Cooperative Education

Cooperative education (co-op) is the cornerstone of Northeastern University’s experiential learning approach, in which on-campus study is enhanced by real-world experience at locations all over the world. Through co-op, students alternate periods of academic courses with periods of employment in positions related to their academic or career interests. This combination provides an integrated learning experience that enhances both in-class studies and career development.

Northeastern’s cooperative education is a full-time employment experience outside the classroom supporting the concept of experiential learning. Students use the full-time experience to reflect on areas of study and academic interest. Cooperative education experiences are recalled throughout the student’s academic career in classes and capstone papers. Students on co-op are required to maintain the same health insurance coverage (either through a private provider or through the university program) as they would while attending classes. In addition, those who wish to do so may live on campus while on co-op. International students must obtain proper authorization from the Office of Global Services (OGS) (http://www.northeastern.edu/ogs) before engaging in or extending any period of co-op.

Co-op Scheduling Options
Northeastern provides the flexibility to pursue co-op and other experiential opportunities in a way that fits individual educational goals. Full-time undergraduates may complete up to three six-month co-ops in five years and as many as two six-month co-ops in four years at Northeastern. The design of some programs, such as pharmacy and theatre, requires four-month co-ops.

All co-op patterns share four semesters when students attend classes on a full-time basis: fall and spring terms of the first year, fall term of the second year, and final term of the senior year. In the first three terms, students have an opportunity to develop academic expertise as well as professional development skills. In the last term, students have an opportunity to integrate their in-class and experiential activities in a capstone course. Generally, half of the required course credit will be completed in these four terms.

The remaining half of the required course credit may be arranged in a variety of schedules that incorporate six-month co-op periods and full-time classes in full semesters and summer half semesters. Students may also elect to take courses (on-campus or online) during co-op periods or to complete extra course credit in some terms. Advisors assist students in developing plans of study that best fit the students’ experiential learning goals and the requirements of majors/minors.

For better financial planning, students and parents should be aware that:

1. No tuition is charged while a student is on co-op only (although the student will pay room and board if he or she stays in the dorm).
2. If a student takes a class/earns academic credit while on co-op, tuition will be charged at the per-credit rate.
3. Financial aid will be distributed to match the student’s academic program and tuition bills.

Co-op Eligibility
Every student must meet specific eligibility requirements to participate in co-op. These are general requirements for all students; however, students must work closely with their cooperative education coordinator to ensure that they meet any college- or major-specific requirements and are aware of major-specific logistics, deadlines, and required paperwork. In accordance with U.S. federal regulations, international students must not begin, extend, or resume any co-op experience without first receiving employment authorization from the OGS.

General Requirements
Students must:

- Take and pass a preparatory course before starting co-op.
- Satisfactorily complete the requirements and deadlines set by their specific co-op program.
- Register for co-op, either through their pattern of attendance or through a change in pattern of attendance, which must be approved by their cooperative education coordinator and academic advisor.
- Have received a Satisfactory (S) grade and have resolved any outstanding Incomplete (I), Audit (AU), or Withdrawn (W) grades for previous co-ops. Students who have received an Unsatisfactory (U) grade must work with their cooperative education coordinator to reestablish eligibility in accordance with the policies and requirements of their program.
- Resolve any previous disciplinary or academic probation issues, or have their cooperative education coordinator approve a plan to resolve these issues, prior to being referred to co-op jobs.
- Have any self-developed co-op approved by their cooperative education coordinator before accepting the position.
- Comply with any preemployment checks required by the employer, such as drug testing, credit checks, physical examinations, security clearance, and criminal record checks.
- Participate in Title IX training, as required.

Academic Requirements
Students must:

- Be making satisfactory progress toward their degree as defined by the university, their colleges, and the curricula in their major programs.
- Have a cumulative 2.000 grade-point average to be eligible to go on domestic co-op or an international co-op at the time they apply for a co-op position.
- Students must be full-time while on co-op. Full-time status for co-op is defined as either:
  - one full-time co-op job,
  - one part-time co-op job and half-time classes.

Transfer Students
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 co-op. Students transferring from one major to another within Northeastern must have completed the requisite courses and requirements as defined by their current major’s co-op program.

Appeals Process
If students do not meet the co-op eligibility requirements and/or their cooperative education coordinator has determined they are ineligible to go on co-op, they may appeal to the director of cooperative education for

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their college. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, they may appeal the decision to the college academic standing committee.

Registering for Co-op
Students are registered for co-op based on the job placement in NUcareers. Registration into the co-op experience class occurs one month before the term of the co-op job. All co-op placements need to be approved by a co-op coordinator.

Co-op Documentation
Students who fully and successfully participate in co-op will receive a grade of Satisfactory; those who fail to complete their co-op assignment will receive a grade of Unsatisfactory. These grades will appear on the student’s academic transcript. However, no academic credit is awarded for the completed co-op assignment.

Further Information
For more detailed information about co-op policies and procedures, see the Cooperative Education Student Handbook.