

# ATTRACT. CONNECT. RETAIN.

## CO-OP HIRING MANAGER HANDBOOK



# Table of Contents

ATTRACT. CONNECT. RETAIN.	1
The Co-op Hiring Manager Handbook	3
Benefits of Hiring Students	4
Timing	6
Planning for Hiring	7
The Hiring Process	10
Co-op Employee Hiring Checklist	13
Useful Contacts and Resources	16

# The Co-op Hiring Manager Handbook

If you are reviewing this handbook, chances are you are either considering hiring or preparing to hire a co-op student. The goals of this guide are to ensure hiring managers know how co-op positions can be posted and filled most effectively and efficiently, and how to develop a competitive edge within a limited co-op student pool.

The BC Public Service Agency can help you with the hiring of a co-op student. If you require more information, or have a suggestion for additions to this guide, please do not hesitate to contact the Employment Programs Resource Office at [coop@gov.bc.ca](mailto:coop@gov.bc.ca).

# Benefits of Hiring Students

Preparing for changing demographics within the workforce will help the BC Public Service fill job vacancies and remain a desirable employer.

- Hiring students helps to develop a positive relationship between the BC Public Service and younger generations.
- Student employment programs allow the employer to “try before they buy”, creating a cost-effective means to evaluate potential new hires.

Whether they are current students or recent graduates, co-ops:

- ease the workload of current employees,
- provide fresh perspectives, and
- receive developmental experience to support their career growth.

Together, the student and the BC Public Service create relationships between today's employers and tomorrow's employees.

## Co-op Program

Before we go any further, it is important to understand what the BC Public Service's Co-op Program is, and whether a co-op employee will meet your hiring needs.

The Co-op Program is a corporate employment program defined by the [Eighteenth Main Public Service Agreement \(BCGEU\)](#) (34.2). The program provides post-secondary students who are enrolled in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution with a work placement in the BC Public Service that allows them to explore careers available and to expand their skills by working on projects related to their field of study.

Although co-op students who are participating in the Co-op Program are BC Public Service employees, the co-op component of a student's degree is integral to their formal education; each co-op work term is worth academic credit and is reflected on the student's transcript. As such, the nature of the work is aligned with the student's academic discipline, and an extra level of emphasis should be placed on training, learning, development, growth, support, and mentoring.

As a corporate employment program, Co-op Program positions are unique in that the employee's [salary](#) is based solely on the current level of schooling that the applicant is enrolled in and is not tied to the complexity of the work that is being done.

Co-op students are hired at either:

- Level 1: students working towards a diploma or bachelor's degree; or
- Level 2: students working towards a post-graduate degree.

This makes the hiring process simpler and more cost-effective because you can omit the job classification process, and it allows you to provide the co-op employee with the opportunity to learn and develop by doing work above their salary level.

The work assigned to employees hired under this program must supplement their field of study.

If hiring a co-op employee will not meet your operational requirements, go to [MyHR](#) to explore some of the other hiring options available to you.

## **Pacific Leaders Tuition Grants for Co-op Employees**

The [Pacific Leaders Tuition Grants for Co-op Employees](#) program enables ministries to reimburse the tuition fee that your co-op employee pays to their post-secondary institution, while they are on a co-op work term. All co-op employees working for the BC Public Service may apply for a grant to cover their co-op work term tuition fee, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per term. The funding for the grant is managed at the ministry level. Each ministry funds the co-op tuition grants which are recorded under STOB 5220. We suggest connecting with your ministry's corporate services branch to determine the source of funding within your ministry.

## **The Employment Programs Resource Office**

The Employment Programs Resource Office (EPRO) is a corporate resource within the Public Service Agency. The office supports all employees interested in, or engaged in, the Co-op Program with the BC Public Service. The office was launched in May 2017, born out of our corporate plan, [Where Ideas Work](#), as one of the ways in which the organization is looking to replenish the workforce, better reflect the citizens we serve, incorporate a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to enhance both creativity and innovation, and solve problems more effectively.

EPRO organizes events and provides information, resources and tools to co-op employees, supervisors and hiring managers to support them through their co-op journey.

## Timing

Once you have determined that hiring a co-op employee is right for you and you have the budget/approvals to hire, you need to be aware of the timelines around work terms.

## Work Term

Most post-secondary institutions require students to complete a minimum of three or four co-op work terms to graduate with the co-op designation. While some programs/institutions are rigid in their students' availability for their co-op work term, most students have flexibility around which work term(s) they can commit to. This means students can schedule multiple co-op work terms back-to-back (i.e., eight- or twelve-month duration.)

