

Food Science Work Term Report Guidelines

Co-op Faculty Advisor

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Overview

In order to qualify for the co-op certificate at the end of your undergraduate studies, you must show that during your co-op term some academic work was performed. If you were just a pair of hands that followed orders without any of your own thought and input, this would not be considered a learning experience. Therefore, each co-op student is required to write reports to demonstrate that some academic learning took place. These reports cannot be simply a summary of what you did but must be a scientific study that summarizes experimental work that was performed during your co-op term or examines the current literature on a particular subject relevant to your job.

Your first co-op work term normally takes place in the summer after your second year of studies, and you will be required to submit a full report for this semester. Your second and third co-op work terms, which are usually done after your sixth semester of study, are typically an eight-month job co-op term with the same employer and supervisor. If this is the case, then you will only need to submit a five-page update that summarizes what your topic will be, what you have accomplished so far, and what will be done in the next semester by the end of the second work term. This update will not receive a mark, but you will be asked to rewrite it if the Co-op Faculty Advisor feels that there are serious problems with the contents. If you do not receive any feedback on the submitted update, you can assume that it was satisfactory. A full report will then be submitted after

the third co-op work term. If you change co-op terms between the second and third work terms, then full reports will be required for each job. Some students opt to register for an optional fourth co-op work term. If all three semesters are at the same job, then five-page updates will be required for each of the second and third work terms, and a final report will be submitted at the end of the fourth. Once again, if your job or location changes for the fourth work term, then an additional full report will be required. In some cases, your employer might want a full report for each semester you are employed even though you are still at the same job, and their wishes must be respected.

Topic

After settling into your job, you should have a discussion with your immediate job supervisor concerning potential report topics. Students should note that **confidential reports are not permitted**. Hopefully, you will have your own work project that is not proprietary, which can be used as the basis of your report. Often, even if there are some proprietary issues, reports can simply be written using inexplicit terms like ‘ingredient X’, ‘process Y’, or ‘product Z’ to maintain confidentiality. If your project is so top secret that your employer feels that even this approach is unacceptable, or if your work simply does not lend itself well as a subject of a co-op report, you can suggest to your Co-op Faculty Advisor literature review topics that are related to your job and would be of use to your employer.

About a month into your work term, you are required to send an e-mail to the Co-op Faculty Advisor that proposes, in a few paragraphs, what your final work report will encompass. Often, several correspondences are needed to finally arrive at an appropriate subject. **Your co-op report topic must obtain final approval from the Co-op Faculty Advisor at least two months before the final submission date.**

Format

Brilliant students who are incapable of effectively exchanging their ideas with the rest of the world are destined to a life of frustration. On the other hand, flashy gimmicks, and

excessive jargon cannot conceal a project lacking substance. Every report should focus on both style and content.

Your report should be divided into subsections in order to provide clarity. Headings should be consistent, logically related to one another, and grammatically parallel. Be careful not to overuse subheadings. Word processing software such as Word™ can automatically format your document using a variety of outline styles. Research reports typically use the 1., 1.1, 1.1.1 structure but any consistent format is acceptable. Bullets are sometimes used to list important points in a document; however, they should not be overused or substitute for properly written prose.

Your report should be written so that a fellow classmate would comprehend it. In other words, you can assume that the reader understands general food science so there is no need to give detailed explanations of basic concepts. However, provide explanations with references for any more esoteric concepts specific to your project. The document should be approximately 15 double spaced pages of text not including figures, tables, references and appendices. **Using large fonts, wide margins and excessive spacing between titles to make the report look longer than it really is will not be looked upon favorably.**

The document should begin with a title page that includes the following information: project title, student name, student number, work term number, job location, and date. The next page should contain a 200-300 word executive summary. This provides the reader with a brief overview of the document. It should explain the rationale for the project, briefly describe what was accomplished, and highlight key issues and conclusions. Following this will be the Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures.

The first major section of the report is the Introduction. This section does not have to be long, but should provide context (i.e., the purpose of the report). The issues on which the project will focus also need to be justified. It is often useful to conclude the introduction with a specific list of project objectives.

