



Northeastern University
Cooperative Education

CO-OP

Undergraduate Handbook



Co-op Undergraduate Student Handbook

This handbook will help familiarize you with Northeastern’s cooperative education (“co-op”) program and will serve as a resource for you throughout your co-op experience(s). To make the most of your co-op experience, please take the time to learn the program’s policies, procedures, and options. Remember that your co-op coordinator/advisor is always available to help you with any aspect of your co-op experience.

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What is Cooperative Education?

Experiential learning integrates the classroom and the workplace. Cooperative education is the cornerstone of Northeastern University's experiential learning approach, in which on-campus study is enhanced by hands on experience through full-time opportunities at locations worldwide. Through co-op, students alternate periods of academic courses with periods of work in positions directly related to their academic and career interests.

This combination provides an opportunity for you to (1) use your degree knowledge and practice your skills in authentic workplace situations; (2) gain new knowledge and develop new skills to successfully engage in unfamiliar tasks and activities; and (3) integrate and use both the new and deepened knowledge and skills to continue to learn in your academic programs and grow your professional network.

Who Participates in Co-op?

The majority of full-time undergraduates participate in at least one co-op. Co-op is an integral part of a Northeastern education and is required in some programs and majors. Please consult with your co-op coordinator/advisor to understand all academic requirements.

What Role Does My Co-op Coordinator/Advisor Play?

Each student is assigned a co-op coordinator/advisor based on their chosen major. All students will meet their co-op coordinator/advisor by the semester they start their first co-op search. In addition to teaching the co-op class that covers basic job searching skills like writing resumes/cover letters and preparing to interview, co-op coordinators/advisors work with students to: (1) identify career aspirations and pathways; (2) develop individualized strategies and plans for their co-op search; (3) support students throughout the co-op experience; and (4) facilitate learning and reflection upon completion of a co-op.

What is My Role in the Co-op Process?

Students should take a proactive approach to their co-op search process. While their co-op coordinator/advisor is a source of support throughout, students are expected to thoroughly research relevant industries, prepare job documents such as resumes and cover letters, actively review and apply to co-op postings in NUworks, respond to communications from co-op coordinators/advisors and employers in a timely manner, and interview for co-op positions. The more effort a student puts into the process, the more likely their co-op search will be successful.

Co-op Schedule

How Long Are Co-ops?

Cooperative education work terms typically span six months in duration with a January-June/July-December co-op term rotation. There are some exceptions to this; students can discuss individually with their co-op coordinator/advisor for approval.

How Many Co-ops Will I Do?

Full-time undergraduates may complete up to two six-month co-ops during their four years at Northeastern for a total of up to twelve months of work experience.

Are All Co-ops Full-Time?

Most co-op opportunities are full-time. Full-time co-op opportunities are defined as working 32-40 hours per week with an employer; half-time co-op opportunities are defined as working between 16-31 hours per week. Half-time co-op experiences require additional coursework during required terms for your program. Please contact your co-op coordinator/advisor if you are planning to pursue a half-time opportunity.

When do I Start Co-op?

Students usually begin co-op either in January or July of their second year as a matriculated student. Transfer students from other universities must have met the same requirements in their major's co-op program as nontransfers and must have completed at least one semester of classes before starting the co-op job search.

Can I Change My Co-op Pattern?

Most students remain in the same co-op pattern throughout their time at Northeastern. However, you may be allowed to change your pattern, or request a change, in certain circumstances. To be considered for a change, you will need to refer to your college/program's processes and:

1. Contact your financial aid counselor to have the distribution of your aid adjusted to accommodate your new course and co-op schedule (if applicable). If you do not complete these financial aid arrangements in advance, it may result in reduced amounts of some types of aid.
2. International students in F-1/J-1 student status must consult with OGS to determine that they remain eligible for the required employment authorization for co-op.