There are typically three 4-month work terms per calendar year:

- winter (January to April)
- summer (May to August)
- fall (September to December)

Co-op employees typically start within the first week or two of the work term, and work until the end of that same term. If you wish to employ a co-op student for more than a four-month period, make sure you state this in your job posting. The minimum time commitment for a co-op work term is 12 weeks and/or 420 hours of full-time work.

## Key Recruitment Times

Co-op students traditionally seek to solidify upcoming work terms at key times throughout the year. To ensure that you can attract and hire the top students, it is important that you be aware of these key "search" times and when they occur.

### **Work term**

Winter (January to April)

Summer (May to August)

Fall (September to December)

### **Ideal time to post a job**

October/November

February/March

June/July

Co-op students are encouraged to apply to and commit to jobs early on. Although the process is ongoing, the quality and size of the applicant pool is often better at the beginning of the semester.

## Planning for Hiring

There are many things that should be considered before hiring a co-op employee. In addition to considering the immediate needs of your work unit, you should also think about the longer-term opportunities that may be available. You may want to have a conversation with your ministry's Strategic Human Resources (SHR) branch to discuss succession management, and potential long-term opportunities for a co-op employee once they have finished their academic studies.

## The Work Itself

Co-op employees are looking for an attractive job experience that will complement their education and provide a beneficial learning environment. When asked what they want most out of their work term, most co-op employees expressed that they want practical work experience and challenging assignments.

To empower your co-op employee, identify work assignments and projects that will help guide their skill and competency development. It is also important for co-op employees, as for any employee, to see how their work contributes to the goals of the branch/ministry and BC Public Service as a whole. Take the time to identify these links and communicate them in the job description. Ideally, co-op employee projects should have a beginning and an end, and clearly contribute to the overall goals of the work unit.

Examples of past co-op employee assignments:

- Design and create a user manual for a new database (Database Co-op).
- Coordinate a ministry's Green Team including events, communications, etc. (Green Initiatives Co-op).
- Write new content for the ministry's intranet site (Internal Communications Co-op).
- Work with field teams to catalogue local data sets (Forestry GIS Co-op).
- Assist in interpreting and summarizing air and water quality results (Environmental Assessment Co-op).
- Collect and analyze data and prepare briefing notes (Research Assistant Co-op).

## Work Term Duration

Thinking ahead about the duration for which you wish to hire a co-op employee can significantly reduce the amount of time and effort you may otherwise spend on additional hiring processes. You may decide to extend a co-op employee's work term. If you do, check with their co-op coordinator to confirm they are eligible to work another work term. You can use the auxiliary extension letter and submit a service request to AskMyHR to update their records. Consider what kind of placement will best fit your hiring needs:

### **Single work term (4 months)**

A single 4-month placement is the most common type of co-op hiring. If you hire a co-op employee for a 4-month term and later wish to extend their placement, you will need to send a new offer letter for the additional term(s).

### **Consecutive work terms (e.g., 8 months)**

If you already know you'll be needing a co-op employee for more than 4 months, you can offer an 8-month placement (2 consecutive work terms) or a 12-month placement (3 consecutive work terms). Although these will be recognized by the co-op employee's post-secondary institution as multiple work terms, you will only need to send one offer letter clearly stating the duration of the placement you're offering.

### **Non-consecutive work terms**

In some cases, you may wish to hire a co-op employee for multiple, non-consecutive work terms (for example, hiring the same co-op employee every summer for three years, or hiring a co-op employee for two 4-month terms but with a study semester in between). If you choose to hire for multiple non-consecutive terms, please contact the Employment Programs Resource Office about how to structure your offer letter.

The examples below outline some models of co-op hiring that you may wish to consider when hiring a co-op employee for multiple work terms. These examples assume a placement of three (not necessarily consecutive) work terms; however, you can reconfigure them to the number of work terms that best suit your hiring needs.

## **MINISTRY SPECIFIC CO-OP EXPERIENCES**



You can work with other divisions of your ministry to provide co-op employees with exposure to the diverse work available within your ministry.

### **CROSS MINISTRY CO-OP EXPERIENCES**

You can work with other ministries to develop a comprehensive co-op experience that gives the co-op employee exposure to similar work in different ministries.

### **CAREER STREAM SPECIFIC CO-OP EXPERIENCES**

You can also work within your own ministry or with other ministries to develop a comprehensive co-op experience that gives co-op employees exposure to the range of careers in their field of study that are available within the BC Public Service.

### **PROJECT BASED CO-OP EXPERIENCES**

Working within your team, you can develop a comprehensive co-op experience for an employee that gives them exposure to the full project management lifecycle.

## **Academic Program Details**

There are thousands of students across the province who participate in co-operative education programs through their post-secondary institution, and thousands more from outside of BC. With the intention of long-term retention, we want to recruit the top talent into the BC Public Service, and this starts at the co-op hiring level. When deciding who should fill the position, and which post-secondary institutions the job will be posted at, there are a few things to consider:

**Level of Schooling:** Co-operative education programs are available for students completing certificate, diploma, undergraduate degree, master's degree and PhD level programs.

