



**Henry Ford College Office of Career Services Presents:**

**Creating a Quality Cooperative Education (co-op) Experience**

**“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”  
— Benjamin Franklin, inventor, scientist, diplomat**

This guide is designed to assist your organization in the development of a successful cooperative education worksite. It will give you information and samples designed to help you create co-op positions that meet the needs of your organization and assist students in gaining professional, career related experience.

### **What is Cooperative Education?**

**Cooperative Education (Co-op):** An academic partnership in which the college and the employer join to provide the student with a method of learning which integrates work experience and classroom instruction. Students are employed in practical, paid positions directly related to their educational and career goals. Through the integration of academic study and work experience, students enhance their academic knowledge, personal development, and professional preparation.

### **Benefits of Cooperative Education for the Employer**

- Increases cost-effectiveness of recruitment and training.
- Results in a higher average retention rate among permanent employees recruited and hired through a co-op program.
- Provides an opportunity to evaluate employees prior to a decision regarding full-time employment.
- Allows flexibility in staffing.
- Brings state-of-the-art technical knowledge to the workplace.
- Exempts employers from paying unemployment compensation taxes on wages of co-op students if they are enrolled in a qualified co-op program and from paying unemployment compensation to students released from these programs.
- Creates a partnership between business and education.

### **Benefits of Cooperative Education for the Student**

- Enhances the student's marketability by providing valuable work experiences.
- Integrates work experiences with classroom instruction.
- Provides academic credit toward graduation (in most programs).
- Enables students to earn money to help defray college expenses.
- Develops self-confidence, responsibility, and professional competence.
- Provides student contact and exposure to the working world.
- Helps students to develop long-range career goals.
- Encourages the development of a working portfolio.

Henry Ford College can provide co-op students enrolled in most of the programs as long as they're gaining skills that align with their education and career goals.

For a complete list of all degrees available at Henry Ford College visit:

