

Policies & Practices for Co-op Employment

Established September 2023
(Updated September 2025)

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Effective date: September 1, 2023
Updated: September 1, 2025

1. Overview & Purpose

The policies set out in this document support the operation and delivery of the Faculty of Engineering Co-op Program in alignment with national accreditation standards and expectations set out by [Co-operative Education & Work-Integrated Learning \(CEWL\) Canada](#). The Centre for Career Growth & Experience (the Centre) adheres to these policies and expects the same of McMaster Engineering co-op students. The policies outlined here are applicable to all co-op students and registered co-op work terms regardless of whether they find a job on OSCARplus or through their own independent search.

The Faculty of Engineering at McMaster University reserves the right to take appropriate action in instances where students do not adhere to these expectations or engage in unprofessional conduct during the co-op process. In some cases, this may include reduced access to the OSCARplus co-op job board, being placed on probation* in the co-op program, or removal from the co-op program. Multiple infractions across policy types could lead to an escalated action plan, assessed on a on a case-by-case basis.

2. Extenuating Circumstances

In situations where extenuating circumstances may warrant alternative approaches/actions from what is outlined in this policy document, students are expected to contact their [Career Educator](#) for guidance and support. In certain cases, a special request may be an appropriate course of action. Completion of a special request or extenuating circumstances form does not guarantee approval of a request.

3. Policies & Practices

Academic Requirements & Co-op Eligibility

a) Academic Standing

- A student must be designated as full-time status in the academic term that immediately precedes the work term and returning to full-time status in the academic term that immediately follows the work term.
 - These **units must be required for your program**. Access your Advisement Report in Mosaic to view earned and outstanding course requirements for your program.
 - **Enrollment status** is calculated by adding the unit count for McMaster courses in which the student is enrolled each term (denoted in Mosaic as 'Prg

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- Units'). Courses taken on Letter of Permission (LOP) are denoted at 'Att Units' and are not used in the calculation of enrollment status.
- For **undergraduate students**, as defined by the [McMaster Undergraduate Academic Calendar – Full Time Student](#), an undergraduate student who is registered in at least 9 units in an academic term. This enrolment status requirement applies to all undergraduate co-op programs.
 - For **graduate students**, as defined by 2.2.5 of the [McMaster Graduate Academic Calendar](#) and determined at the time of admission.
 - B.Eng, CompSci and IBEHS students must have a minimum 4.0 cumulative grade point average (CGPA), and B.Tech students must have a minimum 3.5 cumulative grade point average (CGPA).
- b) Work Term Prerequisites & Concurrent Courses
- A student must successfully complete ENGINEER/IBEHS IEE0, ENGTECH IET0 or ENGINEER 701 with a grade of COM prior to registering a co-op.
 - Students are eligible to enroll in a maximum of 1 academic course per term of any unit value (excluding capstone and thesis) while engaged in a registered co-op experience, provided all required course activities fall outside their co-op work hours.
 - Course/unit load is calculated by adding the unit count for McMaster courses (denoted in Mosaic as 'Prg Units') and LOP courses (denoted in Mosaic as 'Att Units') in which the student is enrolled each term.
 - Co-op work terms cannot be taken concurrently with any program capstone course.
- c) Work Term Length & Sequencing
- Undergraduate students can register a maximum of 16 months of continuous employment at one time, and a total maximum of 24 months (for 4-year programs) or 28 months (for 5-year programs) of co-op experience within their degree.
 - Graduate students can register a maximum of 12 month of continuous employment at one time, and a total maximum of 12 months of co-op experience within their degree.
 - Our co-op program provides students with choice in their co-op journey and offers flexibility for students to request alternative sequencing options after their successful completion of Level 2. To view information on specific co-op program

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- sequencing and program maximums, please visit "[How Co-op Works](#)" on our website.
- A student can pursue **long-term co-op experiences** (8, 12 and 16 months in length) after successful completion of Level 3 of their academic program.
 - Requests to **change a co-op sequence** and/or pursue **long-term co-op prior to completion of Level 3** are considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - **Request Process**
 - Students who would like to request approval to change their co-op sequence and/or pursue a long-term co-op experience prior to completion of Level 3 **should speak with their [Career Educator](#)** before accepting job opportunities that fall outside the pre-determined sequence for their program. For questions related to this, book a "Support with Co-op Policies and Procedures" appointment with your Career Educator on [OSCARplus](#).
 - Students must submit their request via this form – [Co-op Re-Sequencing Request Form](#) (completion of this form does not guarantee an approval for long-term co-op).
 - **Level 1 (First Year) Restrictions**
 - Level 1 (first year) students are **not eligible** for a co-op sequence change and are restricted to participating in a 4-month co-op experience in the Spring term following their first year of study.
 - Level 1 students are **not permitted** to participate in co-op work term experiences that begin in the Fall or Winter terms during their first year.
 - **Level 2 (Second Year) Restrictions**
 - Level 2 (second year) students are **eligible** to be re-sequenced to participate in a long-term co-op experience starting in the Spring term following their successful completion of all Level 2 prerequisite academic courses for their program.
 - Level 2 students are **not permitted** to participate in co-op work term experiences that begin in the Fall or Winter terms during their second year.
- d) For more information
- Students are encouraged to [contact their Career Educator](#) if they have questions about the academic requirements to register a co-op work term or require information regarding returning to studies

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Work Term Registration

Students are required to [register their work term](#) within 10 business days of receiving an official offer letter and no later than the employment start date indicated on their employment contract. Students must meet all the conditions outlined on the [co-op confirmation form](#) and are not permitted to backdate the registration of their co-op work term (i.e. students are not permitted to register a co-op work term once employment has commenced).