Co-op Eligibility

Eligibility Requirements

All students must satisfy the following requirements:

- Completion of a minimum of three academic terms as a degree-seeking student
- Successful completion and passing grade of the Co-op Preparatory Course
- Maintenance of a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0
- Resolution of academic probation issues, or have cooperative education coordinator/advisor approve a plan to resolve these issues prior to applying for co-op jobs
- Minimum of one academic term remaining in degree program following completion of final co-op experience

Additional Transfer and International Student Requirements:

- Transfer students from other universities must have met the same requirements in their major's co-op program as nontransfers and must have completed at least one term of classes before starting co-op.
- International students in F-1 student status must complete at least one academic year as a full-time, degree-seeking student on-ground in the U.S. before becoming eligible for the employment authorization required to participate in a co-op. Students must meet all other eligibility requirements and request appropriate authorization from the Office of Global Services (OGS) before engaging in co-op.
- International students in J-1 student status must meet all eligibility requirements and obtain appropriate authorization from the Office of Global Services (OGS) before engaging in co-op.
- International students in immigrant/nonimmigrant statuses, not sponsored by the university, should independently determine if they have valid work authorization to engage in co-op employment.

Appeals Process

If you do not meet the co-op eligibility requirements and/ or your co-op coordinator/advisor has determined you are ineligible to go on co-op, you may appeal to the co-op appeals committee.

Can I Participate in a Co-op if I am a Varsity Athlete?

Yes, varsity athletes are eligible to participate in co-op. We encourage those who play fall sports to utilize the January– June cycle and those who play spring sports to utilize the July– December cycle.

Student-athletes competing in winter sports may participate in co-op in either cycle but are strongly encouraged to obtain local placements with flexible schedules that allow them to work, practice, and compete.

Winter athletes' co-op options may be limited as a result of their schedules. Be sure to discuss your athletic schedule with your co-op coordinator/advisor and Student-Athlete Support Services.

Can I Search for Co-op Positions While on a Study Abroad?

Students on an academic study abroad are able to participate in a co-op job search if they have taken and successfully passed the co-op preparatory class.

Searching for a Co-op Job

Once you have met all academic requirements (and international student requirements, if applicable), you will be eligible to apply to co-op positions.

Co-op Preparatory Course

The first step in participating in the co-op program is to take a required preparatory course that introduces co-op and addresses career choices and career management issues. You will develop job search skills, including resume writing and interview preparation, that will maximize your chances of getting the co-op job that best fits your goals and interests. You will also discuss how learning works in any environment—classroom or workplace—to ensure that your coursework and co-op interact and complement each other.

Meeting with Co-op Coordinator/Advisor

You will meet with a co-op coordinator/advisor at least one term before you begin your search to discuss your career interests and personal and professional goals, develop your resume, and address job-search strategies.

How and When Do I Register for Co-op?

Students who successfully pass the co-op preparation course and secure a co-op position will be registered for the appropriate co-op course.

What Happens if I Change My Major or Concentration?

Please inform your current coordinator/advisor if you've been approved for a major change and they can advise you on the best plan moving forward, as a change in major may result in a change to your assigned coordinator/advisor and co-op pattern.

How Do I Schedule an Appointment With My Co-op Coordinator/Advisor?

You can schedule an appointment or view your co-op coordinator/advisor's appointment calendar through Navigate, available in the Northeastern Student Hub.

What is NUworks?

NUworks is Northeastern's online database of co-op jobs. This system is used to search for co-op jobs, upload your resume and application materials, and apply for positions that best align with your program of study. Once you have been approved for a co-op search term, you will be able to access NUworks. Some highlights of what you can do with NUworks include:

- Search, sort, and select co-op positions based on your major, interests, and skills, as well as build a preference list of positions that interest you.
- After your resume has been approved by your co-op coordinator/advisor, search and apply with your resume.
- Track your co-op applications.

Alongside co-op opportunities, NUworks offers students access to events, internships, full-time positions and more! If you have any questions about the database, talk with your co-op coordinator/advisor.

Where Do Co-op Opportunities Exist?

Co-op opportunities exist around the country and around the globe. In order to ensure the best co-op experience possible, students are encouraged to consider co-op opportunities outside of your home campus area. The more flexible you can be with where you will work, the greater the co-op opportunities will be. Co-op coordinators/advisors may already have established contacts in your preferred regions or can advise you on how to develop leads in areas of interest. If your interests go beyond the United States, please review information on Global Co-op to learn more about global co-op opportunities.