If your report is a literature review, you can choose section titles that would be relevant to your topic. However, if the report describes a research project, then the following sections should be used: Literature Review (what has been done previously? what were

the objectives of the project?), Materials and Methods (what did you do and how did you do it?), Results (what did you find?) and Discussion (what are the implications of the findings?). The manufacturer or supplier of equipment or chemicals used in the study should be cited in the text (for example: Sodium Chloride (Fisher Scientific, Ottawa, ON)). Figures and tables should be properly labelled and numbered and placed in the report immediately following the corresponding reference in the text. Figure titles are found below the figure, whereas table titles are placed above. When you print out your final document, make sure that figures and tables are not segregated between two pages--the complete figure or table should appear on one page. Also, move titles that are right at the bottom of a page to the top of the next.

All information that is not essential to the understanding of the work but would be helpful to people continuing the project (e.g., company literature, equipment specifications, or detailed calculations or statistics) should be relegated to an appendix. Figures, tables or appendix material must all be cited in the text of the main document.

Conclusions and recommendations are in the final section of the main document. This section is not a synopsis of the document (this is the role of the Executive Summary). It should be succinct and address the specific issues and objectives previously raised in the introduction. Recommendations can answer the question: where do we go from here? or can list issues that require further investigation. Finally, a reference section lists all the publications or web sites specifically cited in the document. References must be provided in a standard format (the IFT Style Guide can be found at <https://www.ift.org/news-and-publications/scientific-journals/journal-of-food-science/author-guidelines> . A wide variety of books, scientific articles, and web sources should be used. If you cannot conveniently visit the University of Guelph Library during your work term, many articles and e-books can be accessed remotely through the library's web site.

All ideas in the report taken from other sources must be properly referenced. Citing a reference allows you to use the person's idea but does not give you the right to copy word-for-word sections of their text. If you have not already, I suggest that you read the University of Guelph rules on plagiarism, <http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/plagiarism.cfm>

A report containing many grammar and spelling mistakes quickly loses credibility. Readers ask themselves: if the author was careless with these aspects of the report, how careful were they when collecting their data or performing calculations? Fast Facts Sheets on common writing errors can be found on the University of Guelph Learning Commons website, <https://inventory.lib.uoguelph.ca/resources>

A word processor's grammar and spell checker is not an adequate substitute for proper proof-reading because these devices will not catch many common mistakes. Having a colleague carefully read your report before handing it in will catch any missed errors and significantly improve your final mark. The clarity of a document can also be greatly improved with effective punctuation. Most students only use (or misuse) commas and periods and do not employ colons, semi-colons or long dashes.

Sentences that are wordy and repetitive are a chore to read, so tightening up the text is an essential step before document submission. Fast Facts Sheets on sentence structure and proper writing style can once again be found on the University of Guelph Learning Commons website.

Co-op reports are considered formal documents. As a result, contractions (e.g., can't, he's) should not be used and jargon should be kept to a minimum. A well written document should flow, with one section naturally leading to the next without any non-sequencers. Marks will be lost if the final document lacks continuity or contains a great deal of overlap between sections.

Submitting Reports

Electronic submission is preferred in either Word or PDF format by email with request for read receipt to glapoint@uoguelph.ca . The read receipt will provide confirmation of receipt by the faculty advisor.

Your report should be submitted, with a cover letter before the title page, on the due date specified on the co-op office web site, along with the signed employer comments form. The cover letter should be addressed to the co-op 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. If there are mitigating circumstances that will hold up the submission of your report (e.g., tests not complete, bosses not available, etc.), please inform your Co-op Faculty Advisor well ahead of the due date. Also, if your supervisor is late with their employer comments evaluation form, indicate this in your cover letter and provide a date when you expect to receive it.

Ahead of the due date, you must provide adequate justification for any elements that will be missing from your submission (cover letter, report, employer comments form) along with a plan for providing the missing elements. A submission missing any of the required elements without adequate justification and a corrective plan will be graded “unsatisfactory”.

Evaluation

Students must submit a [Co-op Work Term Report - Employer Comments Form](#) when handing in their report. Please note that your employer’s comments are not used in the overall evaluation of your report. Graded reports can be requested by email and if provided in electronic form. They will only be kept on file for 6 months and will be disposed of after that time. To grade your report, the following marking scheme is used: [Marking Scheme for the Report](#).

A student who receives an Unsatisfactory work report evaluation will be given one opportunity to make revisions and resubmit the report. The work term report must be resubmitted by the deadline specified by the faculty advisor AND address the identified deficiencies in order to be upgraded to satisfactory.