



## *Frequently Asked Questions for Undergraduates*

### **What is the difference between a co-op and an internship?**

Engineering Career Services defines a co-op as a full-time (40 hrs/week), paid, engineering-focused work experience under the supervision of an engineer requiring a minimum commitment of 15 weeks during a semester. Most co-op opportunities consist of a semester and the adjacent summer. An internship is defined as a summer-only experience. Students accepting a co-op must receive academic credit during a spring or fall term; interns may choose to take credit.

### **Who is eligible for a co-op?**

Any undergraduate student who has successfully progressed into a department in the College of Engineering with at least two semesters remaining after the co-op is eligible. Students in non-CoE majors should consult with ECS regarding possible participation options.

### **I'm an international student, can I co-op?**

Yes. Under current INS regulations, any student in the U.S. with an F-1 visa may work up to 364 days under Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization. Any international students working beyond 364 days will lose Optional Practical Training benefits. CPT requires that international students receive credit for both co-op and internship assignments. INS regulations are complex; verify eligibility with ISS prior to beginning your search.

### **May I co-op if I'm on academic probation?**

Generally, no. However, co-ops are educational experiences that may benefit some students on probation. Contact the ECS staff to discuss eligibility for receiving special permission to participate.

### **How are health insurance and students loans handled while I'm on co-op?**

You must enroll in the one-credit co-op course to remain recognized as a full-time student. By doing so, your student loans will remain deferred and you will also be able to maintain parental or university health insurance. Every student accepting a co-op must register for the one-credit co-op course and complete educational assignments.

### **May I obtain credit for a co-op/internship working 15-25 hours per week?**

No. As defined earlier, a co-op is a full-time work experience. Students are expected to work approximately 40 hours per week, or as authorized overtime by their employer. Part-time internship positions are not eligible for credit through Engineering.

### **How many weeks am I required to work?**

Co-op assignments during fall or spring semester must be for a minimum of 15 weeks. Summer co-op terms and intern assignments must be for a minimum of 12 weeks. The weeks worked must correspond with the academic term.

### **What does it cost me to pursue a co-op or internship?**

There is no cost to pursue a co-op or internship. All of ECS services, including access to Handshake, are free to students.

### **Do I pay any tuition while on co-op?**

All undergraduate students participating in a co-op or credit-bearing internship are required to enroll and pay for the one-credit co-op course. Students pay for only one credit of tuition, plus fees and prorated differentials. Companies may provide tuition reimbursement to cover the cost associated with the one-credit course; make sure to ask the employer ahead of accepting an offer. For specific tuition costs visit: <https://bursar.wisc.edu/tuition-and-fees/tuition-rates>

### **Am I eligible for financial aid while on co-op?**

Students are not eligible for student loans or grants while on co-op. Some scholarships may be deferred until your return to campus. Please contact your scholarship official for more details on how awards will be affected.

**May I take additional classes while on co-op?**

Students are not allowed to take other classes while on co-op or credit-bearing internship since it is a full-time, professional work experience. An exception is made for on-line courses that do not physically meet. Contact ECS if you have additional questions.

**Can I be released from my university housing contract to participate in a co-op?**

Yes. University Housing will allow you to be released from your contract if you choose to leave campus for a co-op. No payment will be required, however, you will forfeit your initial deposit. Contact the Division of University Housing for more information at 608-262-2522.

**Do I need to register with ECS to obtain a co-op or internship?**

There are many employers who do not come on campus to recruit our students. You may find co-ops or internships through other sources. If you find a co-op or internship independently, ECS will work with you. Regardless of how you found your co-op or internship, if you plan to be out during the Fall or Spring semester, you must take co-op credit through ECS.

**What are the requirements to receive a satisfactory grade for a co-op?**

We expect each student to bring a high level of professionalism and willingness to learn to each work assignment. Topic assignment responses are required along with a 4-week evaluation, student evaluation and a supervisor evaluation.

**How do I decide on which position to accept?**

You may receive several offers. ECS can help you evaluate an offer before accepting it. It is highly recommended you speak with ECS before accepting. We can share student feedback on their experiences with the employer. Once you accept a position, verbally or in writing, we will expect you to honor that commitment. Failure to honor your commitment will result in the loss of Handshake and other ECS privileges for the following 2 semesters and inability to register for cooperative education credit.

**May I work in a family owned business?**

Students are not eligible for academic credit if they are working in a family owned and managed organization. Please contact ECS with any questions.

**May I work on a College/University campus?**

Positions in research labs are not eligible. Credit may be awarded for support services like physical plant and maintenance that are related to a student's course of study.

**What are the basic requirements to obtain credit?**

Positions must meet the following: related to a students' major, competitively paid, full-time, performing engineering work, and under the supervision of an engineer. Duration of the experience, as previously outlined, is also a factor.

**How does the last 2 semester rule affect co-oping?**

The last 2 semesters of a degree must be completed in-residence. Students who plan to co-op in their 2<sup>nd</sup>-to-last semester of their undergraduate degree must receive a waiver from the assistant dean for academic affairs in advance of the assignment. Waivers for co-op in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last semester are obtained through ECS. *Students are not allowed to co-op in their final semester. Student cannot co-op after they have graduated.* Co-op terms are not considered "in-residence". Summer is not considered a mandatory academic term. For details, see graduation regulations at [enr.wisc.edu](http://enr.wisc.edu).

**How do I register for credit?**

1. Students must submit an electronic notification of the JOB OFFER through Handshake (Experiences)
2. Attend a Course Orientation session
3. Submit a copy of the employer offer letter to ECS
4. Approval of the co-op/internship must be given by ECS prior to course authorization for enrollment being granted by ECS

**Questions?**

Please contact:

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