



Graduate Cooperative Education

Student Handbook Co-op

Contents



This guide is designed for students who are approved to search for co-op.

Northeastern University has endeavored to provide accurate information in this guide. However, the information is provided "as is" without warranty of any kind. Northeastern University does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, content, completeness, legality, or reliability of the information contained in this booklet.

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Introduction

This handbook will help familiarize you with Northeastern's nationally acclaimed cooperative education ("co-op") program and will serve as a resource for you throughout your graduate co-op experience(s). You are required to take the time to learn the program's policies, procedures, and options. Remember that your co-op coordinator is always available to help you with questions regarding your co-op curriculum.



What is cooperative education?

Experiential learning integrates the classroom and the real world. Cooperative education ("co-op") is one of the fundamental experiential learning programs where students engage with the world through professional work and learn how to transform ideas and information across contexts. Students who participate in graduate co-op, alternate between semesters of academic classroom work, and semesters of full-time employment in fields related to their skills and interests.

This combination provides an opportunity for students to (1) use their knowledge and practice their skills in an authentic, real-life situation; (2) gain new knowledge and develop new skills to engage in unfamiliar tasks and activities successfully; and, (3) integrate and use both the new and deepened knowledge to continue to learn in their academic programs.

Who participates in co-op?

Co-op is an integral part of a Northeastern education and is required in some programs. Please consult with your co-op coordinator to understand all requirements.

What role does my co-op coordinator play?

Each student is assigned a co-op coordinator based on their program. Co-op coordinators work with students to: (1) identify and apply for appropriate co-op positions, (2) develop individualized strategies for their co-op search, (3) assist students if any questions or concerns arise while they are on co-op, and (4) facilitate learning and reflection upon completion of a co-op. Co-op coordinators also teach the Professional Development for co-op course that is required in some programs.

How long are co-ops?

Typically, graduate co-ops last 4-6 months. Start and end dates generally correspond with the academic semester. Students are expected to return to campus after co-op.

What is my role in the co-op process?

Students take ownership of their co-op application process. While your co-op coordinator is a source of support throughout, students are expected to prepare job documents such as resumes and cover letters. In addition to actively review and apply to graduate co-op postings in and outside of the University job search database; respond to communications from co-op coordinators and employers promptly, and interview for co-op positions. The more effort a student puts into the process, the more likely their co-op search will be successful.

Co-op Schedule



Am I guaranteed a co-op job

Co-op is an employment relationship between the co-op student and the employer. Northeastern cannot guarantee that you will secure a co-op job. As a result of the job market or other conditions, even a well-qualified student may not obtain a position. Working closely with your co-op coordinator and meeting all required deadlines will benefit you in your co-op job search process.

You will also expand your job opportunities by considering a variety of geographical locations and types of positions, including global opportunities. If you are unable to obtain a co-op job, please speak with your co-op coordinator about other options. Your options depend upon your college and academic program.

How much will I be paid?

Compensation is set by the employer and depends on many factors, including the industry, level of the position, and the local economy. There are a few unpaid opportunities. If the salary is not posted on the University job search database, your co-op coordinator may be able to give you compensation information relating to an opportunity. Additionally, you do not pay tuition while you are on co-op unless you are enrolled in an academic course.

Where do I live while on co-op?

Some employers may provide housing and relocation assistance. [Off-Campus Housing and Support Services](#) provides support and education related to off-campus housing, relocation services, renter's rights knowledge, and community connection. The office offers many resources, special programs, and events to help you find off-campus housing in Boston and beyond, stay connected to campus, and serve as a link to your peers, alumni, and community. If going on co-op or part of a Northeastern program beyond Boston, we offer leased housing options in popular co-op locations. We also help you understand your rights and responsibilities as a renter and how to navigate landlord issues. Peer Community Ambassadors plan programs and events for you, are here to answer all of your questions and help you meet your neighbors. Call us, email us or stop in to see us today!



Co-op Eligibility

Every student must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to participate in co-op. These are general requirements for all students; however, students must work closely with their co-op coordinator and academic advisor to ensure that they meet any college- or major-specific requirements and any major-specific logistics, deadlines, and required paperwork.



General Requirements

Before they can be authorized to begin the co-op search process, students must:

- Satisfactorily complete the requirements and deadlines set by Northeastern and their specific academic program.
- Resolve any previous disciplinary or academic probation issues
- Meet minimum program GPA requirements
- Comply with any pre-employment checks required by the employer (see page 10).