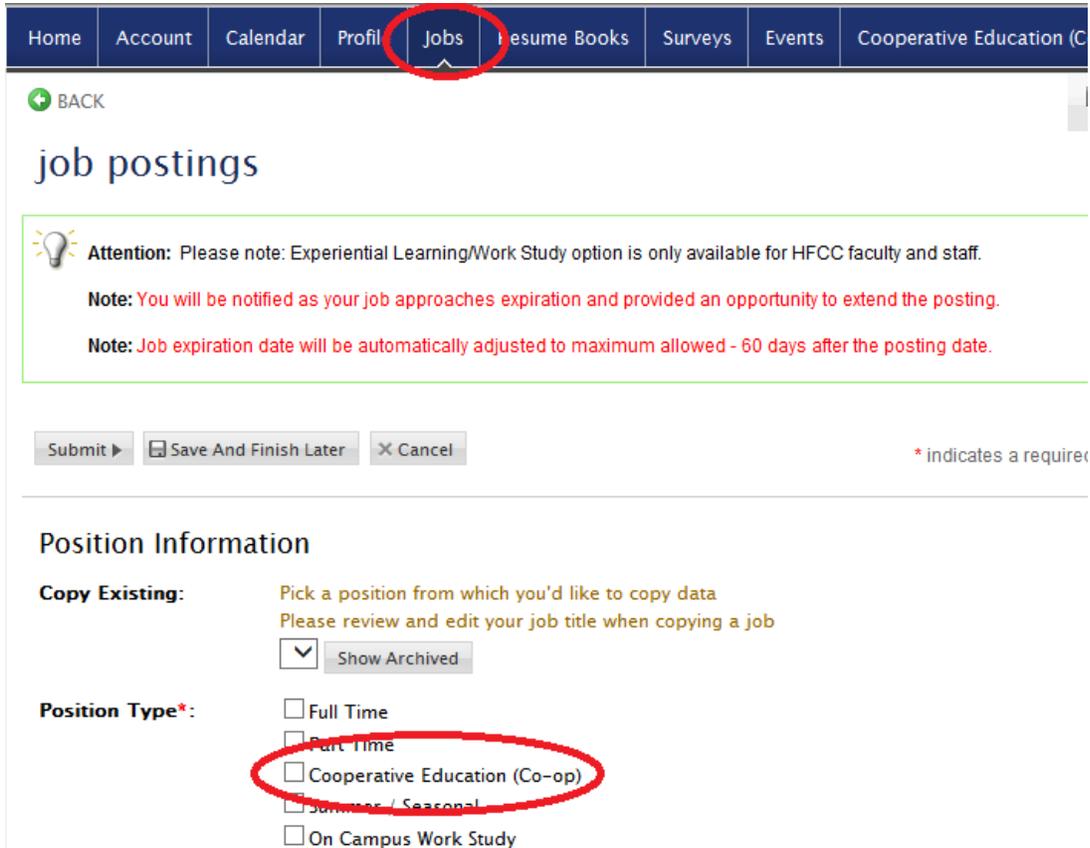
<https://www.hfcc.edu/catalog/programs>

Co-op is required for the following programs (click the links for details about each program)

- [Administrative & Information Management](#)
- [Architecture/Construction Technology](#)
- [Automotive Service Management - Technical Concentration](#)
- [Electrical Technology](#)
- [Culinary Arts](#)
- [Hotel/Restaurant Management](#)

## How to Post a Co-op Job on HFC Job Leads

- Visit [careers.hfcc.edu](https://careers.hfcc.edu)
- Click on the Employer Login section
- Click “Login” if you have an existing account or click “register and post a local job” to create a new account
- Once you’ve registered, click on the “jobs” tab and click “+add new”
- Position type must indicate Cooperative Education (co-op) – See Picture Below.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the HFC Job Leads website. The 'Jobs' tab is highlighted with a red circle. Below the navigation bar, there is a 'job postings' section with a lightbulb icon and an attention message. The attention message states: 'Attention: Please note: Experiential Learning/Work Study option is only available for HFCC faculty and staff.' Below this, there are two notes: 'Note: You will be notified as your job approaches expiration and provided an opportunity to extend the posting.' and 'Note: Job expiration date will be automatically adjusted to maximum allowed - 60 days after the posting date.' At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Position Information' section. Under 'Copy Existing:', there is a dropdown menu with 'Show Archived' selected. Under 'Position Type\*:', there are five radio button options: 'Full Time', 'Part Time', 'Cooperative Education (Co-op)', 'Summer / Seasonal', and 'On Campus Work Study'. The 'Cooperative Education (Co-op)' option is circled in red.

You can also submit your co-op job description to the Job Developer in the Career Services Office. Please assure that you include the following information in your job description.

- Company name, address, and web address
- Company contact person name, title, phone and fax numbers, and email address
- Department/Division
- Co-op Job Title
- Minimum qualifications
- Brief description of duties
- Work schedule
- Salary or salary range
- Benefits (if available)

**Please send information to:**  
Henry Ford Community College  
Office of Career Services - Co-op  
5101 Evergreen  
Dearborn, MI 48128  
Phone: (313) 845-6370  
Fax: (313) 845-9899  
Email: [kerue@hfcc.edu](mailto:kerue@hfcc.edu)

## **Five Steps to Developing a Quality Co-op Experience**

### **Step 1: Set Goals and Policies for the Co-op Position**

What is the main goal for your company's participation in cooperative education?

- Look at current business activities and consider what ongoing work you would like to expand or projects you would like to initiate or complete that are beneficial to your organization and would provide challenging learning experiences for students.

Who will supervise and mentor the co-op student?

- A successful supervisor:
  - Enjoys teaching and has time to dedicate to training.
  - Possesses good communication skills, is sensitive to the student's needs, and is willing to devote time to address those needs.
  - Helps the student complete projects on time and on budget.
  - Models good work habits and always stresses high standards.

### **Step 2: Write a Plan for the Co-op Experience**

- Plan work assignments that offer professional, and career related experiences of real value.
- Offer the student a variety of assignments including exposure to different departments/divisions.
- Offer more challenging projects as the student progresses.
  - Identify goals, timelines, workspace, and general description of the projects.
- Create a job description for the position.

