

<b>Policies of the University of North Texas</b>	<b>Chapter 07</b>
<b>07.007 Internships and Cooperative Education</b>	<b>Student Affairs</b>

**Policy Statement.** This policy provides definition and guidance for internships and cooperative education programs.

**Application of Policy.** Faculty and Students.

**Definitions.**

1. **Internships and Cooperative Education (co-op):** formally integrate students’ academic studies with practical work experience in a professional environment. Through this practical work experience, students are provided an opportunity to enhance their academic knowledge, their personal development and their professional preparation. Cooperative Education and Internships (CEI) is the central office responsible for the administration of these programs. The teaching faculty, co-op staff, and the on-site supervisors share in the responsibility and education of these students. Cooperative Education and Internships reports to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

It is essential that all internships and co-op experiences offered by a department within the University:

1. Are directly related to the student's major or professional field of study.
  2. Provide for integration of academic and experiential learning.
  3. Are deemed academically viable by the department awarding credit.
  4. Are recorded with the office of Cooperative Education and Internships, whether they are internships or cooperative education experiences.
  5. Include appropriate written agreements between the student, employer, and university that hold the university harmless for any liability issues that may arise as a result of the student’s participation in the program.
2. **Cooperative Education:** Cooperative Education is a multi-semester program that combines classroom study with planned and supervised work experience on an ongoing basis. Its purpose is to give students a broader educational experience, with the added benefit of being paid while working. Workstations are carefully developed with employers to ensure that: 1) assignments increase in scope and responsibility each semester, while remaining directly related to a student’s major field of study; 2) students are directly supervised by practicing professionals in the field; 3) employer supervisors are willing to participate in the professional mentoring and teaching role, respecting the students’ academic priorities; and 4) each supervisor will participate in a review and report of each student’s progress and performance during each work

semester. Academic credit for co-op is given in units of 1-3 credit hours per work semester.

3. **Internship:** An internship is normally a one-semester work experience and provides a one-time educational and practical work experience in which students may receive academic credit for work experience that is related to their major field of study. Internships may be paid or non-paid.

## **Procedures and Responsibilities.**

### **1. Cooperative Education.**

There are two basic work plans within the co-op program: alternating and parallel. Alternating positions are those in which students work full-time for a period of time (usually a semester - sometimes 6 months), and then return to school full-time for a semester. Students then go back to work full-time for a second work period, followed by a semester at school, and so on.

Parallel positions are part-time or full-time for consecutive semesters and the student must maintain at least part-time school enrollment at the same time.

Alternating and parallel work plans may be combined to accommodate full-time summer employment followed by part-time employment during the fall and spring semesters

#### **1.1 Qualifications for Cooperative Education**

Undergraduates must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5, have completed at least 12 semester hours at UNT, and have at least 2 semesters remaining prior to completion of degree currently being pursued.

Graduate students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 at UNT, have completed at least 9 hours of graduate credit at UNT, and must be currently admitted to a graduate degree program.

Academic departments may have additional qualifications (e.g., a particular GPA in the major, or completion of a particular course). These requirements will be on file at the office of Cooperative Education and Internships.

All students participating in a co-op program must be registered with Cooperative Education and Internships (CEI), and must meet all qualifications of the program and the student's major department. CEI and the faculty supervisor will work together to ensure the academic credibility and viability of each semester of work experience.

## **1.2 Requirements for Cooperative Education**

During each work semester, co-op students must submit a completed evaluation of their experience. The CEI will provide the form, and a copy of the completed form will be provided to the student's major department/faculty supervisor.

During each work semester, employer supervisors of co-op students must submit an evaluation of the students' progress and performance. The CEI will provide the form, and a copy of the completed form will be provided to the student's major department/faculty supervisor.

Insofar as feasible, the central staff coordinators of the CEI will meet with each student and/or employer supervisor during each work semester. Results of the meetings will be shared with the student's major department/faculty supervisor.

Each academic department will establish its own requirements, which will be in addition to those listed above. The requirements will include a written report from the student during each work semester, and may also include: learning objectives; journals or logs; meetings or regular correspondence with faculty supervisor; or other requirements specific to the academic unit.

The University reserves the right to terminate a student's and/or an employer's participation in a co-op program, and to remove a student from a work assignment at any time if the Director of CEI decides, in consultation with the faculty supervisor and/or appropriate university administrators, that continued participation is not in the best interest of a student or the University for any reason.

## **2. Internships.**

### **2.1. Qualifications for Internships**

The academic department will establish qualifications for internships. The department may request assistance from the CEI regarding job listings, evaluations, record keeping, and site-visits.

All internships should be recorded with the CEI.

All employers requesting UNT students for internships should be recorded with the CEI.

### **2.2. Requirements for Internships**

The academic departments will establish requirements for internships. Those requirements will be on file with the CEI.

The University reserves the right to terminate a student's and/or an employer's participation in an internship program, and to remove a student from a work assignment at any time if the faculty supervisor decides, in consultation with the Director of Cooperative Education and Internships and appropriate university administrators, that continued participation is not in the best interest of a student or the University for any reason.

