

The Internship Program: Cooperative Education

One of the major premises underlying LaGuardia's educational model is that learning takes place in many different settings, both in and outside the classroom. Through the Cooperative Education Department, the college provides students with internship experiences that enable them to realize their full potential in work, education, and everyday life. The Cooperative Education internship program offers students the opportunity to learn through meaningful experiences in the workplace. These experiences help students to:

- ▶ explore various career options and/or confirm career plans;
- ▶ apply classroom learning to real work situations;
- ▶ develop core competencies in the context of the workplace;
- ▶ practice and strengthen interpersonal and technical skills.

Co-op faculty work closely with students throughout their Co-op experience. They guide students through the program, advise them in the selection of internships based on career, personal, and educational objectives, and help students to assess what has been learned through their internships and seminars.

All day students are required to take a specific number of internships depending on their major. Internships are also required for extended day students in the following specialized curricular areas: Dietetic Technology, Elementary and Secondary Education, Education Associate: The Bilingual Child, Human Services, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Physical Therapist Assistant, School Foodservice Management, and Veterinary Technology. Students in these specialized curricular areas should consult with their departments for specific guidelines regarding their Cooperative Education requirements.

While a Cooperative Education internship is optional for extended day students in other majors, it is highly recommended

for students who are considering career changes or advancement or who are undecided about their career choices. Cooperative Education internships can also be helpful to extended day students seeking to develop specific personal, educational, and professional skills.

FUNDAMENTALS OF PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Prior to taking an internship, students in a First Year Academy complete the Fundamentals of Professional Advancement course. Academy students take this course during their second semester.

Prerequisites to internships

Prior to their first internship, students must have fulfilled the following requirements:

- ▶ completion or waiver of basic skills courses as specified by the Cooperative Education Department;
- ▶ completion of Fundamentals of Professional Advancement;
- ▶ evidence of satisfactory academic progress. Students are required to have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average prior to taking an internship; and
- ▶ completion of the appropriate introductory or other prerequisite courses in the student's major.

Responsibility for deciding whether a student is ready to go out on an internship rests with the student's Co-op Faculty Advisor. Appeal of this decision should be addressed to the Chair of the Cooperative Education Department.

THE INTERNSHIP

A Cooperative Education internship course is defined as an internship and a seminar.

Credits are awarded for each internship course. Placement on internships is determined by a student's interests, needs, and academic progress, as well as market conditions and the availability of appropriate internships.

Students choose their internships from over 350 cooperating companies, government agencies, and not-for-profit organizations. The internships span a wide range of fields and include positions in accounting, business, education, communications, computer-related fields, fine arts, government and public policy, health care, journalism, law, media, office technology, publishing, scientific research, social work and many other areas.

Students may develop their own internships or use existing jobs as internships if the work fulfills career-related learning objectives. Interested students must first receive permission from Co-op faculty.

While on internships, students work as regular employees of the organizations in which they are placed. They are expected to follow the rules and regulations of these organizations and perform their duties as would any other employee. During the internship, students are visited by the Co-op faculty member who placed them. Co-op faculty are available throughout the term should problems arise.

Students are evaluated by their internship site supervisor. This evaluation is a major part of the final grade for the Co-op experience. (Grading is discussed in greater detail later in this section.)

THE INTERNSHIP SEMINAR

LaGuardia Community College believes in the value of linking work experience with opportunities for critical analysis and reflection. While on their internships, students return to the College to attend Internship Seminars. The seminar curriculum provides a framework for students to analyze and evaluate their internship experiences.

The purpose of the seminar is to enable students to:

- ▶ gain meaning from the day-to-day occurrences of their internships in order to broaden their understanding of theoretical concepts as they apply to real life situations;
- ▶ develop insights into the relationship of the self to work and to the larger society by understanding their own values and strengthening an awareness and appreciation of differences;
- ▶ understand the steps required in the career decision-making process to plan for professional mobility and lifelong learning; and
- ▶ develop the personal and professional skills and strategies that will facilitate success in the next stages of life.

Part of the Co-op requirement is the successful completion of an internship seminar. The seminar is normally taken during each internship term. In special cases, a student's Co-op Faculty Advisor may approve taking the seminar in a subsequent term. In unique circumstances, a student may make arrangements with the Co-op Faculty Advisor for an individualized project in place of a seminar.

GRADING

The Cooperative Education internship grade is determined by the degree to which a student meets the requirements for both the internship and the internship seminar. The internship and seminar grades each contribute 50% toward the final grade. Students must pass both the internship and the seminar to receive a passing grade for the Cooperative Education course. Students must meet with their Co-op Faculty Advisor for a final evaluation conference during the early weeks of the term following their internship to receive a final grade. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade for the Cooperative Education course.

The internship grade is based on the Co-op Faculty Advisor's on-site visit evaluation, the employer evaluation, and the student's progress toward achieving learning objectives as described in a Final Evaluation essay.

The seminar grade is based on grades received on class assignments, classroom participation and attendance.

The Co-op Faculty Advisor determines the final Cooperative Education grade based on the above two grades. Only the final grade will appear on the student's transcript.

The Cooperative Education Department does not place or grant further Cooperative Education credit to a student who has received two F grades in Cooperative Education courses. Appeals may be made to the Academic Standing Committee.

Financial Aid and Cooperative Education

By Federal law, projected Co-op earnings, minus expenses, will be applied against all financial aid awards other than TAP and PELL. Students must consult with their Co-op Faculty Advisor and a Financial Aid Counselor to determine how their financial aid may be affected.

Taking courses during an internship

Students on internships are permitted to take additional coursework, as long as it does not conflict with their internship and seminar. It is generally considered inadvisable for students to take more than 6 credits of additional coursework while taking a full-time internship.

Foreign students with temporary non-immigrant status

All day students, as well as extended day students in certain specialized curricular areas (see specific major requirements), attending LaGuardia Community College with temporary non-immigrant status are required to complete the Cooperative Education course requirements in order to graduate. They must inform their Co-op Faculty Advisor of their status and meet with one of the College's International Student Advisors (M-166), who will explain and help process the steps necessary to receive official authorization from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to work. This must be done before an internship begins.

Withdrawal from Cooperative Education

Termination or withdrawal from a Cooperative Education internship is subject to the approval of the student's Co-op Faculty Advisor. It is recognized that termination of an internship may be due to a variety of justifiable reasons. Therefore, each case will be handled individually by the Co-op Faculty Advisor, subject to normal grading procedures of review and appeal of Cooperative Education grades.

For additional information about the Cooperative Education program and its policies, please contact the Central Office of the Cooperative Education Department, M-204, at (718) 482-5204.

