Cooperative Education Policies

Definition
Cooperative Education is an academic program that connects what students learn in the classroom with paid, on-the-job experience. Co-op placements are related to the student’s major field of study or career focus. Students may choose from either in-state or out-of-state opportunities. Students earn academic credit for their co-op work experience. Co-op placements are usually two to four semesters in length.

Academic Component
Cooperative Education is a program in which students enroll and receive college credit. Students work with a faculty advisor in their area of study. The faculty advisor assists in developing learning objectives, assigning and grading projects related to the work experience and awards credit.

Enrollment
Students must enroll in a co-op course and fulfill all academic requirements each semester she/he is employed in a co-op position.

Compensation
Co-op students should be paid at the same rate as other entry-level employees who do the same work. Other benefits may be offered, but are not required.

Hours/Semester
Co-op students work a minimum of 15 hours per week; the average is 20-25 hours per week. Students usually work more hours during the summer.

Because co-op is an academic course, students are available to work during time periods that coincide with University semesters, beginning in August, January, and May.

- For employment beginning in August, contact us by June.
- For employment beginning in January, contact us by November.
- For employment beginning in May, contact us is March.

Worker’s Compensation
Required by Kansas law.

Federal Unemployment
Co-op students cannot file unemployment claims against their employer at the end of their co-op placement according to the Federal Unemployment Tax Act Provision, Title XXVI, Section 3306 (c)(10)(C). In order for the federal legislation to apply, students are required to enroll and pay tuition for the appropriate co-op course.
State Unemployment
The Kansas Unemployment Security Law states that the term “employment” does not include service performed as part of an employment work-release or work-training program assisted of financed in whole or part by a federal agency of the state or political subdivision thereof or of an Indian tribe, by an individual receiving such work-release or work-training. (K.S.A.) 2004 Cum. Supp. 44-703 (1)(4)(L).

It is our opinion that the Kansas Unemployment Security Law does not apply to cooperative education students. However, we recommend that you seek advice and direction from your accountant or legal counsel.

Taxes

Permanent Hires
While many co-op employers do hire students after graduation, they have absolutely no obligation to offer students a permanent position or to hire them once their degree is completed.

Student Issues/Concerns
If your own efforts to resolve an issue with a student are not successful, call the Office of Cooperative Education and Work-Based Learning at (316) 978-3688 and visit with your WSU coordinator.

Legal Aspects
- Students authorize the Cooperative Education and Work-Based Learning Office to release copies of their academic transcripts and other information deemed necessary for placement purposes.
- Wichita State University assumes no responsibility for health/accident insurance, housing, transportation or any other personal needs of a student that may result from employment through the Cooperative Education and Work-Based Learning Program, nor for the actions of any student as an employee on a Cooperative Education assignment.
- As a registered student in the Cooperative Education and Work-Based Learning Program, each student will be aware that their conduct is subject to the policies and procedures as outlined in the WSU catalog.
- Wichita State University and Cooperative Education and Work-Based Learning Program comply with all Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines.
- If the co-op student is harassed at your organization, and no action is taken to address the issue, your organization opens itself to the risk of lawsuits. Take time to advise your co-op student of appropriate workplace behavior, the organization’s harassment policy and complaint procedures.

Contact our office for more information.