

CO-OP WORK TERM IN THE IEEQ PROGRAM

Tell me more about co-op work experience in the IEEQ Program.

Co-op work experience is structured, monitored work experience for academic credit. Co-op work experience allows students to apply the knowledge and skills gained in their courses in order to enhance their academic training, professional growth, and personal development. While co-op work experience is career-related, the positions are student-level or entry-level.

The goal of the 16-week co-op work term is:

- To facilitate Canadian engineering-related employment experience, to allow you to get a Canadian work reference, and to begin to build a Canadian network of engineering contacts;
- To provide you with an opportunity to apply knowledge gained in your university courses, including the course *Professional Engineering Practice in Manitoba*; and,
- To allow you to gain this experience in a context where you earn a wage or salary, where you work with engineering colleagues and/or supervisors, and where you have access to the support of the Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office for intervention or feedback if required

Note: Neither the Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office nor the IEEQ Program guarantee that co-op work experience will be credited by Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba toward the requirement for acceptable engineering experience for the P.Eng. license. The assessment of acceptable engineering experience is **solely** at the discretion of the Experience Review Committee of Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba. Application to Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba for work experience credit is done after successful completion of the IEEQ Program and once registered as a Member-in-Training with Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba.

Is the co-op work term a mandatory part of the IEEQ Program?

Yes. The co-op work term and the co-op report are part of the mandatory requirements to complete the IEEQ Program.

Does the IEEQ Program/Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office guarantee that it will find a co-op work placement for me?

No. It is the student's responsibility to find a suitable co-op position.

We recognize that many participants are motivated to join the IEEQ Program because of the co-op work term and the related support available from the Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office in securing job interviews that lead to co-op employment. Since the program began, IEEQ Program students have had a very high success rate in finding opportunities for job interviews that have led to co-op positions. Currently, the Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office maintains active contact with many individuals in local companies and organizations, as well as industry liaison groups such as the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, and Manitoba Aerospace.

However, the responsibility for finding a co-op work placement rests with the IEEQ Program participant. Participants should clearly understand that the Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office cannot oblige any employer to extend an offer of employment, and therefore neither the Co-op Office nor the IEEQ Program can guarantee a co-op work placement to the participants.

The Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office supports the IEEQ Program participants' job search efforts by networking with employers to identify their staffing needs, distributing job postings to students, and by

facilitating opportunities for interviews for IEEQ Program participants. The decision to hire an IEEQ Program participant is ultimately up to the employer, and will be influenced by their specific engineering needs and how well the participant's background fits in, how well the IEEQ Program participant handles the interview process, and the participant's language skills. In all cases, the IEEQ Program participant must secure a co-op position based on merit.

What is my responsibility in finding a co-op work placement?

You have a number of ongoing responsibilities in finding a co-op work placement.

In the year that you are seeking a co-op placement (year one for students completing the program in one year; year two for students completing the program in two years), you are expected to actively engage in your own employment search activities beginning in September. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Checking your University of Manitoba email daily.** Co-op related information will be coming to you by email only and may require an immediate response.
- **Attending the IEEQ Program co-op orientation** that takes place in September, and the completion of follow-up procedures given in those sessions.
- **Attending career fairs and company information sessions** that take place at the University of Manitoba and in the Faculty of Engineering between September and April, and other career fairs for professionals that IEEQ Program/Co-op Staff bring to your attention. The IEEQ Program can provide you with suitable materials to present to employers, explaining your participation in the program.
- Working with Co-op/IIP staff to **improve your resume** for job-search purposes and to email a current Canadian-style resume to ieeq@umanitoba.ca no later than September 30th.
- Working together with the Co-op/IIP Staff to **establish a list of employers or companies** that you find interesting or wish to explore for a possible co-op opportunity. These suggestions help Staff to understand how you see yourself fitting into the engineering environment in Manitoba and which types of job roles that interest you. There are no guarantees that you will find opportunities for job interviews with these companies.
- **Applying for suitable positions** throughout the academic year.
- **Attending all interviews offered to you** throughout the academic year, whether through your own employment search or coordinated by the IEEQ Program or Co-op/IIP Program.
- **Remaining in regular contact with Co-op/IIP and IEEQ Program Staff** before, during, and after interviews and seeking counsel for appropriate follow-up measures where required.

