

# SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT CO-OP WORK TERM REPORT/PROJECT GUIDELINES

## IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK TERM REPORT

Good communication skills are vital to successful professional practice. To communicate well, one needs to be able to write effectively. Writing reports is one of the most formal ways of presenting the results of professional work. However, one must also be able to write:

- ▶ Advertisements
- ▶ Bulletins
- ▶ Contracts
- ▶ E-mails
- ▶ Job descriptions
- ▶ Lab notes and records
- ▶ Legal documents
- ▶ Letters
- ▶ Memos
- ▶ Presentations
- ▶ Procedures
- ▶ Proposals
- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Specifications
- ▶ Work Statements

Students are expected to write a report for every 4 month work term, except when special circumstances permit one report for an 8 month work term. In cases where students spend two back-to-back 4 month Work Terms with one employer, special circumstances may permit submitting one report at the end of the 8 month period. For example, if a student is engaged in one project spanning the whole of the 8 month period. In this case a one page Project Outline/Progress Report must be submitted at the end of the first 4 months, with a final report due at the end of the 8 months. This should be discussed with your Coordinator during the site visit.

## TYPES OF REPORT/PROJECT

There are many options to choose from when identifying the type of report or project you will produce: (for simplicity we will use Work Term Report to include any of the following reports or projects.) For written reports, depending on what type or format your employer prefers and depending on the content of the report, the finished product may be any of the following:

- ▶ Brochure
- ▶ Case Study
- ▶ Computer Model
- ▶ Literature Review
- ▶ Orientation Manual
- ▶ Paper
- ▶ Poster
- ▶ Product Review
- ▶ Scientific Journal
- ▶ Scientific Report
- ▶ User Manual
- ▶ Web Site

In the case of an employer having no suggestions or preferences as to the style or format of the report, co-op students should consider the following:

A Work Term Report contains four essential parts, although it may also contain other information and be laid out under different titles. These essential parts are:

- ▶ a clear definition of the project(s) or problem(s) addressed by the study;
- ▶ the details of the study including: assumptions, alternatives, and predicted outcomes;
- ▶ conclusions following from the details; and,
- ▶ (sometimes) recommendations derived from the conclusions and addressing the problem.

Reports may also be produced using a medium other than a written report. Some examples of these are:

- ▶ Internet Web Pages
- ▶ Oral Report or Presentation of a Project
- ▶ Poster
- ▶ Video

Whatever the style, format or medium used to produce a report, co-op students should think of it as their legacy – this will be used by an employer, and/or kept at the S&E Co-op office for other students to read.

You should always offer to leave a copy of your report with your supervisor.

Work Term Reports give co-op students practice in some or all of the following:

- ▶ choosing a suitable subject of interest to students and their employers;
- ▶ communicating in a language that can be understood by all readers, whether expert or novice in the field of study, by explaining common workplace terminology;
- ▶ forming relevant conclusions;
- ▶ interpreting and following instructions;
- ▶ neatness and thoroughness in presentation skills;
- ▶ organizing and presenting a large amount of information;

#### CHOOSING A TOPIC

Preferably, your report should be based on your Co-op project and be of some use to your employer. Often the report will be a part of what you have done. If your co-op placement does not involve a specific project, you should research a topic, which is related to your work or place of employment. You should discuss possible topics with your work supervisor and establish one by the middle of your Work Term. During the site visit, your Coordinator will ask you about your topic.

#### STYLE

In most instances, the Co-op Work Term Report is expected to be analytical rather than descriptive. It should contain accurate, factual information together with sound arguments and conclusions. The format of the report should normally follow the guidelines provided in this handout, but if it is to be used by your employer, you may use the company's own internal guidelines. If your employer has given you company-specific guidelines for your report, you should advise your Coordinator of this during the site-visit.



## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ▶ standard, formal English (no slang or colloquialisms)
- ▶ first person only in the preface
- ▶ only one side of the page for all text and figures
- ▶ major sections of the Report start on new pages
- ▶ a title page which shows Student Name, Company, Date, Title of Report
- ▶ page numbering:
  - All pages which come before the body of the Report are numbered using lower case Roman numerals. The title page is considered to be page i, but is not numbered.
  - The body of the Report begins with the introduction. The pages of the body are given in Arabic numerals. The first page of the introduction is considered to be page 1, but it is not numbered.
- ▶ leave margins of 1" on the top, bottom, and sides of each page.

The length of your written Work Term Report should be approximately 1,000 to 3,000 words, excluding appendices. The length should reflect the complexity of the topic and the thoroughness of the research.