- Have completed one academic year at Northeastern prior to your co-op start date.
- Have completed one academic year at Northeastern prior to your co-op start date

Every student must meet the general eligibility requirements to participate in graduate co-op. However, students must work closely with their co-op coordinator and academic advisor to ensure that they meet any additional college or program-specific requirements and are aware of major-specific logistics, deadlines, and required paperwork. Policies vary by both program and college. To begin reviewing your eligibility, click on your college.

- [Bouvé College of Health Sciences](#)
- [College of Science](#)
- [College of Engineering](#)
- [College of Social Sciences and Humanities](#)
- [Khoury College of Computer Sciences](#)
- [College of Professional Studies](#)
- [College of Arts, Media, and Design](#)
- [D'Amore-McKim School of Business](#)
- [School of Law](#)

English Proficiency

English proficiency is required for many co-ops. In some programs, TOEFL scores are used to assess eligibility for co-op. Check with your co-op coordinator.

Appeals Process

If your co-op coordinator has determined you are ineligible to go on co-op, you may appeal to your college's standing committee. (Or the director of cooperative education for your college, if your college does not have a standing committee).

Co-op Preparation

Procuring a Co-op Job



Once you have met your program's requirements, you will be eligible to apply to co-op positions. The application process may vary by academic program, your co-op coordinator will advise you of any deadlines for application. For information about co-op outside the U.S., please see page 22.

Co-op Preparation Course

The first step in participating in the graduate co-op program is to complete a course about the co-op search process and general career development. This course is a co-op pre-requisite in some (but not all) graduate programs. It teaches job search skills, including resume writing and interview preparation, that will maximize your chances of getting the best co-op job for your needs and interests. You will also discuss professional expectations in the workplace and success on co-op. Contact your department to determine whether and when to register for the course. If your college does not have a required course, please review your program's materials to determine if another form of preparation is required.

What happens if I change into a different program?

Please let your current co-op coordinator know if you change programs. They can advise you on the best plan moving forward.

How do I schedule an appointment with my co-op coordinator?

Once assigned a co-op coordinator, you can schedule an appointment or view your co-op coordinator's appointment calendar in the Northeastern student portal (www.myNortheastern.edu).

How do I apply for a co-op position?

Once students have met their program's requirements, they will be eligible to apply to co-op positions. The application process may vary by academic program; your co-op coordinator will advise you on any application deadlines. During the semester, candidates interview for positions, and employers choose a co-op based on the skills and requirements for the job. For information about co-op outside the U.S., follow these links:

What is NUworks?

NUworks is Northeastern's online database of co-op jobs. This system makes it easy to upload your resume and search for co-op jobs that best suit your skills. Once you have been approved for co-op, you will be able to access NUworks. Some highlights of what you can do with NUworks include:

- Search, sort, and select co-op positions based on your major, interests, and skills, as well as build a preference list of positions that interest you.
- Post and apply with your resume, after your Coordinator has approved it.
- Track your co-op applications. If you have any questions about the database, talk with your co-op coordinator.

May I work outside of Boston?

Yes! Co-op opportunities exist around the country and the globe. To ensure the best co-op experience possible students are encouraged to consider co-op opportunities outside of Boston and Massachusetts. The more flexible you can be with the location of your co-op, the greater the opportunities will be.

Your co-op coordinator may already have established contacts in your preferred region or can advise you on how to develop leads in areas of interest. If your interests go beyond the United States, please see page --- to learn more about global co-op opportunities.

Procuring a Co-op Job

Pre-Employment Screening

Co-op employers may require applicants to undergo pre-employment screening, such as drug testing, credit checks, physical examinations, security clearance, and criminal record checks.

Jobs Involving Cannabis/Marijuana

Although Cannabis has been legalized both recreationally and medicinally in some states, it remains illegal under federal law. Northeastern University is a drug-free campus, consistent with federal law. Northeastern may post co-op positions in the cannabis industry in those states that have legalized medical and/or recreational use of cannabis but cautions that the use and/or sale of marijuana may be prosecuted by federal law enforcement and that any such co-ops, research, or job opportunities could potentially affect your federal student loans, immigration status, or future background checks for security clearances. Any student who chooses to engage in such an employment does so at their own risk.

Accepting a Co-op

Caution of Social Networking Websites

Students should be aware that social networking websites such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, and LinkedIn are public, and employers can and do review them to learn more about job applicants. Employers may also use search engines such as Google to learn more about applicants. Please keep this in mind when posting personal and professional information and photos on these public websites.

How can I develop my own position?

Northeastern has a range of resources available to help you find a graduate co-op position, including your co-op coordinator and the Career Design staff (please see page ---). We encourage you to use these resources to find a co-op position that matches your values, interests, personality, and skills. You may also choose to make or call upon your connections to find a co-op job. If you find your own position, keep the following in mind:

- Discuss your plans with your co-op coordinator well in advance of the co-op period.
- It is your responsibility to inform the employer that you are a Northeastern University co-op student and that you will return to the University at the end of your co-op cycle.
- Co-op students cannot be employed as consultants or independent contractors.