### **Step 3: Recruit a Qualified Co-op Student**

- Allow time to search for qualified candidates. Arrange interviews in a timely manner (best practice: 3 - 5 days).
- Hire co-op students as carefully as you hire permanent employees.
- Once you have selected your candidate, extend an offer to student(s) of your choice.
- Notify candidates who were interviewed but not chosen for the position.

#### **Step 4: Manage the Co-op Student**

- Complete the following steps with the student to start everything off on the right foot!
  - Provide an orientation to the company.
  - Review personnel policies including work hours, lunch/breaks, sick time, etc.
  - Ensure the student understands safe practices and proper use of equipment.
  - Give the student a clear idea of what is expected and what learning opportunities are available.
  - Give your co-op student the resources needed to do the job.
    - Provide proper equipment, tools, office supplies, computer and/or work station as these are important for job success.
  - Introduce the student to other personnel and show where appropriate resources are.
  - Monitor the co-op student's progress.
    - Keep in mind this could be the first professional work experience for this person. When work is assigned make sure it is given with a detailed explanation. A few extra minutes of explanation will pay off later when the student produces good work independently.
  - Make sure you are aware of what's happening with the student's daily tasks.
  - Help your co-op student set goals for completion of various tasks including daily, weekly, and monthly goals. This will help establish a solid work ethic for the student.
  - Evaluate the co-op student's progress periodically.
    - Evaluations are important for the success of your co-op student's experience.

#### **Step 5: Conduct Exit Interviews and Follow-up**

- Proving the value of your cooperative education program will require evidence that your organization is getting a return on its investment.
- Use the employer evaluation form as a guide to assist you in evaluating the student's performance.
- At the end of the work term, review the student's goals and discuss either the possible continuation of co-op or the opportunity of permanent employment.
- For students not returning, conduct an exit interview to determine if co-op students are leaving the organization having had a good experience. This can be valuable for future staff planning.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: Why should I hire a co-op student?*

A: Large and small companies, as well as public sector and nonprofit organizations, have found co-op to be a cost effective way to recruit temporary or permanent employees.

*Q: What qualifications will the students have?*

A: Students will have completed at least half of their required courses in their degree program.

- Employers can require the completion of specific courses, minimum grade point average, and specific skills and knowledge.
- Co-op students bring state-of-the-art technical knowledge to their work assignments.
- They are enthusiastic and eager to learn.

*Q: What level of compensation is typical for cooperative education students?*

A: The average wage for the past 2 semesters (Fall 2013 & Winter 2014) for students working off-campus was \$12.05 per hour. The wages ranged from \$8.00 to \$23.00 per hour, depending on the field that the student was working in and their level of experience.

*Q: Is my organization responsible for providing benefits for co-ops?*

A: If your organization can provide benefits to a co-op student that is a positive asset and added incentive for them. Co-op students are in a separate classification from permanent employees and employers are not required to pay benefits.

*Q: How many hours do co-op students work per week? Do they typically work five days a week?*

A: Co-op students are available year round, for full or part-time positions. Please include your needs in the job description so that students are aware of the requirements.

*Q: What if my co-op student does not work out?*

A: The co-op agreement can be terminated at any time; however, we encourage employers to consult with the cooperative education office to help determine strategies to improve the situation.

**Contact the co-op office to discuss the situation before taking any action.**

*Q: I like my co-op student and would like to extend the co-op position. How do I go about this?*

A: This is at your company's and the student's agreement and you may continue a co-op position and/or offer permanent employment once the semester has been completed. Many organizations offer co-op students permanent positions upon completion of class or upon graduation.

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*"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."*

**—Henry Ford**

## Sample Co-op Job Description

**Capital & Associates**  
5101 Wealth Rd.  
Dearborn, MI 48128  
[www.capital&associates.com](http://www.capital&associates.com)

Capital & Associates is a full service accounting firm with services including payroll management, financial statements, tax services, and various business advisory services.

**Contact:** Richard Rich, Accounting Manager

**Phone:** 313-555-5555

**Fax:** 313-555-5551

**Email:** rrich@capital&associates.com

**Position:** Accounting Assistant

### **Job Description:**

- Reconcile payroll and expenditure reports.
- Enter statistical data and make corrections when required (accuracy very important).
- Organize and maintain reimbursement records.
- Enter invoices and purchase orders into computer system.
- Assist with special projects such as budget, revolving fund account, and reimbursement records.
- Assist with general office duties as needed.
- Demonstrate good communication skills and be task oriented and organized.

