Cooperative Education: Faculty Responsibilities

Responsibilities
Faculty Advisors will:

- Approve/disapprove the Cooperative Education placement
- Discuss learning objectives with students before job placement begins
- Develop learning agreement with student containing college-level learning objectives, academic assignment as well as deadlines
- Discuss on-site visitations and final evaluation procedures
- Be certain that students understand the Cooperative Education course requirements, i.e. logs, journals, reports, and term papers
- Maintain contact with student for the duration of the Cooperative Education experience
- Contact the student's supervisor at least once during the semester to check on the student's progress
- Assign a grade for student academic work
- Evaluate students on their overall performance at the end of the semester
- Act as liaison to other faculty members in their school
- Supply job leads to the Cooperative Education staff whenever possible

Maintaining Academic Quality
Cooperative Education is an academic course. The integrity of the Cooperative Education Program is dependent upon faculty adherence to strong academic standards in the assessment of experiential learning. Goals and objectives are highly individualized and will naturally vary with each student, his or her major and the job experience. Students will be placed at the level of their educational status and work experience. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisor to create through co-established learning objectives and the academic assignment (journals, interviews, readings, etc.) the appropriate level of learning. Students receive four academic credits for meeting Cooperative Education requirements as well as the completion of the academic requirements listed on the Three Way Learning Agreement. The Cooperative Education faculty advisor's role is similar to the supervision of a student's independent study or honors project. Students are required to work a minimum of 15 hours a week for 16 weeks in the Fall and Spring semesters and 20 hours per week for 12 weeks during the summer for a total of 240 hours each semester. A major component of this relationship is the development of the Three-Way Learning Agreement which is distributed electronically by the Cooperative Education staff.

Students are also required to attend mandatory orientation and reflection sessions facilitated by the Cahill staff.
The Three-Way Learning Agreement

Following procedures developed by the Cooperative Education Advisory Committee and administered by the Cooperative Education staff, Cooperative Education faculty advisors, students and employers negotiate a learning agreement that consists of three parts.

Part A - Student

• General student information
• The student's proposed learning objectives

Part B - Employer

• General employment information such as the job location, period of employment, salary, hours, supervisor's name, address and phone number the student's job title with a description of the work-related activities and responsibilities known at that date

Part C - Cooperative Education Faculty Advisor

• The development of the learning objectives to be achieved during the Cooperative Education experience: The Cooperative Education faculty advisor often encourages the student to focus on educational objectives, including those that relate to personal, social, and career development. Students should consider the broad range of human learning: cognitive knowledge, technical and communication skills and interpersonal relations. A finance student working at an investment firm might decide, for example, with the direction of the Cooperative Education faculty advisor, that the learning objectives for that placement should include an understanding of portfolio management, client needs assessment and the integration of technology and finance.

• Academic requirements: Cooperative Education faculty advisors often assign journals that describe learning, research papers, professional interviews, and a wide variety of projects that are conducive to evaluating and grading Cooperative Education students. See The Academic Assignment (below).

• Faculty Availability: It is very important that Cooperative Education faculty advisors make themselves available to students (through office hours and telephone/e-mail access) for completion of learning agreements prior to the beginning of the Cooperative Education assignment. Once a student is assigned to a Cooperative Education faculty advisor, a meeting must be arranged to discuss Cooperative Education academic requirements. In the first few weeks of the semester, extra efforts to provide this availability, particularly to evening students, is deeply appreciated by our students and the Cooperative Education staff.
The Academic Assignment

The faculty advisor determines academic requirements that best suit a particular student. Depending on a student's academic major, presentation of these requirements can take several forms. The following methods can be utilized to evaluate a student's learning during a Cooperative Education placement:

