

# How Undergraduate Cooperative Education (Co-op) Works

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**Co-ops are always PAID**, usually **4-9 month positions** related to your major in which you are working at **least 30-40 hours per week and earning at least minimum wage**. While on Co-op you are not taking regular classes, but students may enroll in up to two UWW online courses and pay the UWW rates. Co-ops can be during a semester or a semester plus a winter/summer break period. A summer-only job is not a co-op, as an academic leave is not necessary in the summer. Co-op status allows you to maintain your status at UMass Amherst as a full-time student, without paying tuition. While on Co-op you don't earn academic credit, but Co-ops can be noted on your transcript, after successful completion. **You CANNOT work for family members** if you are seeking Co-op status or recognition on your transcript. You must also have an on-site supervisor at your placement site who is a professional. Students on Co-op **DO NOT WITHDRAW** from the University.

**International students** must contact the International Student Programs Office (IPO) to obtain CPT work authorization prior to accepting a paid Co-op position in the United States. <https://www.umass.edu/ipo/node/18162>

**All Undergraduate students** must get approval from the International Student Programs Office (IPO) *at least six months in advance* for an international Co-op. This applies to both domestic and international undergraduate students.

**WHEN YOU ACCEPT A POSITION** – there is **IMPORTANT PAPERWORK**, all of which must be attached to your online Co-op contract.

If you have not yet earned a **minimum of 45 credits** or have a **minimum 2.0 GPA**, you will need approval from your college's Academic Dean. The **Undergraduate Internships and Co-ops Academic Dean's Approval Form** can be found on our website Forms page at <http://www.umass.edu/careers/internships/forms>

If you are an **undergraduate student** and your internship is **outside of the United States**, contact the International Programs Office (IPO) *at least six months in advance* for approval. Once approved, ask the IPO representative to sign the **Undergraduate Internships and Co-ops International Internship/Co-op IPO Approval Form**. That form is available at <http://www.umass.edu/careers/internships/forms>

If you are an **international undergraduate student** planning to do a PAID Co-op in the United States, contact the International Programs Office (IPO). Review the CPT guidelines at: <https://www.umass.edu/ipo/node/18162> **Do not accept a position before obtaining CPT approval from your Academic Department**. Attach a copy of your offer letter to your online Co-op Experience contract in Handshake. After your co-op experience contract is approved, the Field Experience Program staff will have your status set to Co-op, Full-Time Student.

For **all undergraduate students**, if your Co-op is **during the fall or spring semester** and will take you away from campus and you will not be taking any regular classes, you need to attach a signed **Undergraduate Internships and Co-ops Placement Requirements Form**, a signed **Department Permission for Undergraduate Student Away on Internship or Co-op Form** and a signed **Field Experience During Covid19 Agreement** to your online Co-op contract before it can be approved. These forms are available on our website Forms page at <http://www.umass.edu/careers/internships/forms>.

Once you have all of the applicable forms signed, then log into **Handshake** and complete an online **Experience** form for a Co-op. Click on the **Career Center** tab on the top right, then click **Experiences**, then **Request an Experience**. Under **Details**, for **Experience Type**, select **Undergraduate Student Co-Op Experience Contract**; select a **Term**, and then include your placement details. Once you complete and submit your Handshake Experience form with any applicable attachments (see above), Field Experience Program staff will review the form and have your status changed to Co-op if it is during a fall or spring semester.

Near the end of the Co-op, you will submit a **Weekly Work Hours Log**, which will be sent to you from our office, and you and your on-site supervisor will receive emails with **final evaluations**. You both need to complete and submit them\*(required for Co-op recognition on your transcript). Once these evaluations are received, and you have provided your total work hours and they have been verified by your employer, your Co-op can be listed on your transcript as pre-professional experience. To have your Co-op listed on your transcript; send an email requesting that to [internships@umass.edu](mailto:internships@umass.edu) and include your name and SPIRE ID Number.

For those participating in fall or spring semester Co-ops, you should also contact the following offices:

- Undergraduate Registrar's Office** Email [regtrans@registrar.umass.edu](mailto:regtrans@registrar.umass.edu) or call **413-545-0555**. If necessary, change your graduation date in SPIRE so that you'll be able to register for classes for the semester when you'll be returning to campus.
- Residential Life Student Services Office** Email [living@umass.edu](mailto:living@umass.edu) or call **413-545-2100**. Remember to cancel on-campus housing for the semester(s) you'll be away and arrange housing for the semester you return. You can also arrange for housing on the UMass Mount Ida Campus while on Co-op in the Boston area; see <https://www.umass.edu/mic/internships> for details.
- UMass Dining Services** Email [umdining@umass.edu](mailto:umdining@umass.edu) or call 413-545-2472 to cancel your meal plan. This can also be done in SPIRE.
- Financial Aid Services** Email [finaid@finaid.umass.edu](mailto:finaid@finaid.umass.edu) or call **413-545-0801**. Students who receive financial aid must meet with Sharon Ruth, the Financial Aid liaison, for Co-op students.
- Veteran Services** Email [vetbenefits@umass.edu](mailto:vetbenefits@umass.edu) or call **413-545-5792**. Students currently receiving veteran's benefits should contact this office for information about what impact a Co-op may have on their benefit eligibility.

**Questions? Contact the Field Experience Program Office, Career Development & Professional Connections Hub at**  
[internships@umass.edu](mailto:internships@umass.edu)