Can I Develop My Own Co-op Experience Outside of NUworks?

Students are encouraged to make use of both internal and external resources to find a co-op position that matches your degree, values, interests, personality, and skills. If you find your own position, keep the following in mind:

- Discuss your plans with your co-op coordinator/advisor. Your co-op coordinator/advisor must approve your position and will verify the opportunity with the employer before you accept employment.
- Co-op students cannot be employed as consultants or independent contractors on a 1099.

Pre-Employment Screening

Co-op employers may require applicants to undergo pre-employment screening, such as drug testing, credit checks, physical examinations, security clearance, and criminal record checks.

Jobs Involving Cannabis/Marijuana and Other Controlled Substances

Northeastern may post co-op positions in the cannabis, or related, industries, in those states that have legalized its use. In considering any such position, students should be aware that while some states have passed laws permitting cannabis, it remains a controlled substance under federal criminal law and the possession, use, and/or sale of marijuana may be prosecuted by federal law enforcement. Additionally, work in cannabis and related industries may affect future background and security checks. For non-U.S. citizen students, it may also impact federal immigration status and eligibility for future benefits; as such, non-U.S. citizens are strongly advised not to pursue these positions.

Northeastern University is a drug-free campus, consistent with federal law. Students are reminded that use of marijuana, and related substances, is prohibited under the Student Code of Conduct.

Am I Guaranteed a Co-op Job?

Northeastern cannot guarantee that you will secure a job each co-op term. Working closely with your co-op coordinator/advisor and active engagement will benefit you in your co-op job search. You will also expand your job opportunities by considering a variety of geographical locations and types of positions, including global opportunities. Students are encouraged to explore all experiential learning opportunities offered at Northeastern.

How Do I Accept a Co-op Job?

Once you accept a co-op position verbally, electronically, or in writing, you must notify your co-op coordinator/advisor of your acceptance, inform employers you have interviewed with that you are no longer available and complete any applicable college processes for approval.

You may not accept more than one job offer. Reneging or retracting an accepted offer may result in withdrawal from all co-op opportunities and future co-op eligibility. By accepting a co-op position, you are committing to work for the entire co-op period and must adhere to the start and end dates agreed upon at the time of acceptance.

Working on Co-op

Co-op is an invaluable opportunity to gain real-world experience directly related to your program of study, develop professional skills, and explore potential career paths. To ensure a successful and rewarding co-op experience, students must approach this opportunity with professionalism and commitment. Student success depends on maintaining professional conduct and responsibility, engaging in effective communication and feedback, actively pursuing learning and development opportunities, meeting all academic and program requirements, and utilizing available support resources.

By embracing these expectations and maintaining a positive, learning-focused attitude, students will maximize the value of their co-op and return to their studies with enhanced skills, professional connections, and greater clarity about your career direction.

Code of Student Conduct

As a co-op student, you are an ambassador of Northeastern, and your performance may have an impact on future co-op placements. You are expected to adhere to Northeastern's Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Northeastern policies and practices while on the job and on campus.

Healthcare

Full-time undergraduate students maintain eligibility for care at University Health and Counseling Services (UHCS) while on co-op, regardless of their insurance. If you are enrolled in the student health plan, your coverage continues during co-op. If you have questions regarding the benefits of the student health plan or your responsibilities in filing a claim, please contact your coordinator/advisor UHCS.

Liability Insurance

Your co-op employer is responsible for maintaining commercial general liability and professional liability insurance in addition to any other types of insurance that they are required to maintain under the applicable laws, regulations and related contracts. The university maintains professional liability insurance for students in clinical settings who perform clinical job duties. Please refer to your co-op coordinator/advisor regarding applicability.

What Are My Expectations While on Co-op?

