

CO-OP AND INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK





INTRODUCTION

This handbook is to be used by students and employers that are a part of or looking to become involved in UAH's Cooperative Education (Co-Op) and Internship Program. The handbook will serve as a resource throughout your experience(s). To ensure maximum benefit from your co-op or internship, please review the program's policies, procedures, and requirements. The Co-Op and Internship Team (contact information below) is always available to assist with any aspect of your co-op or internship.

Contact Info

intern@uah.edu
256-824-6741

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To ensure maximum benefit from your co-op or internship, please review the program's policies, procedures, and requirements.

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

Experiential Learning: Any type of experience in which students have the opportunity to explore their career field(s) and make connections outside of the classroom. While this can include mentorship programs, externships (job shadowing), informational interviews, etc., for the sake of this handbook, Experiential Learning will refer to co-op or internships.

Cooperative Education: Cooperative Education, or co-op, refers to an educational program where a student is working in a degree-related field for multiple semesters for the same employer. A co-op student will complete at least one year of full-time work for that employer by the time the co-op is completed. Co-ops offer integrated learning experiences that enhance a student's career and academic development. At UAH, there are two different types of co-op structures: Alternating or Parallel.

Alternating Co-Op: An alternating co-op is one in which a student alternates between work and school terms. Alternating co-ops must contain at least three work terms for the student to receive the year of full-time work experience. For example, a student can begin a co-op in the Summer semester, work full-time for the employer, and be classified as "Co-Op Work." That student would then be enrolled as a full-time student in the Fall, taking a full academic course load and not working for the employer ("Co-Op School" classification). The student would return to the employer in the Spring Semester for a work term and follow this alternating pattern until the co-op is complete. Students and Employers may elect to have work terms back to back if that structure works best for their organization.

Parallel Co-Op: A parallel co-op is one in which a student is working and taking classes at the same time. Typically, parallel co-op students work part-time (approximately 20 hours a week) and take a partial course load (approximately 9 credit hours). This structure allows students to continue making academic and career progress. Students on a parallel co-op will have about 6 semesters of experience (depending upon the number of hours worked each week) to gain the minimum year of full-time experience.

Co-Op Complete: Co-Op Complete is the terminology used for students that have completed their co-op rotations and do not plan to co-op again before graduation. More information can be found later in this handbook.

Internship: An internship is an experiential learning opportunity that is one semester in length. Internships can occur at any point in the academic year. Students within certain colleges at UAH (typically the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and the College of Business) may be able to receive academic credit for their internships. Academic credit internships are coordinated through the Colleges and students should reach out to their Academic Advisors to determine eligibility.

Co-Op and Internship Team: The Co-Op and Internship Team at UAH is composed of multiple full-time staff members that receive support as needed from others in the office. The team works with students one-on-one and through co-op and internship specific events and programming to help students and employers before, during, and after a co-op/internship. The team will help students identify and apply for appropriate jobs, reflect on experiences, and assist with any questions or concerns that arise during the program. The team will help employers identify applicants, get involved on campus, and assist with any questions or concerns that arise.

Charger Path: Charger Path (powered by Handshake) is UAH's Career Management System. Students may utilize Charger Path to learn about career-related events on and off campus, search for and apply for co-ops, internships, on-campus jobs, volunteer opportunities, and full-time jobs. Charger Path can also be used to schedule appointments with the Co-Op and Internship Team. We recommend that students upload their resumes to Charger Path for review and make them public for approved employers in the system once approved. Employers may use Charger Path to post openings and connect with students. Although UAH offers a variety of resources to help prepare students for co-ops and internships, it is up to the student to ensure success by applying for jobs, preparing for interviews, performing well on the job and progressing academically to maintain eligibility.





CO-OP AND INTERNSHIP ELIGIBILITY

Every student must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to participate in a co-op or internship through Career Services. Employers may set additional or higher eligibility requirements for students as well. Students receiving academic credit for their work experience are held to the standards put in place by their College and should speak to their Academic Advisor for more information.

General Requirements

Students must:

- ▶ Register their co-op or internship with the Office of Career Services by completing the required paperwork and submitting a copy of the offer letter for verification purposes.
- ▶ Register in the appropriate co-op or internship course through Banner each semester prior to that semester's census date.
- ▶ Comply with any pre-employment requirements put in place by employers as well as any confidentiality agreements put in place by the employer.

