Cooperative Education Program
Frequently Asked Questions

What is co-op?
At Georgia Tech, the co-op program is an academic program in which students work at least three alternating semesters in a position related to their major. Co-ops gain at least a year's worth of experience with the same employer and earn a competitive salary while working. Co-oping allows participants to build a powerful resume, to develop a network of professional contacts, and to gain a truly complete education. Students who successfully complete this form of enhanced education receive a co-op designation on their degree and are recognized for their accomplishment during the commencement ceremony.

Will my co-op advisor find a job for me?
The co-op advisor will offer guidance during your job search and make sure you know how to research job opportunities. However, it is your responsibility to apply and interview for available co-op positions. There are no guarantees that you will secure a co-op job. Barriers to locating a job include being inflexible regarding the geographic location in which you are willing to work and/or the term in which you wish to begin working. Another possible barrier is having a GPA that is lower than what employers typically desire.

May I apply for co-op opportunities that I locate on my own?
Yes! However, the Division of Professional Practice must approve the company and co-op opportunity in which you are interested. You must work out such arrangements with your advisor. Remember that the job must be related to your major, paid, full-time, supervised, and with increasing responsibility for at least three alternating semesters.

May I begin the co-op program if I am not committed to completing it?
No. You will be allowed to begin co-op employment only if you intend to meet all requirements of the program, including working a minimum of three work terms — two of which must be during a fall or spring semester. If you do not have time to complete the required number of work terms, you may wish to consider the internship program.

If I cannot find a job or change my mind about pursuing a co-op position, will the Division of Professional Practice automatically drop me from its rolls?
No. You must withdraw from the Co-op Program through your co-op advisor.

If I don't intend to begin the job search for two or three terms, do I still need to see my co-op advisor?
Yes. Students in the Co-op Program should see their advisor at least once each term.

If I decide to accept an offer, may I do so by telephone?
In certain situations, you may be made a verbal offer over the telephone. You may accept the offer over the phone; however, you must follow up with a written acceptance letter to the individual who has extended the offer. If you are made the offer during a plant visit or second interview, you still must follow up in writing. Give a copy of the acceptance letter to your co-op advisor. See Appendix E for a sample acceptance letter. After accepting a job — even if the acceptance has been only verbal — you may not consider other offers. Once you accept a job offer, inform other employers with whom you have pending offers, and notify your co-op advisor. Cancel any other scheduled interviews or on-site visits.
How long are the work terms?
Refer to your co-op calendar (available at www.coop.gatech.edu) and information from your co-op advisor and employer to determine the exact length of the work term. Co-op students must work sixteen to eighteen weeks during a fall or spring semester and twelve to fourteen weeks during summer session. Many employers need to keep you on the job until your alternate is ready to begin work during the following term. The employer may even request that your work dates overlap with those of your replacement.

Once my Georgia Tech co-op advisor has worked out an alternation schedule for me, may I modify it?
No! Your alternation pattern cannot be changed without approval from both your co-op advisor and employer.

How many work terms must I complete to earn the co-op designation on my diploma?
You must work at least three alternating work terms, at least two of which must be during fall or spring.

If I’m not pleased with my co-op experience, may I change employers?
Students typically complete at least three work terms with the same employer. Students who must change employers due to a change of academic major or to being downsized by an employer should work with their co-op advisor concerning the possibility of completing the co-op program. Most students will find they have the flexibility to intern with one or two additional employers before or after completing the three co-op rotations.

During work terms, will I be considered a full-time student at Georgia Tech?
Yes, if you have registered for the co-op course. If your health insurance company requires proof of your full-time status, you may obtain the necessary documentation, Verification of Enrollment, via www.coop.gatech.edu/work_forms.php.

Is tuition charged for the co-op course?
No tuition is required for this course.

Is a grade given for the co-op course?
The course is an audited course, and a letter grade is not given. A successful audit results in a designation of V on the transcript, and an unsuccessful audit results in a designation of W on the transcript. To earn a successful audit, be sure to register for the co-op course, work the required number of weeks, and complete the required reports on P2D2.

What happens if I forget to register for the co-op course?
If you do not register for the co-op course, your work term will not count toward your completion of the co-op program, and you will not be enrolled at Georgia Tech for that term. Failure to register for the co-op course may jeopardize your ability to earn the co-op designation on your diploma and your ability to obtain health insurance.

How will co-oping impact my scholarships?
Scholarships are typically not impacted by co-oping. For example, HOPE scholarships are disbursed only during regular school terms. Co-ops should contact the Office of Financial Planning at www.finaid.gatech.edu/contacts for more information about individual scholarship situations or to find out how co-oping may impact other types of financial aid packages.

