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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR COOPERATIVE EDUCATION (CO-OP) for Liberal Arts/Division of Arts and Sciences Students

*Revised
January 7, 2015*

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Overview

A high percentage of students today are working their way through college, and a great many liberal arts students are “undecided” about their educational/career goals. If you are one of them, a cooperative education experience may be a valuable element of your personal career planning process. Cooperative Education (Co-Op) is an experiential learning model designed to integrate your classroom curricula with periods of practical experience in a workplace related to your major field of study and career objectives. The blend of classroom theory and practical on-the-job exposure may help you explore careers, solidify decisions about career choices, and obtain practical work place experience in your field of interest. Classroom learning is supported and reinforced by a series of working experiences in business, industry, health, or public sector agencies.

This program is called Cooperative Education (Co-Op) because it involves a cooperative alliance (partnership) between SFSC faculty, students, and local employers. You could earn up to 7 hours of college credit (over the span of several terms) while working in positions related to your academic and career goals. Co-Op placements are unpaid volunteer experiences. Although many students are placed at a work site by the Career Center staff, it may be possible for a student already employed to complete a Co-Op for college credit at their current work site if such a position meets the program qualifications, affords opportunity for *new* learning, and is approved in advance by the Co-Op Director. (In such cases all responsibility for wages/benefits is that of your employer and your participation must be approved in advance by the Co-op Director.)

To earn Co-Op credit you must register for an appropriate Co-Op course and pay normal tuition costs, document a minimum of 45 hours of on-site job shadowing experience during the college term in a designated work setting for each 1 credit hour of Co-Op sought, and submit several written projects and assignments that pertain to the Co-Op learning experience.

During a Co-Op experience college credit is granted not for merely spending time in a workplace but, instead, for your documentation of your learning that occurs as a result of those hours spent in the workplace! You will, in collaboration with your faculty advisor, the Career Center, and the work observation site, create measurable learning objectives relevant to your course of study and career plans which must be accomplished during the term. Projects must be submitted to document your achievement of the knowledge and skills identified in your learning objectives.

Co-Op courses are graded following standard SFSC policies. Most assignments will be submitted for your Co-Op course using SFSC’s Panther Central and the D2L course management system. Co-op courses are considered “electives”; they will not count toward curriculum major requirements, and not all college/universities will accept them for transfer.

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in liberal arts Co-Op (Co-Op provided through the Division of Arts and Sciences)*, you must:

- Be a current SFSC student in good standing who is registered for SFSC classes during the term of the Co-Op experience.

- Have successfully earned at least 12 college credit hours. (***Note:** Exceptions can be made, at times, for students who are in the early phases of career exploration- with approval of the Career Center Director.*)
- Have successfully earned at least 12 college credit hours at SFSC. (***Note:** Exceptions can be made, at times, for students who are in the early phases of career exploration- with approval of the Career Center Director.*)
- Hold an overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher.
- Meet all requirements of the selected employer worksite. This may include orientation, background screening, interview, or other items.
- Be registered for the Co-Op course. (Registration is conducted in the Career Center *only*.)

****Note:** The Division of Applied Sciences and Technologies has different policies, procedures and guidelines for Co-Op experiences associated with its various technical training programs. Please contact the Dean, Applied Sciences and Technologies for more information about those Co-Op/internship opportunities.*

Application Process

To apply for program acceptance you would:

1. Complete a *Cooperative Education Program application form* and submit it, with your current resume, to the Career Center (Highlands Campus, Building B- Room 111) or email it to rafattic@southflorida.edu (The Career Center staff can assist you in developing your resume. Call 863-784-7410 for an appointment, or stop by the Center.) The application is available on the Career Center website: <http://www.southflorida.edu/student/resources/career/Experiential.aspx>
2. Explore opportunities for a work site in which to complete Co-Op hours in your community.
3. Call 863-784-7410 to make an appointment with the Career Center (Co-Op) Director for interview and orientation.
4. Submit a completed *Cooperative Education Program Training Agreement* to the Career Center (Co-Op) Director prior to beginning your Co-Op hours in the worksite.
5. Register (and pay for) the Co-Op course. Tuition fees for Co-Op courses are the same as for other regular college courses. (Refer to the SFCC College Catalog for the current tuition rate.)