Academic Requirements

Students must:

- ▶ Have a cumulative 2.75 undergraduate (3.0 for graduate students) GPA. Many employers may set higher GPA requirements for their student employees.
- ▶ Be enrolled in a degree seeking program and co-oping or interning in a position related to their degree field.
- ▶ Maintain satisfactory academic progress toward their degree as defined by the University, college, and major curriculum.
- ▶ Students typically begin co-ops or internships at the end of their sophomore year.

Transfer Student Requirements

Students must:

- ▶ Meet the same requirements as described.
- ▶ Unless the student transfers into UAH with a co-op approved by their previous University or College, students are expected to complete one semester of classes at UAH before co-oping/interning.

International Student Requirements

International students are often subject to more stringent federal mandates, rules and regulations than U.S. students. Failure to comply may result in the loss of your student status and possibly subject you to deportation.

This information is applicable as of the date of publication. However, circumstances impacting the privileges and responsibilities of international students are highly fluid and subject to change by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and UAH. This information should be regarded as guidelines only and the latest information can be obtained from the Office of International Services.

Students must:

- ▶ Meet the general and academic requirements described above (as well as transfer requirements if applicable).
- ▶ International students on F-1 visas must be in full-time student status for at least nine months before starting a co-op or internship.
- ▶ Obtain written authorization from Career Services as well as the Office of International Services prior to working in or returning to any co-op or internship position in the United States.
- ▶ Work only during the academic semester as published by the University (International students can begin work no sooner than the first day of classes and end work no later than the last day of finals.)

Active Military Students:

Students in the military reserves that get activated for service while working must immediately notify their employer and the Office of Career Services to ensure the appropriate military leave is recorded with the University.

Students with Disabilities:

Employers are required by law to provide reasonable accommodation for the physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability. If you think you will need a reasonable accommodation to apply for a position or perform essential job functions, you should speak to the staff at the Disability Support Services.

Appeals Process

If you do not meet the co-op/internship eligibility requirements, you may schedule a meeting with one of the Co-Op and Internship Team members to discuss your situation. Students that do not meet the GPA requirements may be placed on a Probationary Period while they are co-oping and interning.

CO-OP & INTERNSHIP PREPARATION

How and when do students find co-op and internship positions?

Students may begin looking for co-op and internship positions at any point as long as they meet the eligibility requirements when the position begins. Many employers look to fill positions a semester to a year in advance, so advance preparation is key.

Students can use a variety of resources to find positions including Charger Path attending Career Fair each Fall and Spring Semester, attending networking events sponsored by Career Services and employers, utilizing LinkedIn, and searching employer websites. While the Office of Career Services is not a placement office, we encourage students to schedule meetings through Charger Path with the Co-Op and Internship Team to discuss career goals and the job search process.

The UAH Co-Op and Internship Team will make every reasonable effort to help students find positions, but UAH cannot guarantee that students will receive a co-op or internship offer. Job-market and other conditions may affect a student's ability to obtain a position, despite qualifications. Working closely with the Career Services Team, being proactive in your job search, and considering a variety of geographical locations and types of positions will help students in the job search process.

What should I do now that I have a co-op/internship offer?

Your acceptance of a co-op or internship is considered final when confirmed with your employer either verbally or in writing. Once you accept a position you must promptly notify all other employers that have extended offers to you (if applicable) to decline the position. You should not accept more than one offer.

After accepting the offer, you must register your position with Career Services by completing the co-op paperwork, providing a copy of your offer letter, and registering for the appropriate course in Banner each semester. While course registration remains open beyond the census date each semester for students that receive offers mid-semester, students must be enrolled in the appropriate CRN at Financial Aid Census Date to receive special consideration of their financial aid. Failure to enroll in the appropriate CRN by the census date could result in the loss of your scholarship and/or the loss of your student loan deferment.

We also recommend that you meet with your academic advisor to discuss course registration moving forward as well as the Office of Financial Aid to discuss how scholarships and aid may be affected.

Why do I need to register my Co-Op or Internship with Career Services?

