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IS FOREVER

U.S. Department of State

Cooperative Education Program

A Guide for Prospective Students



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MISSION STATEMENT

To administer United States foreign policy and maintain diplomatic relations throughout the world.

The Cooperative Education Program (Co-op) is also commonly known throughout Federal Departments as the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). The Department of State is proud to provide an educational program that integrates a student's academic studies with Federal work experience. The Co-op program is one of only a handful of career paths that has the potential of a non-competitive conversion into the Federal Civil Service. Due to the unique partnership between the student, the school and the Department of State, the student is paid a government salary and is expected to work either part or full time in a capacity that is compatible with the student's course load. Students are required to work in areas that are directly related to their academic program and career goals. Participants provide support to bureaus in the Washington D.C. area and some regional areas.

WHO CAN APPLY?

The program is designed to enhance the student's education while they are enrolled in high school, vocational/technical school, undergraduate or graduate studies.

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

Students must be:

- A U.S. citizen.
- At least 16 years of age.
- Enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a degree or certificate-seeking program with at least a half time academic, vocational or technical course load, while remaining in good academic standing.

WHAT IS THE WORK SCHEDULE?

Students typically work part-time while school is in session and full time during breaks. There are no limitations on the number of hours a student can work per week. A specific work schedule will be submitted that fits with the student's academic schedule as well as the bureau's need. This program is the perfect work-study combination.

HOW ARE STUDENTS PAID?

Students are paid at regular government salary rates (typically GS-1 through GS-5). Pay is dependent on the level of education and experience the candidate may possess, based on the qualification standard of the job the applicant is seeking.



WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

An application is a student's resume, cover letter and most recent (unofficial) transcript. All items need to be electronically submitted to coop@state.gov identifying the subject as "Cooperative Education Applicant Resume." *Please attach documents using Microsoft Word.*

WHEN IS THE APPLICATION DUE?

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and placements are made throughout the year. We keep applications on file for 6 months in hopes of matching the student with a bureau. If no placement is made in that time, the student must re-apply for further consideration.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STUDENT PROGRAMS

If you have any questions or concerns:

EMAIL: coop@state.gov identifying the subject as "Cooperative Education Program Inquiry"

PHONE: (202) 261-8888 (Ask for the Co-op Coordinator)

WHAT TO EXPECT AS A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION APPLICANT

Before submitting your resume and cover letter to coop@state.gov we suggest you bring it to a school counselor or career services to look over. You want to make sure these items have all your information, are formatted well and have no spelling errors, since this is your first impression with managers.

After you submit your application, you should receive a receipt of application email, no later than one week from when you applied. If you do not get a response, please resubmit your application.

Once we receive your application, we keep your resume on file for 6 months in hopes that we will find you a placement in that time. *We are unable to tell applicants the status of their application because these positions are need based, and they become available as needed.*

Placements are made when:

1. A bureau coordinator or manager contacts the Cooperative Education coordinator, requesting the need for a student with certain characteristics, for example: a certain major or work experience background.
2. Next the Co-op coordinator goes through the file of applicants and sends the best matches to the bureau coordinator or manager.
3. The bureau coordinator or manager then goes through the applications and sets up interviews with those they are interested in hiring.



WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION POSITION

1. Once a bureau coordinator or manager has interviewed you and given you a verbal offer for the Co-op position, you will need to provide them with the following materials:
 - An updated resume that includes your birth date and social security number.
 - A current official transcript. *(If you are just beginning a term in school and do not have a transcript yet, please submit a proof of enrollment.)*
 - Completed Co-op agreement.
2. Once your bureau coordinator or manager has received all these materials they will send them to Human Resources – Student Programs to process your appointment.
3. Student Programs will contact you with information regarding your tentative offer for the Co-op position as well as the security clearance process.
4. Students tentatively selected for the program must undergo a background investigation and receive either a Secret or Top Secret security clearance.
5. The security clearance process takes approximately 90-120 days to complete from the time the forms are received. Investigations may take substantially longer than 120 days if you have had extensive travel, education, residence and/or employment overseas, or if you have dual citizenship, foreign contacts, immediate family or relatives who are not citizens of the United States and/or a foreign born spouse or if there is a security, suitability or medical issue to resolve. These issues could include a current or past history of drugs or alcohol abuse, as well as a recent history of credit problems. Although these problems will not necessarily preclude you from receiving a security clearance, they will lengthen the time required to complete the clearance process. **It is important to be completely honest when filling out your security questionnaire.**
Note: It is possible that you could receive an interim clearance, which would allow you to work at the Department of State while your investigation is still taking place.
6. Your offer is not official until you receive written notification from Student Programs. Once you receive that, you will be able to schedule a time for orientation.



NON-COMPETITIVE CONVERSION INTO THE CIVIL SERVICE

A great benefit of the Cooperative Education Program is that after the completion of certain requirements, it is possible that the participant be converted to a civil service position. However, a non-competitive conversion is not guaranteed.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Participants in the Co-op program *may* be non-competitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment when students have:
 - a. Completed, within the preceding 120 days, at an accredited school, course requirements conferring a certificate or degree;
 - b. Completed at least 640 hours of career-related work before completion of, or concurrently with, the course requirements;
 - c. Been recommended by the employing agency in which the career-related work was performed; and
 - d. Met the qualification standard for the targeted position to which the student is appointed.
2. Conversions must be an occupation related to the student's academic training and career related work experience.
3. The non-competitive conversion may be to a position with the same agency or any other agency within the Federal Government.

FAQ FOR COOPERATIVE EDUCATION APPLICANTS

Q: Are all the positions in the Washington D.C. area?

A: Co-op positions are typically only in the Washington D.C. area. Most students go to schools that are located in the Washington D.C area and then commute to work. There are very few instances that a student is placed in another city. However, in the rare cases that they are, they are typically at passport agencies. If you are interested in working outside of the D.C. area please specify that on your resume and cover letter.

Q: What type of work will I be doing?

A: Every Co-op placement is different. As long as the position is directly related to your academic major and/or career goals.



Q: I can't attach an unofficial transcript, what should I do?

A: If you are unable to attach an unofficial transcript to your application, you may submit your resume without it. Please note that if you do receive a placement you will need to send in your current official transcript.

Q: What should I do if I want to update my resume?

A: Updating your resume whenever you have made changes is encouraged. This way we are sending your most current resume to managers. If you would like to update your resume, please electronically submit it to coop@state.gov identifying the subject as "Updated Resume - last name"

Q: Do Co-op students receive benefits?

A: Yes, Co-op students receive several types of benefits. Students earn annual and sick leave based on a prorated basis of how many hours worked per pay period. They are also eligible for both health and life insurance coverage.

Q: Can my work experience while on the Student Temporary Employment Program count towards the required 640 hours necessary for noncompetitive conversion career conditional employment?

A: Yes, if the work performed is related to the student's academic studies and career goals. There should be clear documentation showing the "relatedness" between the work (actual duties/tasks/assignments) performed while on a STEP appointment to the work that will be performed while on a SCEP appointment.

