

# Co-op Report Guidelines

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## Co-op Reports

At the end of your training, you are required to write a report reflecting on your personal growth as both a student and a business professional. Although the training or co-op might not be linked directly to a class, per se, the act of writing the report is certainly a writing-intensive experience. The document provides a simple means for you to report to your faculty supervisor on both the content and value of your work assignment. You should think of your report, therefore, as both a formal academic assignment and as a personal opportunity to use and enhance your skills as a communicator. You can use your report to review what you have learned, detail what you have accomplished, and gauge your personal growth.

Guidelines for writing your report are provided to you, and it is critical that you follow these guidelines. It is also important, though, that you treat these guidelines as starting points rather than ending ones. For instance, if you are posed with three questions to consider in a particular section of your report, your responses to these questions should be thoughtful and expansive rather than just simple one-sentence answers. Further, you should see these questions as starting points that will lead you to other related questions of your own design. The bottom line is this: Any report guidelines you are given should be viewed as a substantive framework that awaits your interpretation and elaboration, not as a simple Q-and-A or fill-in-the-blank exercise.

## Organization of the Report

Your report should be organized in several sections. To help you structure a meaningful report, we suggest you to follow the following themes.

### Cover Page

Typically, you are expected to supply a cover page giving such details as the title of your report, the type of report, your name, your major, and the complete name, address, website, and phone number of the employing organization, name of your work advisor and name of your academic advisor.

### Table of Contents

This should be a list of sections in your report and appropriate page numbers.

### Executive Summary

The executive summary is one paragraph summary of your work. It is intended to serve as a synopsis for the busy executive who doesn't have time to read the entire report.

More people will read the executive summary than any other part of the report, so its utility is critical. The executive summary is always self-contained, and is normally presented as a separate page and in a single paragraph. Executive summary is always written after finishing the entire report.

The executive summary should include the followings:

- briefly summarize the purpose of the report;
- summarize the specific nature of your work assignment;
- provide basic information about the employer;
- point the reader towards the conclusions of the report, which might in this case be your evaluation of the experience.

## Introduction

Introduction is meant to spark the reader's interest by providing basic background relevant to the report. As you write your introduction, remember that you should create immediate context, ideally with individual style. This section is intended for the benefit of the reader so that s/he has some background information on the organization where you spent your work term thus allowing the reader to better understand the context of your report.

## Report Content (The Body of the Report)

The specifics of the report content will vary from report to another. However, the body of your report should include four main subjects:

1. The organization you work with;
2. Responsibilities were assigned to you ;
3. Overall evaluation of your work experience;
4. What the future holds.

### 1. The organization you work with

You should describe the employer you worked for in thorough detail. As you do so, consider doing the following jobs, typically devoting at least one paragraph to each:

- Introduce the employer's connection to you by providing an overview of your position, including such details as where you worked, for how long, and how the position fit into your education.
- Describe the nature of the position you held in relation to the employer—what is the position's value to the company? Why does the company hire interns? Is the internship program new or long-standing?
- When appropriate, quote key company literature—e.g., a brochure, a mission statement, a web page—to summarize the company's values and culture.
- Give an overview of the employing organization's size, structure, and commitment to internship/co-op positions. Use the company literature or web page directly to help you generate detail, but avoid simple cut-and-paste composing—assimilate the material.
- Detail how the position you held fit into the overall company organization.

Outline some of the employer's key goals and challenges, highlighting those problems or projects with which you were specifically charged.

## 2. Responsibilities were assigned to you

In describing your work duties, outline your specific responsibilities and tie them into any larger projects with which you were involved. Detailed accounts should be given of such issues as the following:

- Your specific day-to-day responsibilities and activities. Turn here to your daily routine activities, record keeping methods, and any job description provided by the employer.
- Duties you took on or were assigned beyond the standard job description.
- Activities in coordination with project teams or co-workers.
- Specific technical functions of your position.
- The academic background necessary for any project you worked on.
- The goals of any project you were involved in.
- Key data, equations, or software that you generated or used.
- Analysis and application of data to your particular project.
- Documents, reports, or presentations that you were required to complete.

## 3. Overall evaluation of your work experience

An evaluation of your internship or co-op is important not just for your faculty supervisor, but for your academic department, your peers, and for you personally. As a way to evaluate your experience, elaborate on areas such as the following:

- The assessment others made of your work, especially if you were given a written evaluation.
- Contributions that the work experience made to your career development, goals, and growth.
- Contributions of the work experience to your selection of future career, either because you foresaw new needs due to the work or because a co-worker made recommendations.
- Assessment of which courses you completed that were the most or the least applicable to your internship/co-op. Note specific courses and principles studied in these courses.
- Noteworthy distinctions between your education and on-the-job experience.
- Whether the internship/co-op made good use of your technical background.
- Your level of personal satisfaction with the internship/co-op and whether or not you would recommend it to others.
- Your assessment of how the internship/co-op could be improved for others.

## 4. What the future holds

How did your co-operative education experience influence your career goals? Does it influence your understanding of what you need in terms of a professional and personal life? Based on your co-op experience, what are your goals for your upcoming years?

When you first began the co-operative education program, you probably had very different goals than you do now. Maybe they weren't that different at all. Looking back at those career goals and comparing them to now, how did your co-op work terms influence those goals? Why or why not? Explain.

## Conclusion

The content of your conclusion might be made up entirely of your evaluation of the internship/co-op. However, it is also appropriate to give an overview of the report or to highlight something that you learned in writing the report. In short, you can use the conclusion to show how the work experience changed you.

Remember too that a conclusion can be a substantial portion of a report—perhaps several pages long. This makes it even more important for you to rely on specifics, not generalities. Avoid generic unsupported conclusions such as “The internship was a positive experience for me and it was very beneficial too.” Instead, present evidence to prove your claims—provide examples, scenarios, lists, names, dates, emotions, labels, terminology. Do not skimp on detail.

As you write your conclusion, concentrate on presenting the bottom line, and think of the word’s definition: a conclusion is an articulated conviction arrived at on the basis of the evidence presented.

## References

Any sources cited in your report must be correctly listed on a references page using a citation style that is standard in your field.

## Appendices

You may find it advisable to include an appendix or appendices in order to better explain the content of your report. Use an appendix to attach any important related materials, but only if these materials are highly illuminating or were used directly to write the report.

## Format

The Co-op report should be between 6 to 10 pages in length. This does not include the title page, table of contents, executive summary, or appendices. The report should be double spaced on 8 ½ “by 11” paper with margins of 1” to 1 ½ “. Use a point size of 12 and a highly readable font such as Times New Roman. Include page numbers on all pages after page 1.

Just as in a professional paper, any tables and figures should be numbered consecutively throughout the text, and if many figures and tables appear then separate lists of them at the beginning of the report would be wise. Tables and figures should always have descriptive captions, and if they come directly from sources, the sources must be specifically credited in the captions with the same citation style that you use throughout the report.

Your Co-op report should be organized into sensible sections as it shown above. Your Co-op report will be evaluated by your Faculty Coordinator/Advisor. Co-op reports will not be accepted if:

- It is poorly organized
- It is not well written
- It has grammar, spelling or punctuation errors
- The report is simply descriptive and lacks analysis