Registering your co-op or internship with Career Services has many benefits to you as a student. Your registration will give you transcript documentation of your co-op and internship rotations as well as allow you to maintain your full-time student status

despite how many credit hours you are taking. You will also have more direct support from the Office of Career Services if we are aware of your position. Failure to register your Co-Op or Internship may result in the loss of scholarships, aid, loan deferment, insurance and other benefits. There are no tuition charges associated with registration.

How much will I be paid?

Compensation is set by the employer and depends on the industry, the level of the position and the local economy. Co-ops and interns are paid unless the employing organization meets Department of Labor exceptions to the Fair Labor Standards Act. Employers are encouraged to review the Department of Labor Fact Sheet Regarding Unpaid Interns and Students to determine whether its provisions are relevant to the circumstances of their co-op positions.

Typical average rates of pay are \$10–\$27/hr with \$16 as a non-STEM average and \$20 an average for STEM fields. Students may also receive additional benefits, to be determined by the employer.

Where are positions located?

UAH is fortunate to be located in a thriving city, with the second largest research park in the country located across the street. Many co-ops are located within driving distance of campus. However, UAH students co-op throughout the United States as well as internationally.

Where will I live while I’m working?

Planning for your housing needs is essential. If you live in a residence hall and accept a local position, you may continue living in the residence hall provided that you make arrangements with Housing and Residence Life. Some companies may provide housing and relocation assistance, you can discuss this with your hiring manager after you’re offered the position to see what that company offers.

How will participating in the program extend my expected graduation date?

Many students complete internships or take courses during the summer with no effect on their graduation dates. Some Co-Op students can complete their required rotations and graduate a semester or few later depending upon hours worked and course hours taken each term. However, keep in mind that students are not delaying their employment in their field, rather they are beginning it early and graduating with valuable work experience that makes them more marketable hires.

What happens if I do not meet GPA requirements when I receive an offer or during my co-op?

Students that do not meet the 2.75 undergrad/3.0 graduate GPA requirements may be placed on Co-Op Probation. This will be discussed on a case by case basis with the Co-Op/Internship Team in Career Services and students will also need to discuss this with their Employer as many positions to have a GPA threshold students are required to maintain. Students on Co-Op Probation will meet with Career Services throughout the semester and must make academic progress each semester they are taking courses. While Experiential Learning is important, having a strong GPA and meeting graduation requirements is essential too-and we want to make sure students can do both.



Registering your co-op or internship with Career Services has many benefits to you as a student. Your registration will give you transcript documentation of your co-op and internship rotations as well as allow you to maintain your full-time student status despite how many credit hours you are taking. You will also have more direct support from the Office of Career Services if we are aware of your position. Failure to register your Co-Op or Internship may result in the loss of scholarships, aid, loan deferment, insurance and other benefits. There are no tuition charges associated with registration.

DURING A CO-OP OR INTERNSHIP

CODE OF CONDUCT

As a co-op or intern student, you are a representative of UAH and your performance has an impact on the University, the employer, and future co-op placements at the company. You are expected to adhere to UAH's Code of Student Conduct on the job as well as on campus. Any disciplinary actions will impact your position and may result in immediate termination. Employers may set additional conduct and performance expectations that students are expected to follow while employed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be expected to complete the following activities during their positions. Courses will be coordinated through Canvas.

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION
Beginning of Term Form	The Beginning of Term form is used to encourage students to reflect on their goals for their co-op/internship that semester. Students are asked to put some thought into their goals and expectations for the semester and their experiential learning experience.
End of Term Form	The End of Term form is used to allow students to reflect back on their co-op/internship experience over the semester. Students are asked to discuss if the experience met their expectations and reflect upon their professional growth during the experience.
Co-Op Registration Form	Students are asked to complete registration paperwork and provide a copy of their offer letter upon their first co-op/internship term with a company. This form is not required each term, though any employment updates should be shared with Career Services.
Employer Evaluations End of Term	The student's supervisor will be provided with an evaluation form to reflect on the student's performance during that semester. Career Services will provide this form to employers, but students are welcome to encourage their supervisor to complete the form.

Can I take time off/a vacation during my position?

Students are expected to work the entirety of their co-op or internship term. Students should discuss exact start and end dates with their employers. Employers expect that you will be reliable and responsible during your position. As an employee, you must arrange for your personal and academic commitments to take place outside of your scheduled working hours. If you must take time off due to special circumstances like an illness or emergency, you must obtain permission from your employer. Prolonged absences must be discussed with the UAH Co-op and Internship Team as well.

