Virtual Co-op Guidelines

Remote/Virtual Cooperative Education Guidelines

Virtual Internships also known as Cooperative Education differ from traditional sites in that the work does not take place in a conventional location. Virtual Co-ops that can be done online or remotely anytime of the year. This allows a student to work on a global scale and stay local. With these Co-ops, much of the communication between the site supervisor and their intern(s) takes place via methods such as online conferencing, telephone and email. Virtual Co-op experiences will need to align with the processes of the PCC Cooperative Education Faculty Handbook and the PCC Cooperative Education Student Handbook.

The following guidelines pertain to virtual Co-op positions, and should be used in conjunction with the student:

1. **Defined Learning Objectives** Prior to the Co-op, the student and the site supervisor identify three to five learning objectives to be completed remotely during the course of the Co-op. These objectives will be listed on the Learning Objectives form and will be reviewed by the instructor and specialist. They can incorporate desired industry-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful career advancement. Faculty will regularly check in throughout the Co-op to see if the student is on track to meet these objectives and connect with the site. Connection between the student and site supervisor or student and faculty/specialist can be through phone, email and virtual options such as Google Meet, Google Hangouts, Google chat or Zoom. The student should expect 30 to 36 hours per credit hour over the course of the term to achieve their identified objectives.

2. **Thorough Onboarding and Orientation** Site supervisors will plan for the student's orientation and training. Site supervisors may utilize virtual tools consistent within their work environment. This can consist of: virtually meeting other staff or team members, learning about the organization, reviewing organization-wide communication standards and workplace expectations (including system of tracking hours), and reviewing the student's defined learning objectives. This will provide the student the chance to ask clarifying questions, as this might be their first professional work environment, and may be their first virtually-based position.

3. **Timely Feedback** Similar to online learning environments, site supervisors should review student objectives and provide timely feedback to students on a regular basis. Supervisors are asked to schedule feedback meetings weekly to engage in direct mentorship with the student regarding their progress towards learning objectives and areas of professional development. Pre-planned training topics should also be discussed during these sessions. This includes an update on expected work activities for the week, outcomes from prior work submissions, and other relevant announcements pertaining to the organization. A good practice is to schedule a regular email report around or on the same day each week.

4. **Faculty Communication** Cooperative Education faculty may require the student to provide a report out or reflective journal weekly on their progress. This may be provided in a shared Google document, email, e-portfolio, vlog or other virtual options.

5. **Pre-arranged Schedules** Although a key feature of virtual Co-ops is the flexibility of the work schedule, supervisors and students should agree upon a definitive time allotment per week and per day for co-op activities. It is recommended to cap the hours of a shift by defining the amount of accrued time allotted for any given task to avoid unreasonable work demands on the student.

6. **Organizational Involvement** In addition to facilitating a remote or virtual Co-op, site supervisors should make a good faith effort to integrate the student into the organization's work culture. After initial onboarding orientation, this may include client interactions and virtual attendance at select team meetings, use of company tools and resources, and any other forms of access to other staff members.

7. **Reimbursement of Expenses** Students engaged in virtual Co-ops should not incur any personal expenses as a result of the Co-ops "remote" status. Any such costs, including the purchase of software and hardware for the purposes of the Co-op, should be covered by the Co-op host site, or alternative arrangements provided to the student prior to starting.

 Additional Notes for Site Supervisors
- **Students benefit from tasks being contextualized**. Rather than just assigning "to do" deliverables, communicate why the work is important. *What is it contributing towards or connected to? How will this task contribute to the greater good of the project/department/organization?*

- This may be the first time your student has worked in an independent work environment which necessitates such high levels of self-motivation and personal organizational skills. The more support and tools you equip them with in this new environment, the more easily they will adapt.

If you have questions, please contact your campus Career Services office: www.pcc.edu/careers
Jennifer Poinar, SE Career Services Coordinator | jennifer.poinar@pcc.edu, 971-722-6059
Haydee Goldenberg, RC Career Services Coordinator | haydee.goldenberg@pcc.edu | 971-722-7335
Becky Washington, CA Career Services Coordinator | rwashing@pcc.edu 971-722-5242
George Knox, SY Coordinator Jobs and Co-ops | gknox@pcc.edu 971-722-4475