What salary can I expect?
Salaries are set by employers and can vary widely from one company to another. Your primary goal as a co-op student should be to obtain the best work and educational experience possible. At this point in your career, salary should not be a major factor in deciding which co-op offer to accept.

If I am working in metro Atlanta, can I continue living in campus housing?
Yes, if it is available and if you’ve met deadlines required by the Housing Office.
If I work outside Atlanta, will my employer locate housing for me?
You are ultimately responsible for making your own living arrangements. Employers often give students lists of local apartment complexes to assist them in their housing search. You may also be able to get advice from other co-ops who have worked, or are currently working, for your employer. Occasionally, employers provide subsidized housing at a pre-arranged location.

Am I expected to maintain the GPA listed in the job posting throughout my studies at Georgia Tech?
Employers may expect you to maintain the GPA listed in the job posting throughout your studies at Georgia Tech, but they often simply use this GPA requirement to screen students during the job application process.

How will my work performance be evaluated?
Your supervisor will use the Student Performance Evaluation Form (or substitute one preferred by the company or agency) to evaluate various aspects of your performance. Your supervisor should discuss your performance rating with you at the end of each work term. You will provide your perceptions of the co-op assignment as you complete your work report on P2D2. As previously noted, submitting a work report at the end of each term is a requirement of the co-op program.

What types of information will I provide on the work report?
Work reports provide an opportunity for you to summarize your responsibilities and accomplishments and to provide feedback about your co-op job based on various criteria. Work reports are used to help verify that you have met requirements for graduating with the co-op designation, so plan to complete them accurately and in a timely manner. After removing the confidential information, the Division of Professional Practice may make your reports available to assist other students as they research particular employers.

May I take a course during my work term?
Co-op students working in Atlanta are occasionally able to take a class on campus during a work term. Such an arrangement depends on the willingness and ability of your employer to offer you a flextime schedule of forty hours per week. Taking a distance learning course or a course at another university is also sometimes possible. First, ask if your supervisor approves of you taking a class during a work term. If you plan to take a Georgia Tech course during a work term, contact your co-op advisor to obtain the correct registration permit. If you wish to take a course at another institution during your work term, check with your academic advisor in advance to make sure the credits will transfer. See www.coop.gatech.edu/taking_coop_course.php for additional information.

What student organizations are specifically related to the co-op program?
The Briaerian Society was founded in 1922 for the recognition of those Cooperative Plan students who have attained a high scholastic average. The objective of the society is to promote the scholarship of all students. Juniors and seniors who have earned at least a 3.0/4.0 cumulative GPA and completed at least two work terms are eligible for membership. Each year at the Student Honors Day luncheon, the society acknowledges the graduating senior with the highest grade point average. In addition to promoting scholastic achievement, the society also organizes an annual honors banquet for graduating co-ops, selects “Co-op Employer of the Year,” and performs service projects for the Georgia Tech community. Additional opportunities for co-op student involvement exist in various organizations. For example, selected student government positions are designated for co-op students to provide co-op representation for the student body.

As a co-op, will I be able to study abroad?
You may study abroad during any of your regularly scheduled school semesters. Study abroad semesters should be planned well in advance with the assistance of the Office of International Education. See Chapter 10, which includes information on combining study abroad with work abroad opportunities.

As a co-op, can I work abroad?
Yes! One or more of your work terms can be international. If you are interested in working abroad, you will need to work with both your co-op advisor and the work abroad advisor. In most cases, you should also be studying the language of the country in which you would like to work.
What is the difference between a co-op job and an internship?
The Division of Professional Practice administers both the co-op and the internship programs. Both allow students to register for a course to maintain full-time student status during work terms. The major difference is that the co-op program involves multiple work terms spanning a significant portion of a student’s undergraduate studies and leads to the co-op designation, whereas an internship involves only a one-term commitment on the part of the student and employer. Co-oping allows students to gain a greater depth of experience, perform better in their coursework, and get a larger number of job offers upon graduation. See www.dopp.gatech.edu for additional information on the two programs.

Can an internship count toward my co-op requirements?
In some cases, an internship can count as a co-op term. If a co-op student has completed three work terms with a co-op employer and decides to add an internship with a different employer sometime prior to graduation, the student will be carried as a co-op during the internship. If a co-op student’s first work assignment is an internship and the student is willing to consider working future alternating semesters with the same employer, then the internship can count as a co-op assignment. Also, a work abroad assignment can be counted as a co-op term. Speak with your co-op advisor for more information about your specific situation.