The following additional guidelines apply regarding registration for Co-Op courses:

- You may only register for one Co-Op course in a term, unless special advance permission is granted by the Career Center (Co-Op) Director.
 - You may register for one, two, or a maximum of three credit hours for a Co-Op course.
 - You typically must have successfully completed a Co-Op I course before you will be permitted to register for a Co-Op II course.
 - You may complete no more than one Co-Op I courses, but you may participate in several Co-Op II courses, in different terms, until the 7 credit hour limit is reached.
 - The same, or different, workplaces may be used for Co-Op I and Co-Op II experiences.
6. Meet with the designated faculty advisor prior to beginning your Co-Op hours in the worksite.

Expectations for Workplace Contact Hours

A primary purpose of the Co-Op Program is to provide you the opportunity for real-life “hands on” experience in local workplaces that employ staff in the field in which you may be interested in pursuing your career. (The co-op site is referred to in this document as your “employer”, although you are typically an unpaid volunteer for your co-op experience. All co-op hours at that site are voluntary; however you do earn college credit hours for your investment of time.) Through that experience you will have opportunity to learn new skills and build your knowledge base as outlined in a series of learning objectives. You will be assigned to a work site for your Co-Op and will complete all your required workplace observational hours at the site. Observation/work schedule at the co-op placement site is mutually agreed upon by you and the employer.

Co-op hours *must* occur in a setting that aligns with your career and academic goals. If you are uncertain of your career direction, you must first meet with the Director of the Career Development Center to discuss your options and complete a career assessment program to identify fields that may be a good starting point for your exploration process.

The minimum amount of time that you are required to spend in the workplace is dependent upon the number of hours of Co-Op for which you have registered. Those requirements, which are identical for Co-Op I and Co-Op II, are:

Number of Credit Hours	Number of Workplace Contact Hours During the Term*
1	45 minimum
2	90 minimum
3	135 minimum

****Note: Keep in mind that when you elect to complete a Co-Op course in a shortened term (i.e. - Summer A, Summer B, or Summer 12-week) that you must still complete this required number of hours, but you will have fewer weeks in which to do so!***

You must maintain a daily *Student Time Log and Training Record* that details the number of workplace contact hours completed during the Co-Op, briefly describes what you did each time you were at work site, and is verified by your worksite supervisor.

The minimum number of hours required for the workplace experience as noted above does not include additional time that will be required for you to meet with your SFSC Faculty Advisor and/or the Career Center (Co-op) Director, or to complete the required course written assignments and projects,

Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Course Projects, Assignments, and Grading

Each of the following projects/assignments must be submitted- with appropriate thoroughness and quality and by the outlined due date- to successfully complete a Co-op course. You must earn a minimum of 75% of the available points for each assignment/project and for the course overall to successfully pass the course. A traditional letter grade is determined by your Faculty Advisor for your course. Projects/assignments are somewhat different in Co-Op I vs. Co-Op II, as noted below. The content for specific assignments/projects is outlined in more depth in the Co-Op course syllabi.

Co-Op I Courses	Co-Op II Courses
Project	Project
Complete Co-Op I orientation and submit signed Training Agreement	Complete Co-Op II orientation and submit signed Training Agreement
Learning objectives contract	Learning objectives contract
Documentation of achievement of learning objectives projects	Documentation of achievement of learning objectives projects
Career interview	Code of Ethics research report
Mid-term progress report	Mid-term progress report
Formal thank-you letter for employer	Formal thank-you letter for employer
Acceptable end-term employer evaluation	Acceptable end-term employer evaluation
Completed, signed log form noting adequate hours	Completed, signed log form noting adequate hours
Reflective summary paper addressing objectives	Reflective summary paper addressing objectives
Updated resume (end of Co-Op)	Updated resume (end of Co-Op)
Online Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI)	Online Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI)

The standard SFCC grading scale (as outlined in the current SFSC catalog) will be applied in all Co-Op courses:

Number of Available Points Earned	Letter Grade
90 - 100	A
80 - 89	B
70 - 79	C
60 - 69	D
59 or less	F

Responsibilities of Co-Op Participants

Student

If accepted for Co-Op you will have many responsibilities and must realize that you represent not only yourself- but also the college and the Co-Op Program. Your actions will leave a lasting impression on the employer and may affect an employer's willingness to continue to participate in the program.