To be eligible to register a co-op:

1. A student must be designated as full-time status in the academic term that immediately precedes the work term and returning to full-time status in the academic term that immediately follows the work term.
 - e) For undergraduate students, as defined by the [McMaster Undergraduate Academic Calendar – Full Time Student](#), an undergraduate student who is registered in at least 9 units in an academic term. This enrolment status requirement applies to all undergraduate co-op programs.
 - f) For graduate students, as defined by 2.2.5 of the [McMaster Graduate Academic Calendar](#) and determined at the time of admission.
2. B.Eng, CompSci and IBEHS students must have a minimum 4.0 cumulative grade point average (CGPA), and B.Tech students must have a minimum 3.5 cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

Once a student receives and accepts an official offer letter, they must notify the Centre (hiremaceng@mcmaster.ca) to cancel any upcoming scheduled interviews that have been arranged by the Centre, and similarly, notify any employers with whom they have confirmed an interview for an upcoming date.

The Centre will register the entirety of the co-op work experience based on the dates of employment within the employment agreement/contract, up to a maximum of 16 months of continuous employment for undergraduate students, and a maximum of 12 months of continuous employment for graduate students.

Students are expected to fulfill the full duration of their registered co-op work experience/contract with the employer. Failure to do so will enact the actions and outcomes outlined in "Resigning from Co-op Early".

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- **Work Term Extensions:** If a student's work term has been extended into a subsequent term, the student must notify the Centre (thecentre@mcmaster.ca) within 10 days of being offered/notified of the extension and no later than the first business day of the new academic term.
- **Changes to Employment:** If a student anticipates and/or experiences a change in their employment or issues associated with registering their work term, the student should contact their Career Educator as soon as possible.
- **Document Delays:** In cases where a student is approaching their start date or has commenced employment and is awaiting documentation from the employer in order to register the co-op, the student should notify their Career Educator as soon as possible, and no later than the first day of employment.
- **Pending Work Term Status:** In cases where a student has accepted an offer and the position has been verified by the Centre as meeting co-op criteria, and where one or more of the following exist(s): (1) account hold on student's Mosaic record, (2) co-op registration document not yet received, and/or (3) valid work permit not on file. The student's work term record will be created in OSCARplus and designated as "pending" until such time that the student resolves the outstanding issue. The student must notify the Centre to confirm when issues have been resolved, and then the work term status will be updated to "approved".
- **Prior Learning Assessment:** B.Tech Degree Completion Program (DCP) students may submit a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for their co-op via [OSCARplus](#) – Dashboard > Submit A Form > Category – Engineering Co-op > Sub Category – B.Tech Degree Completion Program (PLA Form).

Actions & Outcomes

- If a student submits their work term registration documents (i.e. the co-op confirmation form) late (i.e. after employment has commenced), the work term is denied, the co-op is not registered, and the employer is ineligible for financial subsidies.
- If there is an extenuating circumstance that prevented the student from registering their co-op within 10 days of receiving an official offer letter, the student is advised to speak with their Career Educator to determine if a special request is warranted.

Interviews

Students should be monitoring their McMaster email at least once per day while in an active job search term and are expected to **respond via email to all interview invitations from the**

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Centre to either confirm the interview date/time, request an alternative interview date/time, or decline the interview.

- **Declining an Interview:** Students may decline an interview if they have received an offer of employment from another company. They may also decline an interview if they are no longer interested in pursuing employment with a company as long as a minimum of 48-hours notice is provided ahead of the interview date. Students must decline an interview if they have already accepted an offer of employment from another company or if they are no longer eligible to participate in the co-op program.
- **Requesting an Alternative Interview Date/Time:** students may request an alternative date/time for their interview if they have an exam/class conflict, are ill, have a family emergency, for religious observation, or another extenuating circumstance.

Actions & Outcomes

If a student has not responded to an interview request within a 24-hour period or does not show up for an interview, the following actions may be applied.

- (1st occurrence) OSCARplus access is made inactive and a note stating the reason is recorded on the student's OSCARplus account. Student must meet with their CE and agree on an appropriate course of action to reinstate the student's access to OSCARplus.
- (2nd occurrence) Student is placed on probation in the co-op program and access to the job board is suspended. Student must meet with their CE and a manager to discuss remedial steps to regain job board access.
- (3rd occurrence) Student may be removed from the co-op program and moved to a non-co-op academic plan. In cases where a student is enrolled in a mandatory co-op program, additional consultation with the Associate Dean's Office will take place.