The Co-op Program with the BC Public Service has translated the level of schooling into two different levels for salary purposes. It is difficult to determine whether a level 1 co-op employee or a level 2 co-op employee would meet your business needs; as such, we recommend that you do not make that call until you have selected the successful applicant. It is recommended that you obtain approval to hire a level 2 co-op employee (Master's Degree or PhD) and open the job up to students that would fall in both the level 1 and level 2 salary ranges. Once the position is filled, you can confirm the appropriate salary is applied to that position through a MyHR service request.

**Field of Study:** The Co-op Program is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain work experience that augments their field of study. Once you have determined the scope of the work, consider all the academic programs your opportunity could align with. Check out the [Co-op Connect Hub - Resources for Hiring Managers Page](#) for a list of all fields of study at post-secondary institutions in BC with recognized co-operative education programs.

**Post-Secondary Institution:** There are 16 public post-secondary institutions across the province with recognized co-operative education programs (see list [here](#)). When considering which institutions to send your job posting to, we recommend that you send it to every post-secondary institution with a relevant field of study, even if the position itself must be in a particular geographic region.

You can also post your co-op job opportunity through [ACE- WIL](#) (Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning BC/Yukon). ACE-WIL offers easy access to students at 25 post-secondary institutions and a multitude of work-integrated learning programs through one portal. ACE-WIL will automatically forward your posting to their member universities, colleges and institutions and WIL professionals at the institutions you've selected will contact you once they receive your posting.

You can also send your job posting to co-op programs at post-secondary institutions outside of BC. Please visit [CEWIL Canada](#) for the list of resources and post secondary institutions. **Important:** BC Public Service does not cover relocation expenses for co-op opportunities and students are required to relocate for the duration of the work term.

## The Hiring Process

Co-op employee hiring may be done without a full competitive hiring process but must be based on the principle of merit. However, to help students gain confidence, skills and the experience to navigate the BC Public Service hiring process, we encourage you to design an assessment process using a similar format to your regular hiring processes (e.g., screening, written assessment, behavioural competency interview, reference check).

## Principle of Merit

Hiring decisions are based on the principle of merit to ensure they are non-partisan and reflect competence and ability to do the job. Reference checks must be completed for all BCPS appointments.

## Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Co-op Program, co-op students must be registered in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution. Check out [MyHR - Co-op Program page](#) for a list of recognized co-operative education programs in BC along with the links to their websites. Students registered in a co-op program at a post-secondary institution located outside of BC are also eligible for the Co-op Program. Check out the [CEWIL Canada](#) website for participating co-op programs across Canada.

## Qualifications

Qualifications are the criteria (e.g., education, skills, knowledge, experience, behavioural competencies) required to perform a job.

While it is common for hiring managers to want employees coming in the door with considerable work experience, this is not the case for co-op jobs. The Co-op Program is designed to integrate academic studies with related hands-on work and provide students with the opportunity to gain the work experience to find permanent employment upon graduation. As such co-op job postings should not require much (if any) previous work experience, and most of the assessment of qualifications should be placed on ensuring the job opportunity aligns with the student's field of study. If additional qualifications are included in the job posting, we recommend that they are skills that an applicant could obtain in an academic setting (e.g., experience conducting research, experience summarizing qualitative and quantitative information, experience creating pivot tables in Microsoft Excel).

## Assessment

Assessment describes any type of activity that determines the extent to which applicants possess the qualifications required for the job. Hiring managers should design an assessment process that will ensure they are hiring the right person for the position, but one that will also ensure they are hiring a co-op student into a position that will complement the student's academic studies.

During the initial screening of applications, importance should be placed on the educational requirements of the position (i.e., field of study), with less emphasis on previous experience. This means that your first round of assessment should screen in all candidates who meet your educational requirements. Subsequent assessments may evaluate other qualifications outlined in the posting, job specific skills, knowledge and behavioural competencies.

Some assessment options to consider:

- Interviews: hypothetical and behavioural competency-based questions, role plays and oral presentations.
- Skills Testing: i.e., typing test.
- Written assignment: i.e., draft a response to a letter, complete an analysis, review data for errors.
- Reference checks.

## Offer & Onboarding

Congratulations, you have selected the successful candidate. Next step is to make a verbal offer followed by the offer letter. Use the [Co-op offer letter template](#), or the auxiliary hire letter template available on [MyHR](#) to prepare the offer letter. Do not forget to send out regret notifications to all unsuccessful candidates.

Be sure to review [Virtual onboarding for managers and supervisors](#) to welcome new employees and get them set up. Virtual onboarding is just as effective as completing the process in person. It helps new employees learn how things work, find a sense of belonging and build relationships with their workplace community.