1. **The Journal**
   The journal is not only a log of activities, but the collection of thoughts and insights the activities produced. The journal allows students to express their own work values and ethics in relation to the organization in which they are employed. Students are encouraged to set daily/weekly objectives and log their progress toward their objective in the journal. Some faculty have found that a "Guided or Focused Journal" is more effective, in which students answer specific questions as well as describe their daily experiences. The following topics/questions can be discussed or answered in journal entries:
   - Describe your company; its mission, history, size and customer base.
   - Describe your workplace, department/office: staffing, responsibility, how it fits into the overall mission of the firm.
   - Describe your responsibilities within your office -- how they fit into general office goals. Describe your reporting line and the title of your supervisor.
   - What is the formal reporting structure?
   - How important is technology in your workplace? Are your skills adequate in this area?
   - Is there emphasis on teamwork in your workplace? Are you a team player? What skills should you acquire?
   - How important are interpersonal skills? Communication skills? How do you feel your skills are in these areas?
   - What role does the developing global economy play in your firm?
   - What are the central marketing strategies used by your firm?
   - Now that you have worked here for a short time, do you see an informal reporting structure that differs from the formal reporting structure?
   - What classroom learning has helped you most in this position?
   - How could Ramapo have better prepared you for the work world? How could the Cahill Center have better prepared you for this experience?
   - If you could change your workplace, what changes would you make?
   - Have your learning objectives changed at all over the semester?
   - Summarize the learning that has taken place over the semester.
   - What future learning/education do you still need to acquire to be successful in this field?

2. **Assigned Readings**
   Assigned readings keep the learning process fresh and focused, explain trends in the field and foster analytical thinking in current settings. Connections between selected readings and the workplace can be recorded in the journal or can inspire a thesis for a term paper.

3. **Research Papers**
   Papers provide an opportunity for faculty to shape student learning. Papers can also help students draw a connection between their Cooperative Education/Academic Internship and its role in the global economy.
4. **Professional/Informational Interviews**
   Interviews allow students to explore the company structure and learn the importance of professional roles and functions within the company. Through interviews students begin to understand career paths and the learning and credentials needed in a particular field. Informational Interview guidelines are available in the Cahill Center or by clicking [here](#).

5. **Oral Presentations**
   Oral presentations promote communication skills. They allow faculty a role in shaping a student’s professional demeanor in both verbal and non-verbal communication.

   Examples of Cooperative Education Projects:
   - Self-evaluation summary at the completion of the assignment
   - Portfolio of self-initiated projects
   - Company history
   - Oral presentation to the Cooperative Education faculty advisor, a class or an organization

A professor from the School of Administration and Business uses the following as the academic component of a Cooperative Education position:

   - Identify student learning goals for academic component of Cooperative Education.
   - Identify student workplace goals for academic component of Cooperative Education (5-7 pages).
   - Meet with professor early in the semester to discuss workplace goals.
   - Students keep daily/weekly self-evaluation journal throughout the Cooperative Education monitoring progress toward achieving the workplace goals.
   - Student summarizes the journal at mid-term and end-term in a 3-5 page memo report to the professor.
   - Student conducts primary (interviews) and secondary (reading) research on topic (in question form) related to achieving learning goals for academic component of Cooperative Education, and submits a 10-12 page paper at the end of the semester.
   - Student meets with professor at start of the semester to discuss academic and workplace goals, at mid-term to discuss first self-evaluation, and at other times as requested by the student.

6. **Individual Meetings with Cooperative Education Students**
   Faculty who require regular meetings better understand a student's role and position in the placement. Meetings allow for any questions or concerns students may have with the placement or the learning process. Faculty get the opportunity to evaluate a student's attitude and presentation skills, enabling them to see what the employer sees on a regular basis. Individual meetings reinforce the academic component of Cooperative Education. Some faculty elect to stay in touch with students via weekly or biweekly e-mail exchanges.