Co-op employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally, adhering to the professional standards agreement, student code of conduct, and their employer's handbook and policies. This includes performing duties as assigned to the best of your ability, seeking guidance from your supervisor and peers to promote your learning, and contacting your co-op coordinator/advisor if any issues arise. At the beginning of your co-op term, you should work with your co-op supervisor to understand your job responsibilities. You should also discuss the co-op learning outcomes you hope to achieve, which you will have drafted in the co-op preparation course.

While the co-op coordinator/advisor is available to assist you with any questions or concerns that arise while you are on co-op related to the co-op curriculum, the employment relationship is between you and the employer. As an employee, you should reach out to your employer's Human Resources or your supervisor regarding employment questions.

Where Do I Live While on Co-op?

If students live in a Northeastern residence hall and accept a local position, they may continue living in the residence hall. If they accept a position that is not local to their home campus, they may request to transfer their housing deposit to a future academic term. Students are responsible for securing their own housing and transportation for most co-op experiences that do not take place in proximity to their home campus.

Students interested in relocating for co-op are encouraged to meet with their co-op coordinator/advisor to identify opportunities in other locations. Northeastern offers a variety of resources to support relocation. Please visit the [Northeastern Network Housing and Relocation Resources homepage](#) to learn more.

How Do I Stay Connected to Northeastern While on Co-op?

While you are on co-op, you may contact your co-op coordinator/advisor for assistance if any questions or problems arise. Your co-op coordinator/advisor may also reach out to you and/ or your employer while you are on co-op.

Additionally, Northeastern resources remain available to students while on co-op, including health counseling services, recreational services, student clubs and organizations.

May I Take a Course While on Co-op?

Students are typically not advised to take courses while on co-op. Students may enroll in a class that takes place outside of their regular working hours. It is recommended that students connect with their academic advisor to see how taking a course impacts their academic plan. If interested in taking a course that interferes with their co-op work hours or taking more than one class while on co-op, students must petition and receive approval from both their co-op coordinator/advisor and their employer prior to accepting their co-op position.

How Much Will I Be Paid?

Most co-op positions are paid. Compensation is set by the employer and depends on many factors, including the industry, level of the position, and local economy.

Can I Take Time Off While on Co-op?

Time off, including vacation, sick, or personal days, varies based on the specific employer's policies and state regulations. Employers expect that students will be responsible and attendance will be regular and punctual. As an employee, you must arrange for your personal and college-related commitments to take place outside of regular working hours. If you must take time off from work for special or emergency circumstances, you must discuss this with your employer and co-op coordinator/advisor. If you have military training obligations or athletic team obligations that require time off from work, notify your co-op coordinator/advisor and your prospective employer prior to the start of your co-op assignment.

International students in F-1/J-1 student status must consult with the Office of Global Services (OGS) if they experience or anticipate an interruption in their co-op.

Active Military Duty

If you are in the military reserves and are activated for service while on co-op, you must immediately contact your employer, academic advisor, the Dolce Center for the Advancement of Veterans and Servicemembers (CAVS) and co-op coordinator/advisor to ensure the appropriate military leave is recorded with the university. International students in F-1/J-1 student status must contact the Office of Global Services (OGS).

Co-op Modalities

There are three defined modalities through which students may participate in a co-op:

- In person (Traditional): All engagement takes place on site at the employer's physical location
- Hybrid: The majority of the engagement takes place on site at the employer's physical location
- Remote (Online): The majority of the engagement takes place remotely, and there is limited or no engagement at the employer's physical location

The modality of the co-op will be labeled in NUworks.

Additional Considerations for F-1/J-1 International Students:

Full Time Co-ops

- F-1/J-1 international students must maintain on-ground presence during every required academic term of study. This includes when an F-1/J-1 student is engaged in a full-time co-op.
- If an F-1 student wishes to participate in a remote co-op (where the majority of the engagement is remote) during a required academic term, they must enroll in an additional on ground course(s) that takes place during the entire duration of the academic term. Many F-1 students enroll in EXED 5945, an on-ground co-op companion course that allows F-1 students to maintain their on-ground presence while participating in a remote co-op.
- J-1 international students are not eligible for remote co-ops.