Your obligations to your Co-Op employer (co-op site supervisor) include:

- Carefully and accurately performing duties in the workplace as assigned by your Co-op employer, and participating in training sessions as requested by the employer.
- Arriving on time for work, on your scheduled work days.
- Avoiding unnecessary absences or tardiness, and always notifying the employer, before your scheduled arrival time, of any unavoidable delays or absences.
- Dressing appropriately for the workplace in keeping with the employer's guidelines.
- Complying with all employer policies and procedures.
- Working cooperatively and maturely with coworkers in the Co-Op site.
- Displaying initiative, interest, and enthusiasm.
- Presenting your workplace time log at least weekly to your employer for review and signature.
- Carrying out your Co-Op duties in a manner that will reflect positively upon self, the employer, and the SFSC Cooperative Education Program.

Your obligations to your faculty advisor include:

- Taking initiative to schedule meetings with your advisor and arriving on time for those meetings.
- Being appropriately prepared for meetings with your faculty advisor.
- Completing and submitting assignments in a timely fashion, with quality, using the methods outlined in the course syllabus.
- Keeping the channels of communication open throughout your Co-Op experience.

Your obligations to the Career Center (Co-Op) Director include:

- Promptly submitting all required application documents.
- Promptly submitting, and completing thoroughly and with quality, all required Co-Op course evaluation and feedback forms.
- Immediately notifying the Director if you will be unable to meet your obligations for the Co-Op course, necessitating consideration of “withdrawal” from the course or an “incomplete” grade.
- Receiving a satisfactory end-term evaluation from your employer.
- Updating your workplace time log at least weekly, and submitting your fully completed and signed original log to the Career Center (Co-Op) Director at the end of the term.

Employer (Co-op Site Supervisor)

The employer plays a vital role in your ability to benefit and learn about today’s workplaces through a Co-Op experience. The employer’s (co-op site supervisor’s) responsibilities related to this role include:

- Helping you develop appropriate and realistic learning objectives to guide your participation in the workplace experience.
- Providing work assignments that will help you achieve your Co-Op learning objectives (as outlined in the Training Agreement).
- Designating a supervisor who will work with you to help you achieve the learning objectives for the experience.
- Considering you as having the same status as other employees in regard to safety, supervision, and general workplace conditions.
- Completing your required end-of-experience performance evaluation, reviewing it with you, and returning it to the Career Center (Co-Op) Director in a timely manner.
- Immediately notifying the Career Center (Co-Op) Director of any concerns or dissatisfactions with your performance.
- Making his/her workplace available to you as mutually agreed upon for the duration of your scheduled Co-Op experience.
- Permitting the SFSC Faculty Advisor and/or Career Center (Co-Op) Director to visit you on site to review your progress.
- Abiding by all provisions of State and Federal law relative to wage and hour regulations and other conditions of employment.
- Providing an equal opportunity/equal access workplace.

Faculty Advisor

A primary obligation of the Co-Op Faculty Advisor is to help you “make connections” between your classroom experiences and theory- and the application of those principles in the world of work. General responsibilities of your Faculty Advisor include:

- Helping you develop appropriate and realistic learning objectives to guide your participation in the workplace experience that are relevant to the content of their SFSC coursework.
- Acting as a liaison between you, the Career Center (Co-Op) Director, and your Co-Op employer.
- Providing guidance to you throughout your Co-Op term regarding appropriate completion of course requirements and assignments, and strategies to maximize your benefit from the Co-Op.
- Immediately notifying the Career Center (Co-Op) Director of any concerns or dissatisfactions with your performance as a Co-Op student.
- Ensuring that you follow the guidelines of the Co-Op course syllabus and that you submit only timely and quality assignments as outlined in the syllabus.
- Visiting you at the work site, if feasible. (This may be completed by the Career Center (Co-Op) Director, instead, as necessary to accommodate schedules.)
- Evaluating and documenting your achievement of the learning goals of the course and course requirements. This includes providing you written or verbal feedback, and submitting your final course grade.

