Co-op

Co-op Term Sequence

FIM students will have the option of co-op in the degree. The proposed co-op term sequence is outline in Table 1. Schedule for FIM Co-op. The summer work term in year three is optional.

Table 1. Schedule for FIM Co-op

Year	Fall	Winter	Summer
1	Academic	Academic	Off
2	Academic	Academic	Work
3	Academic	Academic	Work (optional)
4	Work	Work	Off
5	Academic	Academic	

Learning Outcomes for Co-op Work Terms

Student who complete the Co-op work terms and associated reports will have demonstrated that they are able to:

1. Articulate the skills, motivations, behaviours and knowledge necessary for employment in their chosen field/industry;

2. Describe and explain the key characteristics and features of the position itself, in terms of responsibilities and decision-making, beyond the specific assigned tasks;

3. Describe and explain the broader context of the position within the hiring organization (e.g., organizational structure, institutional or corporate culture, risk management and contribution to corporate or institutional objectives);

4. Evaluate their own performance in their work term through self-assessment, including feedback received from their employer and supervisor and identify opportunities for improvement;

5. Set short and long-term goals for developing skills, motivations, behaviours, competencies and knowledge, based on their self-assessment and job evaluation;

6. Create a plan to participate in any academic or co-curricular, networking, training and professional development experiences that will assist them in achieving their career goals;
7. Collaborate with their supervisor and employer to identify a specific challenge or issue related to their job placement which the student can investigate and develop recommended actions for resolving the issue (or report on your learning experiences and skills development).

Co-op Assessment

Table 2 outlines the proposal for how FIM co-op students will be assessed and the alignment with the learning outcomes (LO) above.

Table 2. Co-op Assessments

Form of Assessment	Content/Activity	LO	Timeline/ Due*
COOP*1100	Resume, cover letter, interview skills training, professional expectations.	n/a	Third semester
Work Report 1: Poster Presentation	Develop and present poster (in case of time conflict, presentation can be pre-recorded)	2, 3	Beginning of term after co-op work term
Work Report 1: Digital assessment	For example, blog, vlog, video, podcast, social media threads	1, 4, 5	Middle of term after co-op work term
Work Report - Optional	Written Report	1-5	Beginning of term after co-op work term
Work Report 2: Employer Project	Written Report (with emphasis on LO 7)	1-7	Beginning of term after co-op work term
Work Report 3: Employer Project	Written Report	2, 3, 7	Beginning of term after co-op work term
Work Report 3: Summative Reflection	Written Paper	1, 4, 5, 6	Beginning of term after co-op work term

* *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.*

Additional Comments

Your report should be submitted, along with a cover letter, on the due date specified on the co-op office web site. The cover letter should be addressed to the coop advisor, and include information on where you worked, your main responsibilities, the topic of your report, and an acknowledgement to the supervisors who helped you during your co-op term.

Co-op Work Report Guidelines

To qualify for the co-op certificate at the end of undergraduate studies, co-op students must effectively demonstrate they have achieved the co-op learning outcomes. For each co-op work term, one or more assessments must be submitted for demonstrating learning outcome achievement. The entirety of assessments for a given co-op term is generically referred to as Work Report. The below guidelines are intended to provide guidance for completion of assessments.

Work Report 1: Poster presentation and one digital assessment

The first Work Report covers learning outcomes 1 – 5 and consists of two assessments.

I. **Poster Presentation:** Primarily addressing LOs 2 and 3, students are asked to describe and explain their position/their unit in the organizational structure of their employer and illustrate which function their unit has in the wider organizational context. While poster and presentation are graded on a rubric, the purpose of the presentation among the co-op cohort is to network, provide a platform for co-op students to share their experiences and to get feedback and input for developing the second assessment.

II. **Digital Assessment:** Primarily addressing LOs 1, 4 and 5, students can choose one form of digital assessment to reflect on their own skills, motivations, knowledge, goals and professional development in relation to the first co-op work term. The content of the digital assessment can be organized in alignment with the three learning outcomes, concluding with a description of professional and academic goals (LO4) that are based on reflections on the work term experience. While rubrics or examples illustrating different levels of reflection are used for grading, the main objective is to demonstrate to students the value of regular reflection and self assessment for their personal and professional development.

Optional Work Report

The optional Work Report is a written report, focusing on learning outcomes 1 – 5 and can be structured as follows,
1. Description of position (LO 2)
2. Location of position and unit in the employer's organizational structure (LO3)
3. Required skills, motivations, behaviours and knowledge for success in position (LO1)
4. Self assessment of performance in comparison to requirements (LO4)
5. Goal setting based on reflection on learning experience in work term (LO5)

The report should not exceed 10 pages (main body of report), not including title page, references and appendices. The preferred font is Arial, font size 12, with 1.25-line spacing.

Work Report 2

The second Work Report is a written report, covering learning outcomes 1 – 7 but strongly emphasizing LO 7 and can be structured as follows,
1. Description of position (LO 2)

2. Location of position and unit in the employer's organizational structure (LO3)
3. Required skills, motivations, behaviours and knowledge for success in position (LO1)
4. Self assessment of performance in comparison to requirements (LO4)
5. Goal setting based on reflection on learning experience in work term (LO5) and development of plan (LO6) for networking, curricular and extracurricular activities, and professional development to achieve goals.
6. Project identified in collaboration with co-op supervisor in employing organisation (LO7).