Half-Time Co-ops

- F-1/J-1 international students must maintain on-ground presence during every required academic term of study. This includes when an F-1/J-1 student is engaged in a half-time remote co-op.
- If an F-1 student wishes to participate in a remote co-op during a required academic term, they must enroll in an additional on ground courses to meet full time enrollment requirements and that take place on ground during the entire duration of the academic term. EXED 5945 is only for students on full-time co-op; enrolling in EXED 5945 will NOT allow F-1 students to maintain their on-ground presence while participating in a remote half-time co-op.
- J-1 international students are not eligible for remote co-ops.

For more information about maintaining F-1/J-1 status during co-op, students should consult the Office of Global Services (OGS).

Successfully Completing a Co-op Experience

Getting a Grade for Co-op

Students who fully and successfully participate in co-op receive a grade of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U), which satisfies Northeastern's experiential learning requirement. The co-op work experience appears on your academic transcript as "Co-op Work Experience" and earns 0 credit hours. A satisfactory grade is administered by the co-op advisor/coordinator and determined by the co-op evaluation requirements, including learning outcomes and required assessments.

Setting Your Learning Outcomes

An important part of your co-op work experience is collaboratively developing achievable learning outcomes with your co-op supervisor. As part of the criteria for a satisfactory grade in your co-op work experience, students are expected to enter these goals and confirm their supervisor in NUworks. At the beginning of your co-op, you and your co-op supervisor will discuss your job responsibilities and may discuss your learning outcomes. Towards the end of your co-op, you will be asked to complete and submit a co-op student self-assessment, which will provide you an opportunity to assess what you learned, as well as discuss how your co-op experience can relate to your coursework and inform your post-graduate goals.

Co-op Reflection Questions

To ensure the continual integration of your co-op learning, students are asked to reflection questions on NUworks. These inquiries will prompt you to reflect on: how you are using knowledge and skills in new ways and contexts, what new knowledge and skills you are developing, and how your experience will impact your coursework when you return.

Employer Confidentiality Reminder

When completing your learning outcomes and reflections, remember that confidential work details should not be shared outside your employer. Students must follow all employer confidentiality policies and avoid disclosing confidential information in their responses.

If you're unsure what information is confidential, consult your co-op supervisor or refer to any nondisclosure agreement you've signed.

Legal Requirements for Co-op Employment

All co-op employees are required to subject to federal rules and regulations regarding their ability to legally work in the U.S. Along with meeting the requirements listed below, international students may be required to meet additional regulations, outlined in the next section of this document.

Identification/Work Eligibility

Each time you begin a new job in the United States, federal law requires that you verify both your work eligibility and your identity by completing an I-9 form provided by the employer.

Social Security Number Requirement

All students, including F-1/J-1 international students, must have a Social Security number from the U.S. Social Security Administration, or have a pending application for the same, before working on co-op.

Income Tax

Federal law requires you to complete a W-4 form with your employer before beginning work. This form ensures that the appropriate federal and state taxes will be deducted from your wages. If your employer does not deduct these taxes, you are still responsible for paying them. F-1/J-1 International students are required to pay federal and state taxes.

Working as a Consultant or an Independent Contractor

The university's expectation is that co-op is a supervised educational experience. Thus, Northeastern does not grant co-op approval for work performed as a consultant or an independent contractor. Such supervision is inconsistent with consultant/independent contractor status. Please check with your employer at the beginning of your co-op to make sure that you will be receiving a W2 form (not a 1099) at the end of the year.

Students with Disabilities

If you think you will need reasonable accommodations to apply for a co-op position or perform essential job functions, you should inform your co-op coordinator/advisor early in the co-op application process. Your co-op coordinator/advisor and the staff at the Disability Access Services (DAS) can answer any questions you may have.