Job Offers and Reneges

Once a student has accepted and signed an offer of employment, they become ineligible for additional interviews or accepting other offers (note: confirmation/acceptance of an offer via email is considered an accepted offer for which this policy applies). Students are not permitted to renege on an accepted co-op offer. In a situation where a student is considering renegeing for any reason, they are expected to contact their Career Educator before making any decision that impacts their offer acceptance.

Actions & Outcomes

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If a student reneges for any reason that is deemed inappropriate, the following actions may be applied.

- (1st occurrence) OSCARplus work term record is denoted as “declined” and a work term record note stating the reason is recorded on the student’s OSCARplus account. The work term is removed from the student’s Mosaic record. The student is ineligible to register an alternative co-op during the work term in which they reneged. If the student accepts an alternative work experience that is long-term, the co-op in its entirety is ineligible for co-op registration and credit.
- (2nd occurrence) OSCARplus work term record is denoted as “declined” and a work-term record note stating the reason is recorded on the student’s OSCARplus account. The work term is removed from the student’s Mosaic record. The student may be removed from the co-op program and moved to a non-co-op academic plan. In cases where a student is enrolled in a mandatory co-op program, additional consultation with the Associate Dean’s Office will take place.

Resigning from Co-op Early

Once a student starts a co-op they are expected to remain in the position for the duration of the co-op. A student should speak with their Career Educator if there are any issues before deciding to resign from the co-op position.

Actions & Outcomes

If a student resigns from their co-op for any reason that is deemed as inappropriate, the following actions may be applied.

- (1st occurrence) OSCARplus work term record is denoted as “declined” and a work term record note stating the reason is recorded on the student’s OSCARplus account. Student receives a failed work term status on their Mosaic record. The student is ineligible to register an alternative co-op during the work term in which they resigned and the following work term. If the student accepts an alternative work experience that is long-term, the co-op in its entirety is ineligible for co-op registration and credit. Student will not be refunded the co-op work term fee.
- (2nd occurrence) OSCARplus work term record is denoted as “declined” and a work-term record note stating the reason is recorded on the student’s OSCARplus account. Student receives a failed work term status on their Mosaic record and may be removed from the co-op program and moved to a non-co-op academic plan. In cases where a student is enrolled in a mandatory co-op program, additional

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consultation with the Associate Dean's Office will take place. Student will not be refunded the co-op work term fee.

Termination of Employment

If a student's employment is terminated as a result of layoff or any other circumstances beyond the student's control, the Centre will consider whether or not an adequate number of hours were completed to grant the work term credit. Alternatively, the Centre will support the student in sourcing/securing a subsequent employment opportunity to compensate for the lost co-op credit.

If a student's employment is terminated for reasons related to unprofessional/inappropriate conduct or poor behaviour/performance, the Centre will review the reasons that led to the termination to ensure a full understanding of the situation before determining a course of action.

Actions & Outcomes

In a case where unclear rationale or due process is provided by the employer and/or the student has demonstrated awareness/understanding of their actions and a willingness to improve, one of the following actions may be applied at the discretion of staff at the Centre.

- Student receives credit for the work term and is supported by their CE in a subsequent job search, or
- Student receives a failed work term status and does not receive a refund of the co-op work term fee. Student maintains their access to OSCARPlus and is supported by their CE in a subsequent job search.

In all other cases of termination related to unprofessional/inappropriate conduct or poor behaviour/performance, the following actions may be applied.

- (1st occurrence) Student receives a failed work term status, is placed on probation in the co-op program and access to the job board is suspended. Student must meet with their CE to discuss remedial steps to regain job board access. Student will not be refunded the co-op work term fee.
- (2nd occurrence) Student may be removed from the co-op program and moved to a non-co-op academic plan. This situation will be reviewed by management to determine the outcome that will apply. In cases where a student is enrolled in a mandatory co-op program, additional consultation with the Associate Dean's Office will take place.

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Mid-Point Check-In and Student Term Reflection

Student check-ins and work term reflections are integral to the co-op experience, and as such, the Mid-Point Check-In and Student Term Reflection assignment are required to receive academic credit for each 4-month experience.

[Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning \(CEWIL\) Canada](#) requires all academically recognized co-op work terms be monitored by the university to ensure the work site offers an appropriate environment for the student's learning goals to be achieved, and that each work term concludes with a final reflection that is completed by the student at the end of each co-op work term.

Deadlines for Mandatory Mid-Point Check-In and Student Term Reflection Assignment:

- Winter Co-op: mid-point check-in due February 28; final reflection due April 30
- Spring Co-op: mid-point check-in due June 30; final reflection due August 31
- Fall Co-op: mid-point check-in due October 31; final reflection due December 31

Actions and Outcomes

- All students who properly complete both the Mid-Point Check-In and the Student Term Reflection by the communicated deadline will receive a grade of COM (undergraduate students) or P (graduate students).
- Any students who fail to complete both the Mid-Point Check-In and the Student Term Reflection by the communicated deadline will receive a grade of NC (undergraduate students) or F (graduate students).

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