A Work Term Report is self-contained (explain any terminology particular to the topic the first time you use it), consistent, and to the point. It should be understandable to someone who has a background in the area of the report (e.g. biology, geography, chemistry) but is unfamiliar with the particular topic of the report.

Your Work Term Report must be hand-delivered, couriered, or faxed to the Co-op Office, by the first day of classes.

## EVALUATION

Your work supervisor will be the initial evaluator of your finished report. The report should be given to your supervisor, with a Work Term Report Release and Evaluation form. Depending on its confidentiality, the report may be evaluated by your supervisor or may be evaluated at SFU by either a Coordinator or a graduate student.

Your report receives an overall evaluation on a scale ranging from "Excellent" to "Unsatisfactory" (a sample form is available from the S&E Co-op web site, or may be left with you during the Coordinator's site visit).

Successful completion of your Co-op Work Term relies on the quality of your Work Term Report and a satisfactory Co-op evaluation from your employer. If you fail to obtain at least a "Satisfactory" evaluation for both your Work Term Report and your Supervisor's Evaluation, an "F" will be entered. If your report is marked "Unsatisfactory," you will be given the opportunity to make revisions and resubmit it for re-marking.

## **PROJECT OUTLINE/ PROGRESS REPORT GUIDELINES**

The Progress Report guidelines are for students engaged in a project spanning the whole 8 month work term. The first option is to be completed except in the case where the final project has yet to be approved by your supervisor. These guidelines will be discussed with your Co-op Coordinator at the site visit.

The Progress Report is submitted at the end of your first 4 months.

### **1. Project Based (1-2 pages)**

Topic of Report:

Provide the title and overall topic/subject of your report

Introduction:

Please provide a brief introduction (1-2 paragraphs) to your topic. What are the main concepts that you will be exploring in your project? Provide useful background information.

Purpose and Objectives:

What do you hope to accomplish with your project? What problem or issue do you plan to address? What results or outcomes do you expect?

Method and Resources:

What will you need to complete your project? Please identify your major sources of information.

Proposed Outline for Project:

Please provide a detailed breakdown of your project.

Project Timeline:

What is your plan for completing the project on time? Please provide a detailed timeline for your project (the following items should be included in your plan: research and data collection, completion of first draft, feedback from supervisor, edit and revise, final draft)

### **2. Self Reflective (1-2 pages)**

\*This option is only completed when a final project has not been approved.

Use the following questions to guide your reflection:

What have you accomplished in this work term? Be specific and provide examples.

What has been the most valuable aspect of this position? Why?

What has been the least valuable aspect of this position? Why?

How has your education been utilized in this position?

How has this experience affected your academic and/or career goals?

What surprised you the most about the workplace?

## WORK TERM REPORT FORMAT (TECHNICAL)

The following is an example of a report produced for a research project or study. This is a suggested layout for that type of report; however, depending on their project, students should not feel restricted to using this format. Students are encouraged to discuss the format of their report with their supervisor and/or Coordinator. Include only those sections and content that are appropriate for your topic.

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**Title Page:** Identifies the topic and ownership of the Report.

**Format:**

- ▶ title of the Report (clearly identifies the subject of the Report)
- ▶ name of the addressee or recipient, "Simon Fraser University" and "student's major"
- ▶ name of student
- ▶ Company name
- ▶ date, place, semester

**Summary:**

The summary is considered by many to be the most important part of a Report. It is a difficult part to write and should always be written last. It is often the only part that managers in the work place have time to read, so it is important to state your case succinctly (usually one to two pages). In cases of confidential Reports, the Summary should not contain any reference to confidential material and may be submitted to the Co-op Office by itself, once released by the employer. The summary will serve as a record of the Work Term and also as a reference for other Co-op students to read. The summary provides a brief summary of the Report, an information abstract. No reference is made to any part of the Report; a summary is complete in itself.

**Table of Contents:** Identifies contents and organization of the document.

**List of Figures (optional):** Identifies any figures, drawings, or photographs shown in the Report.

**List of Tables (optional):** Identifies any tables shown in the Report.

**Introduction:** Introduces the subject of the Report to the reader. Remember that the reader will require some orientation to the subject of your Report.

**Discussion:** Presents evidence (facts, arguments, details, data, test results, etc.) necessary to the purpose of the Report.

**Conclusions:** States briefly the major inferences that can be drawn from the discussion.

**Recommendations:** Suggests a course of action based on the findings and conclusions.

**References/Bibliography:** Acknowledge use of materials from printed sources in the preparations of your Report. Indicate exact source of all quotations and/or results of previous work.

**Appendices (optional):** Includes data, which is not necessary to an immediate understanding of the discussion