How do I stay connected to UAH while on co-op/internship?

Students are encouraged to stay in contact with the Office of Career Services, especially if any issues arise during the position. Registration in the OCS course in Banner will also give students the same amenities as full-time students including access to on campus events and facilities like the fitness center, student health clinic, etc. The Office of Career Services can also provide you with resources that can help you transition between working full-time and taking classes or balancing your courses with work in a parallel co-op model.

How is the Co-Op/Internship Course graded?

Students are graded on a Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) scale for the Co-Op/Internship course. Students that do not complete required paperwork or assignments, or perform poorly in their positions may receive U grades for the semester.

What if I have workplace issues during my position?

Dealing with stressful and uncomfortable experiences is all a part of the workplace learning experience. As with every other aspect of your experiential learning program, the Co-Op and Internship Team is here to support you and guide you as necessary. We encourage you to make an effort to resolve issues on your own with your immediate supervisor or manager on the job site. However, if you feel uncomfortable addressing the problem with your supervisor, you should ask the Co-Op and Internship Team for assistance or advice. It is important to address issues promptly rather than ignore or postpone the problem and subsequent discussions.

UAH does not condone any form of discrimination or harassment toward students, either on or off campus. Although the UAH Office of Career Services makes reasonable efforts to ensure employer sites are free from discriminatory practices, it is possible that a student will experience illegal or unethical behavior in the workplace. If you experience any kind of harassment or unfair treatment contact the Co-Op and Internship Team immediately.

If you feel you have been the recipient of any discriminatory, retaliatory, or harassment activity, you will not be penalized for reporting such a situation. More information on UAH's Title IX policy can be found online.

After receiving such notification, we will try to resolve the problem. No action will be decided upon without your input unless immediate attention is required.

The various options available to you include:

- ▶ Resolving the problem through discussion with your supervisor or another person in authority at your work site.
- ▶ Attending a joint meeting with your cooperative education coordinator and supervisor to seek an informal resolution.
- ▶ Improving the immediate work environment or transferring to another department.
- ▶ Leaving the co-op position without penalty.
- ▶ Filing a formal grievance with the co-op employer's affirmative action office.
- ▶ Filing a formal grievance with the appropriate state or federal agency.



What if I am laid off or discharged during my position?

Occasionally, economic or environmental conditions may force employers to terminate your employment before the end of the term. If you are notified of a layoff or discharged from your position, contact the Co-Op and Internship Team as soon as possible. Employers may also discharge you, just as they would any other employee, for many reasons including poor performance, incompetence, inability to perform expected tasks, irregular attendance, tardiness, or unacceptable behavior or attitude. The Co-Op and Internship Team encourages employers to contact us before initiating any action and we will work with you and the employer to resolve the problem. If you are discharged, contact the Co-Op and Internship Team immediately.

AFTER A CO-OP OR INTERNSHIP

After a student has completed at least a year of full-time work experience with their employer in a co-op format, they may either:

- ▶ continue working with that employer and registering as previously described
- ▶ move onto a different position with another company and register as previously described
- ▶ decide to no longer pursue experiential learning opportunities and register as Co-Op Complete*

*Students that are not continuing to work in a co-op capacity will register as Co-Op Complete each semester until graduation

Students that complete an internship are not required to register in future semesters unless they are participating in a different opportunity.

EMPLOYER BEST PRACTICES

The Co-Op and Internship Team works closely with employers to maintain a positive, collaborative working relationship to help meet hiring needs.



EMPLOYER BEST PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS

The Co-Op and Internship Team works closely with employers to maintain a positive, collaborative working relationship to help meet hiring needs. While much of the requirements for participating in a co-op or internship fall to the student, employers are asked to stay in communication with UAH's Co-Op and Internship Team. We ask employers to complete the following steps when hiring a UAH student in a co-op or internship role.

1. Inform UAH of your hires by emailing intern@uah.edu or your point of contact on the Co-Op and Internship Team. Our Team will reach out to the student to ensure they have completed the registration process.
2. Complete the evaluation form provided to you at the end of the semester to share feedback on your student's performance.
3. Speak with the Co-Op and Internship Team if there are any issues with your student that need to be addressed.



CONTACT US

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CAREER SERVICES