The report should not exceed 12 pages (main body of report), not including title page, references and appendices. Of the main body of the report, between 40% and 50% should be devoted to the project. The preferred font is Arial, font size 12, with 1.25-line spacing.

Employer Project

The student and their advisor at the employing organization discuss and agree on a small, well-defined project that the student can complete during the work term. The co-op faculty advisor approves the topic and should thus be consulted in the process. The expected time needed to document the project and its outcomes in the work report should not exceed three work days. Since co-op positions are expected to vary greatly between BBRM.FIM co-op students, the project topic selection is open to any meaningful suggestion.

Your topic is specific to your employer. Think about what would be of use to your employer in your workplace. Does your employer have any projects, reports, surveys, handbooks, manuals, etc. they may find useful to have completed that were not part of the original/assigned work for the term? Think in terms of what type of report would be of value to your employer. Then, approach your advisor and have a conversation about what would be most helpful to their organization. Come to a tentative agreement. The process should be started in the first month of the work term, after you have settled into your new work environment.

Please note that all work reports are, in principle, available to the public and should thus not include confidential or sensitive information.

Work Report 3: Written Project Report and Summary Reflection Paper

The third Work Report covers learning outcomes 1 – 7 and consists of two assessments.

I. **Written Project Report**
   The written report covers LOs 2, 3 and 7 and can be structured as follows,
   1. Description of position (LO 2)
   2. Location of position and unit in the employer's organizational structure (LO3)
   3. Project identified in collaboration with co-op supervisor in employing organisation (LO7).

   The report should not exceed 10 pages (main body of report), not including title page, references and appendices. Of the main body of the report, about two thirds should be devoted to the employer project. The description of the position and its location in the organizational structure should thus provide information that is necessary for understanding the background of the employer project. For guidelines on choosing a

project topic, see above Work Report t. The preferred font is Arial, font size 12, with 1.25-line spacing.

II. Summative Reflection Paper (LOs 5 and 6)

Students on their final co-op work term are required to write a reflection paper, looking back on their co-op and academic experience. The paper should be between 6 and 8 pages long, not including title page, references and appendices. It should highlight the skills and knowledge that you have gained via your education, co-op program and other experiences here at the University of Guelph. Include reflections on each work term, which could include job search preparation, the work experience, learning objectives progress, performance & report feedback, and what you learned from each experience. A reflection paper is not meant to document what happened; it should be your reflections on how you changed over the course of your education at Guelph. Some questions you might want to consider when preparing for this report are:

- What did you expect to get from your co-op experience when you applied for co-op initially? Was your experience what you expected?
- What surprised you about your work terms and what have you learned about the environment you would like to work in when you graduate?
- If you were starting over would you want to do the co-op option again? Why or why not?
- What was the most difficult work term you went through? Why was it so difficult?
- Do you think your work term experiences changed how you approached your academic work? If so, how?
- 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 that you were not aware of?
- What advice would you give to incoming co-op students to get the most out of the co-op experience?

Appendix 2: Sample questions to initiate reflection on work term experiences for reports, organized along learning outcomes

1 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?
- What has changed between then and the end of your work term?
- How important are/were less obvious or visible skills regarding, for example, creativity, initiative, teamwork, communications?
- Do you get a sense that there is a specific work ethic or spirit in the unit or organization you are working at?

2 Position and responsibilities:

- What were your main responsibilities of your position? How clearly were they described?
- How many of your activities were recurring regularly and how many were new, non-routine tasks?
- Have your received written documentation of or formal training about relevant regulations, operating procedures, internal and external communication, and supervision?

3 Context of your position and organizational structure of employer

- Can you draw a graph that shows how the employing organization is structured, also known as organigram? Don't go into too much detail, an overview is sufficient.
- What is the geographical distribution/presence of your employer? Is it part of a larger, province-wide, national or international organization?
- What are the main functions and responsibilities of your unit?
- How is it connected to other units in the employing organization? What would happen, if your unit stopped working (properly)?

4 Self assessment and performance evaluation

- 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?
- Have you identified weakness that you decided to work on, or identified strengths that you now consider to expand on for academic or career development?

5 Goal setting

- 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?
- What are the differences and similarities of theories learned in the classroom compared to that in the workplace?

- Reflecting on your experience gained from the co-op program, what has the practical application of classroom knowledge in the workplace done to your evolution as a student?
- How will you prepare for your next work term?

6 Professional and academic development plans

- How did your co-op experience influence your development as a professional?
- What did you observe and learn about workplace language, etiquette, issues, work ethic, management styles, and organizational policies and procedures?
- 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? If so, what are the changes?
- Have you identified resources that you can/will tap in for advancing your 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?

Personal development

Although not listed as a learning outcome, please be aware of your personal development during the work terms, as it is closely linked to your academic and professional development. Here, you ask the most fundamental questions that put professional and academic goals and development in perspective.

- 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.
- Other areas which you could explore are: 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.

7 Employer project

Please see the specific instructions for the employer project under Work Report 2.