How does the University support my co-op employment search?

The Faculty Co-op/IIP Office actively establishes and maintains contact with employers and, when appropriate or possible, brings the resumes of IEEQ Program participants to the attention of employers, with the goal to find interview opportunities for you. Co-op/IIP Office staff seek out opportunities that they believe are good potential leads for co-op employment.

The Co-op/IIP Office receives job postings for co-op positions from companies across Manitoba and Canada. These job postings are made available to students who have fulfilled their responsibilities as outlined in the previous question.

The Co-op/IIP Office brings employers to the campus on a weekly basis to give presentations and to meet and recruit students for employment.

The Co-op/IIP staff, and the University's Career Services staff are all available to help you create a strong resume, discuss job-search strategies, and practice for interviews.

Can I count previous employment (i.e. employment previous to the IEEQ Program) toward the requirement for the co-op work term?

Employment previous to the IEEQ Program will not normally be considered. The co-op work term is designed to allow you to apply both the technical and non-technical knowledge and skills that you gain through your academic courses at the University of Manitoba. For this reason, the co-op work term should be completed after the academic courses.

What is the Faculty of Engineering's role during the co-op work term?

Co-op/IIP Office staff are available for ongoing coaching and support to participants during the co-op work term, and will provide advice, counsel, or intervention if difficulties arise.

What is expected of me during the co-op work term?

You are expected to function as an employee of the company in which you are employed. This includes carrying out your duties to the best of your ability, following the direction of your supervisor, complying with company procedures and policies, and displaying professional attitudes and behavior toward your colleagues and supervisors.

During the co-op work term, you are also expected to act as ambassadors of the IEEQ Program. Your conduct and professionalism with your colleagues and supervisors will affect the employers' perceptions of the IEEQ Program and their willingness to participate in the program in the future.

Will every IEEQ Program participant enter into a co-op work term?

The criteria to enter the work term are as follows:

1. The participant must have good academic standing;
2. The participant must have successfully completed at least 70% of their required courses in the program, including ENG 4020 *Professional Engineering Practice in Manitoba* before entering a co-op work term; and,
3. The participant must have demonstrated a professional attitude and behaviour in their courses at the university.

Which company or organization will I be working for in my co-op work placement?

In addition to your own efforts to secure employment, Co-op/IIP staff will review your resume, obtain additional information on your background and interests as required, identify potential employers, and contact these employers to explore opportunities for you with that company. In all cases, companies will only hire engineers if they see a match between their internal engineering needs and the skills and experience that you can offer to the company.

Employers will review resumes and then decide whether to interview IEEQ Program participants. In all cases, the final decision to hire or not to hire an IEEQ Program participant for the co-op work term remains entirely with the employer. The Co-op/IIP Office cannot force an employer to hire an individual.

Job interviews with companies are generally a competitive process in which you may be interviewing for a position against other IEEQ Program participants, other engineering students, or external candidates. In all cases, you will have to attain the job based on merit, not simply because you are part of the IEEQ Program.

How are job offers handled?

You are expected to accept an offer of co-op employment that reasonably fulfills the goals of the co-op work placement as described earlier.

If you have attended interviews with multiple companies and are subsequently presented with two concrete offers of employment at the same time, Co-op/IIP staff can advise you on how to communicate with the employers to accept one offer and to decline the other offer in a professional manner, and in a way that maintains the integrity of the IEEQ Program.

If you are offered employment by a company, but are expecting or hoping that you will be interviewed and offered a co-op position in the future by a different company that you may prefer, you are still expected to accept the first offer of employment that you receive.