**Tip:** Before your new employee starts send them the link to the: [MyHR - New Employees Welcome](#). Here they will find information and help on their new employee journey. New employees can read and learn what they need to do 'before they start' and 'when they start'.

# Co-op Employee Hiring Checklist

## Requirements

- Identify a project(s) that will:
  - Contribute to the overall goals of the work unit
  - Provide the student with practical work experience and a challenge
  - Empower the student to build their résumé, skill set and key competencies.
- Determine the best approach to meeting your needs (see [Planning for Hiring](#))
- Define the [qualifications](#). The level of schooling will correspond directly to the salary cost of the co-op employee.
- Use the [Salary Look-up Tool](#) on MyHR to confirm current salary levels:
  - [Level 1](#) is for students working towards a diploma or bachelor's degree.
  - [Level 2](#) is for students working towards a post-graduate degree.

## Approval

- Confirm that there are funds in your STOB 50 budget to hire a co-op student.
- Confirm that there are funds in your STOB 52 budget for up to \$1000 for the Pacific Leaders Co-op Tuition Grant.
- Obtain approval to hire (per your ministry's process).

## Position Details

- Draft the job posting. You may want to use the Co-op Connect Hub [Job Posting Template](#). Ensure that the posting accurately reflects the scope of work that the co-op employee will be doing.
- If a co-op position number does not already exist within your work unit, you must request a position number via AskMyHR and submit a new service request ("I am submitting this request as or on behalf of" – A Hiring Manager à "Choose a category and then click the arrow to select a subcategory" – Job Classification à Create New Position). Ensure you submit all the necessary documentation such as organizational chart and job description with your request.

## Posting the Job

The Co-op employment opportunities are posted directly to the post secondary's co-op job board. Please contact the post-secondary institution(s) of your choice for assistance in posting your position.

Review the list by visiting the [Co-op Connect Hub](#) to identify the post-secondary institutions in BC with programs that are relevant to the job (see [Academic Program Details](#)).

Visit post-secondary institution co-op job boards or contact co-op job board contact for posting on their student job board.

As an alternative, you can post your co-op job opportunity through [ACE- WIL](#) (Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning). ACE-WIL offers easy access to students at 25 post-secondary institutions and a multitude of work-integrated learning programs through one portal. ACE-WIL will automatically forward your posting to their member universities, colleges and institutions and WIL professionals at the institutions you've selected will contact you once they receive your posting.

### Note:

- You may also wish to consider posting the job opportunity at [post-secondary institutions outside of BC](#) with a recognized co-op program.
- Do not submit AskMyHR Hiring Service Request unless you also want to post the job on the BC Public Service job board.

## Assessment and Selection

Conduct an assessment process to assess knowledge, skills, competencies.

The applicant must be:

- 15 years of age or older.
- Eligible to work in Canada.
- Registered in a recognized co-operative education program at a participating post-secondary institution.

Conduct reference checks to assess past work experience with a previous supervisor or someone who has observed the student's work (paid or volunteer).

Select the successful candidate

## Offer, Hire & Onboard

- Call the top candidate and offer them the position
- Draft and send the offer ([Offer letter template](#)) and regret notifications.
- Complete a Criminal Record Check using the [Personnel Security Screening Office Online Service](#)
- Scan and send a copy of the signed and accepted offer letter and a copy of the Criminal Record Check clearance via AskMyHR Service Request using the category Myself (or) My Team or Organization > Submit a Form or Document > Offer Letters, along with the successful candidate's Social Insurance Number and date of birth.
- HR Tech will process your AskMyHR service request, and you will receive an email with their new employee number.
- Review [Virtual onboarding for managers and supervisors](#) to welcome new employees and get them set up.
- Before your new employee starts send them the link to the: [MyHR - New Employees Welcome](#).
- When your new employee starts send them the [MyHR Onboarding Handout for New Employees](#)
- After an employee number is received, there is a lot that needs to be done to prepare for your new co-op employee's first day. Check out the [Co-op Supervisor's Handbook](#) for information on onboarding and orienting your new co-op employee.

## Useful Contacts and Resources

[coop@gov.bc.ca](mailto:coop@gov.bc.ca)

[Co-op Connect Hub](#)

[ACEWIL BC](#)

[CEWIL Canada](#)

[MyHR Co-op Program](#)

[Co-op Supervisor's Handbook](#)

[MyHR New Employees Welcome](#)

[MyHR Virtual Onboarding for Managers and Supervisors](#)

[MyHR Supervisor Onboarding Checklist](#)

[MyHR Onboarding Handout for New Employees](#)

**For more information, please contact:**  
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BC PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCY



Where ideas work