### **3. Grades for Internships and Cooperative Education Courses.**

Grades for internships and cooperative education courses will be assigned on the basis of the students' ability to integrate academic and field experience, and to communicate proof of this experience in a written report and other documentation as required by the department. Grades may be pass/fail or letter grades, as determined by the academic department.

Students' academic backgrounds must be suitable to the anticipated field experience. Students may be awarded credit for internships or cooperative education coursework through their major departments only, except that students with a minor in technical writing may be awarded credit through that department, regardless of their majors.

No more than 12 credit hours for bachelor's degree candidates and 6 credit hours for master's degree candidates may be earned through internships or cooperative education courses. Internship or cooperative education credit hours may be applied as part of the major professional field, approved supporting courses, as free electives, or as academic credit in addition to degree requirements, as determined by the appropriate academic dean.

Each department will maintain a statement of the scope, objectives, and evaluation criteria for their internships and cooperative education courses, and those statements will be on file with the office of Cooperative Education and Internships.

### **4. Faculty Responsibilities in Internships and Cooperative Education.**

Each department in the university that participates in either cooperative education or internships should appoint a faculty member to serve as a department faculty coordinator/faculty supervisor, who shall be the primary liaison to Cooperative Education and Internships program in all matters related to internships and cooperative education for that major.

### **5. CEI Program Responsibilities.**

All positions listed will be available to all qualified students, and referrals will be made in compliance with federal and state laws and policies governing employment referrals, and in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Positions listed must be employment opportunities rather than business opportunities. Business opportunities are defined as situations that include any of the following characteristics: require students to make investments or initial cash deposits; involve students purchasing inventory or product for resale; students work independently of direct supervision on a regular basis; students work in a private residence or non-commercial setting; students are not considered employees; students will have financial liability for their work or the work of others; or other situation that is not clearly an employee-employer relationship.

A central base of data will be maintained regarding all employers and all students who represent the university through internships and cooperative education positions, which will minimally include students' names, company/employer names, and faculty supervisor.

CEI will collect signatures on statements from participating co-op students concerning the students' responsibilities for their own safety, their agreement to adhere to good ethical standards of conduct, and stating the university's rights and its refusal to assume liability for the students' participation in any such program. CEI will also collect these statements from students participating in internships, upon request of the department or supervising faculty.

CEI will secure agreements from participating co-op employers that will indicate the employers' understanding that the student is participating in a formal work-based-learning course of the University, and that the employer is acting as a participant in that learning. Further, the employer will confirm that: 1) the position description presented for academic credit consideration is an accurate description of the student's position and responsibilities; 2) the student will be supervised by a practicing professional in the field, 3) the employer supervisor will participate in evaluating the student's performance and reporting that to the university by approved forms and methods required by the academic department and CEI, 4) the employer will not perform any act that might impede the student's academic progress toward the degree being currently sought, 5) the work environment is appropriate to the profession and is not a private residence of the employer, 6) the employer will provide appropriate training for the performance of the job and related safety issues, 7) the employer will notify CEI should any occurrence alter or threaten to alter the student's status with the employer, and 8) the employer will retain only those students who remain in compliance with all regulations of CEI, and will dismiss any student upon notification by CEI that the student is no longer in good standing with the program.

Departments are encouraged to seek similar agreements from employers participating in internships. CEI will secure such agreements upon request of the department or supervising faculty.

CEI serves as a resource for each academic department to establish the department's expectations and policies concerning internships and cooperative education courses.

CEI is available to assist departments' and appropriate faculty to determine the credibility of proposed internships.

CEI will report pertinent information to appropriate departments and faculty concerning activities of employers, when the activities of the employers have the potential to affect students.

## **6. Cooperative Education and Internship Faculty Council.**

The Cooperative Education and Internships Faculty Council serves in an advisory capacity for the ongoing Cooperative Education and Internship program at the University of North Texas. A primary consideration of the Council is establishing and maintaining the credibility of the program within the community and among students, the faculty, and the administration. The Council advises the Cooperative Education and Internship program concerning such matters and others as they relate to the ongoing mission of the University, the mission of the program, and in matters regarding specific situations that affect or have the potential to affect the program and its mission. In addition, the Council provides guidance and support for creative initiatives that will expand and enhance the mission of the program while contributing to the mission of the University. Although the Council does not have direct administrative function in the day-to-day operation of the Cooperative Education and Internships program, it plays a significant role in determining the policies of successful work-based-learning programs for the University.

The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs appoints the members of the Cooperative Education and Internships Council. The Council shall be composed of a maximum of 15 members, including primarily faculty members but also including administrators as appropriate. The Vice Provost/Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director of Cooperative Education and Internships both automatically and perpetually serve as members of the Council. The term of office for each Council member shall be no more than three years. Members may be appointed to successive terms. The Council shall elect a chairperson and a secretary from among its members.

**Responsible Party:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**References and Cross-references.** None.

**Forms and Tools.** None.

Approved: 10/21/81

Effective:

Revised: 8/94; 8/98\*; 3/02; 5/06; 5/11\*\*

\*Reviewed with no changes

\*\*Format only