### **Qualifications:**

- An Accounting student with a minimum GPA of 3.0 (preferred) and completion of Principles of Accounting levels I and II (BAC 131 & 132).
- Excellent communication skills (verbal and written) as well as strong computer skills with proficiency in Microsoft Excel, Word and Access.
- Ability to be a self-starter, multi-task, and have a desire to learn and develop professionally.

**Salary:** \$10.00 - \$12.00 per hour

**Schedule:** 15 - 20 hours per week with flexible hours.

Office hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30 - 5:00

## Sample Interview Guide

This is a guideline you may find helpful if your company does not have something in place. It is intended as a suggested example you may use. Make any changes required to fit the needs of your organization and positions for which you will be interviewing.

### Stages of the Interview

- 1. Prepare questions about:**
  - Specific coursework related to the position.
  - Knowledge or familiarity of equipment, techniques, computers, etc.
  - Previous experiences related to the position.
  - Career interests, goals.
- 2. Analyze resumes**
  - Review academic courses related to the student's program of study.
  - Check cumulative grade point average and grade point average in the relevant courses.
  - Look for accomplishments, patterns of progression, and growth.
  - Note involvement and roles in campus and community organizations.
  - Check for signs of organization, clarity, and accuracy.
- 3. Open the interview (1-2 minutes)**
  - Build friendly rapport through introductions.
  - Indicate that the student will have an opportunity to ask questions later.
  - Explain that you will be taking notes and invite the student to do so also.
- 4. Ask questions and gather information (15 minutes)**
  - Use behavioral type questions as well as open ended questions.
- 5. Allow for questions and comments (5 minutes)**
  - Answer honestly and illustrate with your own experiences if possible.
  - Assess the quality of student's questions.
  - Avoid giving answers that indicate a commitment to a position.
  - Be prepared to answer questions about the position, expected training, company structure, and company products/services.
- 6. Give information (1-2 minutes)**
  - Briefly recap information about the position.
  - Discuss the candidate's availability for the co-op position to ensure your needs will be met.
- 7. Wrap-up (1-2 minutes)**
  - Close on a positive note.
  - Briefly describe the next steps.
  - Give an estimate of when the student will hear from you.
  - Avoid making statements that may be interpreted as a promise of employment.
- 8. Evaluate the candidate's qualities with the requirements of the position**
  - Review your requirements and qualifications for the position.
  - Be objective and base your decision on the evidence.
- 9. Follow up with candidates promptly**
  - Offer the position to the selected candidate(s).
  - Send rejection letters to students who do not match your requirements. (This allows them to pursue other opportunities and leaves a professional impression of your organization).

## Sample Interview Questions

### Past Experience Questions

- What achievements from school, work, or other activities are you most proud of?
- Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about an incident where you went beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
- The position you are applying for requires you to always be courteous and friendly. How do you keep a bad day from affecting your contact with customers, guests, or co-workers?
- Tell me about a team project you completed at school, work, or while volunteering where the team was successful.
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What courses did you like the most? The least?
- Tell me about a time when your course load was heavy. How did you prioritize your work?
- What have you learned from previous jobs, classes, or participation in extracurricular activities that will help you be successful in this position?
- What qualifications do you have that will help you be successful in this job?
- Describe a situation where you showed initiative.
- What have you enjoyed most in jobs you have had?

### Job Specific Questions

- What do you know about our company?
- What interests you most about this job?
- What can you offer our organization?
- Do you have plans for continued academic study?
- What are your long range career goals?
- What skills have you obtained from your college program that will be important in this job?

### Personality Questions

- What two or three things should I know about you?
- What are some examples of situations or settings that motivate you?
- Give me an example of a problem at school or on a job that you faced and how you solved it.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe two or three accomplishments that have given you personal satisfaction.
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
- What personal characteristics do you feel are necessary to be successful in this position?