also develop or refine their ability to critically evaluate the literature they rely upon to produce their report

6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity

Students may develop an appreciation for the complex and dynamic nature of individual, organizational and community issues relevant to their work placement site. Students may develop an awareness of the organizational structure and the constraints within the agency, such as constraints stemming from the funding framework. For example, funding may affect program delivery, staff turnover, and so forth.

Life-long learning, a desire for continuous learning, and self-management are nurtured in coop students. Many students assume leadership roles on projects. The work experience offers students the opportunity to develop a professional persona through observing other professional behaviours and attending to the organizational culture. Students may develop workplace awareness through their coop experiences that may also assist in their decisions regarding a direction for future courses, future educational pursuits (such as graduate studies), and future careers.