If you decline an invitation to an interview or a concrete offer of employment based on your hope that another company may offer you an interview or a co-op position in the future, **the IEEQ Program and Co-op/IIP Office are also relieved of all responsibility to continue to search for any further interview opportunities for you.**

Once you have accepted a job offer, that decision is final.

A copy of your letter of offer (letter of employment) must be submitted to the IEEQ Program for your file.

What if I do not like the co-op work placement that I am offered by a company?

In addition to your own efforts to secure employment, the Co-op/IIP Office will actively maintain contact with employers to secure opportunities for job interviews. You might succeed in securing a job offer through your own employment search, or it could be that the Co-op/IIP Office coordinates the *first* appropriate co-op job offer for you. If you would like to continue searching for an opportunity that you define as being preferable to the one that the Co-op/IIP Office has coordinated on your behalf, you may do so on your own effort. However, you would do so with the understanding that the Co-op/IIP Office is relieved of its responsibilities to find you any further opportunities for job interviews, that the initial co-op job offer may not be available in the future, and that the co-op work term is still a requirement for successful completion of the IEEQ Program.

Interview opportunities and subsequent offers of employment are often closely linked to the type of projects happening in the province at any given time. You should be prepared that although you may have numerous years of experience in a specific engineering role or industry from your home country, your co-op employment may be in a different engineering role or industry. As a newcomer to Canada, your first priority is to gain Canadian engineering experience from which you can build and develop your career in the future.

What will I be paid during my co-op work placement?

Wages in engineering are very dependent on the labour market and on the area of engineering in which you are working. For co-op positions, the salary is usually fixed and employers do not negotiate the salary.

The Co-op/IIP Office cannot force an employer to pay a set wage or salary. For a co-op position, an equivalent hourly wage of \$18 - \$27/hour is recommended to the employer.

Under what conditions can I quit my co-op job?

Quitting a co-op job would be highly unusual. Your commitment to the employer is as per the Letter of Offer / Employment Contract that you have signed with the company. If you find yourself experiencing significant difficulties in your co-op work placement, you are expected to contact Faculty of Engineering Co-op/IIP Office staff as soon as possible to discuss the specific nature of the difficulties. Co-op/IIP Office staff can provide recommendations for a course of action to address the difficulties, can contact the supervisor to discuss the difficulties, and can act as a mediator in discussions between you and your employer/supervisor. If quitting a job is deemed the only way to deal with the difficulty, it is expected that Co-op/IIP Office staff are aware of and agree with this course of action before you quit.

Will my co-op job be extended into long-term or permanent employment?

The focus of efforts in the Co-op/IIP Office is to facilitate opportunities for a four-month co-op term. Assisting participants in securing long-term, permanent career opportunities is beyond the scope of the Co-op/IIP Office.

Co-op employers commit to providing a 16-week term of employment to the IEEQ Program participant. They have no obligation to extend that co-op term past the initial 16-week period. It is also very unlikely that an employer would discuss long-term employment during an interview for a co-op term, or offer a permanent job at the beginning of a co-op term.

Long-term opportunities with Canadian employers operating in a market economy depend on the workload of the company, the specific types of engineering needs that they require, and how well you as a participant – in knowledge, skills, and attitude – can contribute to those requirements. In addition, public sector employers also operate under very real budget considerations when hiring. The 16-week co-op term is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your skills and contributions and to allow the employer to assess whether or not you would fit into the company in the long term. Some former IEEQ Program participants have been successful in securing long-term or permanent employment with their co-op employers or via connections made through their co-op employers. Co-op/IIP Office staff can provide guidance on how to initiate such discussions with employers. However, securing long-term or permanent employment is well beyond the scope or role of the Co-op/IIP Office.

How is the co-op work term graded?

You will be required to write a report describing your work experience in the co-op work term. Further details on this report will be provided nearer to the co-op work terms. In total, your participation in the work term is marked on a Pass/Fail basis, established by employer feedback and the written co-op report. It is noted on your transcript as *ENG 4800 Co-operative Work 1-IEEQ*.