Information for F-1/J-1 International Students

Office of Global Services (OGS)

The Office of Global Services (OGS) provides support to international students to achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals for the duration of their status in the U.S. OGS provides immigration advising for F-1/J-1 international students as well as resources for academic success and cultural adjustment

F-1/J-1 Requirement for Temporary Employment Authorization

F-1 international students must request and be approved for [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#), a type of temporary employment authorization, from OGS **prior to beginning their co-op placement.**

J-1 international students must request and be approved for [Academic Training \(AT\)](#), a type of temporary employment authorization, from OGS **prior to beginning their co-op placement.**

Careful planning is important, as the process for gaining the appropriate work authorization and a Social Security number may take three to five weeks.

Co-op and F-1/J-1 Employment Authorization

After a request for F-1 CPT or J-1 AT has been submitted to OGS, review of the request may take up to 15-business days. If OGS determines that an F-1/J-1 student is eligible for F-1 CPT or J-1 AT, OGS will issue F-1 students an updated I-20 and J-1 students an updated DS-2019. The I-20/DS-2019 can be used to demonstrate eligibility for temporary employment authorization with the employer listed on the document.

Social Security Numbers (SSN)

All F-1/J-1 international students must either have a Social Security number (SSN) or a pending application from the U.S. Social Security Administration before working on co-op. Visit the OGS website to learn more about the [application process for a SSN](#).

Co-op Employment Outside of the United States

If you wish to pursue a co-op position outside of the United States (in your home country or other country), you will be referred to OGS to discuss the amount of time outside the U.S. on global co-op, re-entry to the U.S., and eligibility for a U.S. co-op upon return.

Navigating Workplace Dynamics

Should you encounter challenging situations as part of the workplace learning experience, the university and your co-op coordinator/advisor are available to support and guide you as necessary. While we're here to support you, remember that building direct communication skills with your supervisor is key to professional growth. Address concerns promptly—either directly with your manager or with help from your co-op advisor.

Co-op Job Disruptions

Occasionally, economic conditions may prompt employers to terminate a student's employment before the end of the co-op term. If you are notified of a layoff, contact your co-op coordinator/advisor as soon as possible.

Co-op employees are employees of the co-op employer. Therefore, co-op employees and their employers are, in general, subject to the laws that apply to the employer-employee relationship. If your co-op ends early due to termination, economic conditions or other factors, contact your co-op coordinator/advisor immediately so that they can support you through the next steps.

Leaving your co-op early without approval may result in academic consequences including withdrawal from university housing, unsatisfactory grades, or loss of future co-op privileges. F-1/J-1 international students may also experience consequences related to their SEVIS record. As a Northeastern co-op student, you represent both yourself and the university. Your coordinator/advisor is committed to helping you succeed and develop professionally through this valuable learning experience.

Students who encounter workplace conditions that pose a serious risk to their health, safety, or well-being should immediately contact their co-op coordinator to discuss the situation and connect to university support services.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

The Northeastern University Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Title IX prohibits sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation, as well as other forms of sexual and gender-based misconduct and articulates how the university will respond to reports of prohibited conduct. In addition, the Northeastern University Policy on Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity details Northeastern's processes for reporting and resolving reports of discrimination, discriminatory harassment, or retaliation. Students experiencing conduct which may constitute discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation while on a co-op are encouraged to report this information to the university's assistant vice president for university equity and compliance and Title IX coordinator from the OUEC. Please visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/ouec> for a list of reporting options and further information and resources.

Global Co-op Program

The global co-op program provides students with an opportunity to explore global career options, develop intercultural competencies, and utilize and strengthen foreign language skills. Global experiences give Northeastern students the opportunity to live, learn, and immerse themselves in new cultures. Students should work with their co-op coordinator/advisor to explore existing global opportunities or to develop their own options. Existing jobs are available in a variety of fields.

How Do I Get Started?

Global co-op could have early deadlines. Students interested in pursuing a global co-op are encouraged to meet with their co-op coordinator/advisor, or the global co-op coordinator/advisor in their college as soon as possible. They will be able to help clarify specific skills, interests, goals, and deadlines.

The Northeastern University Co-op Student Handbook does not supersede any Northeastern policies and procedures. Students should refer to and comply with all Northeastern policies and program and degree requirements. Policies can be found in the Undergraduate Student Handbook, including the Code of Student Conduct, and at <https://www.northeastern.edu/policies/>