7. **Employer Evaluations**
   An employer’s evaluation of a student can be valuable in many ways. It can inform both the Cooperative Education staff and the faculty advisor of a job well done, timeliness, excessive absenteeism, inability to accomplish tasks properly or efficiently or of a need to polish social or professional skills. It can help get a more accurate picture of the current placement. Employer evaluations allow the employer to provide comments on student's academic and professional participation as well as on Ramapo's academic preparation.
8. Site Visits

Cooperative Education faculty advisors are strongly encouraged to visit the work site and communicate with a student's site supervisor for a number of reasons:

- To monitor student learning in a Cooperative Education position
- To better understand the environment in which the student is placed
- To understand student expectations
- To strengthen the partnership between Ramapo College and the community
- To assess future opportunities for other Ramapo students

Cahill Center staff members are available to accompany Cooperative Education faculty advisors on site visits. If the employer's evaluation is not returned to the Cooperative Education office in time for grading, it is the responsibility of the faculty supervisor to obtain an evaluation via telephone or in person during an employer site visit.

Grading and Evaluation

The Cooperative Education faculty advisor assigns a grade which is often a composite grade combining employer evaluation, completion of academic assignments and progress toward co-established learning objectives. Although grading is an individual matter, many Cooperative Education faculty advisors have reported they use a similar formula to that below:

- Progress toward objectives: 25%
- Academic course assignment(s): 50%
- Employer evaluation: 25%

Many advisors use combinations of the above mentioned projects and methods of evaluation. Some evaluate their students' learning in creative ways not mentioned. It is entirely an individual matter.

Reflection

Faculty advisors should meet with their Cooperative Education students at the end of each semester of Cooperative Education employment. These debriefing sessions may be used to encourage the appropriate integration of experiential learning with the student’s educational and career goals. Students are also required to attend Cahill run reflection sessions held each semester with student and faculty participants.
Benefits of Cooperative Education for Faculty Cooperative Education

- provides laboratory situations for academic studies
- help faculty members to keep current with changes in their field
- brings fresh insight into the classroom
- provides possible opportunities for access to company facilities for sabbatical projects
- strengthens partnerships between Ramapo College and the community

Frequently Asked Questions by Faculty

How often should I meet with each Cooperative Education student?
The Cooperative Education staff recommends that faculty meet individually with each student at least three times during the semester. The first meeting is crucial because learning objectives and academic requirements will be discussed and established on the Learning Agreement. The second meeting, scheduled for mid-semester, enables the faculty to see how well a student is progressing toward those learning objectives and allows the student to express any questions or concerns with the placement. The third meeting, scheduled for the end of the semester, provides an opportunity for reflection. Students and faculty are also encouraged to correspond with each other by E-mail or telephone.

How do I determine learning objectives?
Each set of learning objectives will be unique for each student depending on the student's major, the student's placement and the student's role within the company. The main objective of the program is to promote the application of classroom learning as well as the retention and application of new hands-on learning.

Should I make site visits?
Yes. The faculty advisor is strongly encouraged to make site visits whenever possible. The Cooperative Education staff will be available to join the faculty on site visits. However, if time constraints exist, the faculty can call or E-mail site supervisors as a secondary method of "visiting" a site. The site visit is another opportunity for faculty to ascertain a student's job performance. If a faculty advisor learns of a problem with a placement, the Cooperative Education staff must be contacted immediately.

How should I formulate a grade?
The Cooperative Education faculty advisor assigns a grade, which is often a composite grade combining employer evaluation, assessment of academic assignments and progress toward co-established learning objectives. See Grading and Evaluation for more information.

Will I receive additional financial compensation for participating as a Cooperative Education faculty advisor?
Yes. Pay schedules are determined by the Office of Academic Affairs.

Can a faculty member act as both the advisor AND employer for a Cooperative Education student?
No. Faculty members hiring Cooperative Education students for specific projects, research, field study, etc., and sign off as the EMPLOYER (Part B on the Cooperative Education Learning Agreement) cannot also sign off as the FACULTY advisor/mentor (PART C on the Cooperative Education Learning Agreement) due to inherent conflict of interest. In short, a faculty member cannot act as both the employer AND faculty advisor/mentor for a student working at an approved Cooperative Education placement.