General Policies and Procedures

Completion and Submission of Assignments and Projects

No assignments, projects, or course requirements can be missed or skipped. Your Faculty Advisor and the Career Center (Co-op) Director will jointly determine whether your projects/assignments meet the course standards and will assign project grades appropriately. As necessary, your Faculty Advisor will also seek additional input from your employer when determining your course grade.

If you submit projects/assignments that are incomplete or substandard it is solely up to the discretion of your Faculty Advisor whether you will be permitted to revise and resubmit those projects/assignments. This opportunity is not automatically guaranteed.

All projects/assignments must be submitted into the designated drop boxes provided for that purpose on D2L for your Co-Op course unless otherwise noted in the course syllabus.

If you need assistance with orientation to Panther Central and/or D2L please stop by the Career Center prior to the starting date of your Co-Op course for individualized training.

Course Starting and Ending Dates

All Co-Op courses are conducted on the same time-line as traditional SFSC college terms. You may not begin to accrue workplace hours for a Co-Op experience prior to the first official starting date of the term in which you are taking the Co-Op course.

Dismissal from a Workplace Site

If you do not meet your obligations to the worksite employer and are dismissed/removed from the Co-Op site by that supervisor with cause due to performance issues you will *not* be placed into another work site during that term. Your grade for the Co-Op experience will automatically be entered as an F at the end of the term.

If you are unable to complete your assigned workplace hours due to issues at the workplace that are not based on your inadequate performance you may have the opportunity to be placed into a different site if your employer verifies that your performance to date had been acceptable. Placement into a new site is not guaranteed, however, and is reliant upon your timely notification to the Career Center (Co-Op) Director of the difficulties you have encountered, the reason for those difficulties, and the timing of that report in the term. In cases of this type you may qualify for a temporary grade of “incomplete”; contact the Career Center (Co-Op) Director to discuss this option.

Withdrawal, Incomplete Grade

If you are unable to complete all course requirements by the end of the term there are two options that might be available to you rather than having to take an “F” for the course.

Withdrawal: Refer to the Co-Op course syllabus for the last date you are permitted to withdraw from the course. This date is published in the SFSC Schedule of Classes for the term and is the same for all courses. To withdraw from a class you must contact the Registrar’s Office and complete necessary paperwork. Neither the Career Center (Co-Op) Director or your Faculty Advisor will complete this required paperwork for you. If you withdraw from the course and decide in a subsequent term to re-take the same Co-Op course you would be required to register and pay again for the course.

Incomplete: If you are unable to complete all Co-Op course requirements by the identified due dates in the course syllabus you may be able to request that your Faculty Advisor issue you an “incomplete”. An “incomplete” will only be approved in case of unusual, extenuating circumstances that can be verified. An incomplete will not be approved if you simply procrastinated completing your assignments or displayed poor time management. Issuance of an “incomplete” is not automatic; you must discuss this with your Faculty Advisor before the end of the term and request his/her approval. If your Faculty Advisor approves your incomplete you will be given a limited amount of extra time (6 weeks maximum) in which to finish all course requirements and be issued a regular permanent grade. If you successfully complete all requirements by the designated deadline date your regular grade will then be entered. (Note: Some Faculty Advisors impose a grade penalty when an incomplete is utilized.) Failure to complete course requirements as noted on your *Incomplete Grade Report form* by the designated deadline date will result in an automatic grade of F for the course. You would then have to register, and pay again for the course in another term, to complete it.

Transfer Credit Considerations

Co-Op courses may be taken to earn elective credit toward an associate of arts degree issued by SFSC. If you plan to transfer to another institution to continue your studies you are strongly advised to check on the transferability of credits earned through Co-Op participation before you sign up for these courses. Transferability is determined by each college or university, on an institution-by-institution basis.