How do I accept a co-op job?

When you receive an offer, thank the employer and ask for 2-3 business days to make your decision. It is highly recommended that you meet with your co-op coordinator during that time. Once you accept a graduate co-op position verbally, electronically, or in writing, you must decline all interview requests and inform your co-op coordinator of your decision.

You may NOT accept more than one job offer. Reneging an accepted offer to work for another employer may result in being withdrawn from all co-op opportunities. Your acceptance of a position also means that you have committed to work for the entire co-op period and that you adhere to the dates given by your employer and/or Northeastern.

How do I register for co-op

In most cases, students who meet eligibility requirements and secure a graduate co-op position will be registered for the "Cooperative Education Work Experience" course one month prior to the start of a co-op. There is no charge for the co-op work experience.

The course appears on the student's degree audit, allowing the student to maintain full-time student status. Upon completion of the co-op and all relevant assignments, grades of Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), and Incomplete (I) are assigned and will appear on your academic transcript.

Pre-Employment Screening

Co-op employers may require applicants to undergo pre-employment screening, such as drug testing, credit checks, physical examinations, security clearance, and criminal record checks.

Working on Co-op

Code of Student Conduct

As a graduate co-op student, you are an ambassador of Northeastern, and your performance and professionalism will have an impact on future co-op hiring. You are expected to observe Northeastern's Code of Student Conduct on the job, as well as on campus. (Click [here](#) to view the Code of Student Conduct)



Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Northeastern University does not condone or tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment toward students, on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, genetics, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran, or disability status, either on or off-campus. As a co-op employee, you are entitled to the same protection of federal and state anti-discrimination laws as other employees. You may also be protected under Title IX due to your student standing within the University.

If you feel that you are being discriminated against, retaliated against, or harassed, please contact the Office for University Equity and Compliance (OUEC). You may reach OUEC at 617.373.4644 or visit <https://www.northeastern.edu/ouec/>. You may also contact your co-op coordinator.

Absences

In general, students cannot take time off from co-op, and vacations are not permitted. Employers expect that you will be responsible and that your attendance will be regular and punctual. As an employee, you must arrange for your personal and college-related commitments to take place outside of regular working hours. If you have military training obligations that require time off from work, notify your co-op coordinator and your prospective employer before the start of your co-op assignment.

Contact your employer immediately if you must be absent because of illness or emergency. If the absence is for a week or more, also contact your co-op coordinator. If you miss work because of a work-related injury or illness, be sure to formally report the illness or injury to the employer according to the employer's policy and also notify your co-op coordinator.

Taking Courses on Co-op

Whenever work and student activity conflict while you are on co-op, the needs of your position must come first. You may enroll in a class that takes place outside of your regular working hours. However, you should check with your program and co-op coordinators first or review your individual program's policies. If you are interested in taking a course that interferes with your co-op work hours, you must petition and receive approval from both your co-op coordinator and your employer before accepting your co-op position. Additionally, some programs require a course while on co-op.

Staying in Touch

While you are on co-op, you may contact your co-op coordinator for assistance if any questions or problems arise related to the co-op curriculum. Your co-op coordinator may also reach out to you and your employer while you are on co-op. While the co-op coordinator is available to assist you with any questions or concerns that arise while you are on co-op related to the co-op curriculum, the employment relationship is between you and the employer. As an employee, you should reach out to your employer's Human Resources or your supervisor regarding employment questions.

Layoffs

Occasionally, economic conditions may force employers to terminate your employment before the end of the co-op term. If you are notified of a layoff, contact your co-op coordinator as soon as possible so that they may work with you to secure another job or make other arrangements for the semester.

Workplace Issues

As with every other aspect of experiential learning, the University and your co-op coordinator are there to support and guide you as necessary. However, the employment relationship is between you and your employer. We encourage you to make an effort to resolve issues on your own with your immediate supervisor or another manager at the job site. Should you feel uncomfortable discussing a problem with your supervisor, ask your co-op coordinator for assistance or advice. It is important to address issues as they arise, rather than postpone such a discussion or ignore the problem.

Working on Co-op



Dealing with stressful and uncomfortable situations is part of the workplace learning experience. As with every other aspect of experiential learning, the University and your co-op coordinator are there to support and guide you as necessary. However, the employment relationship is between you and your employer. We encourage you to make an effort to resolve issues on your own with your immediate supervisor or another manager at the job site. Should you feel uncomfortable discussing a problem with your supervisor, ask your co-op coordinator for assistance or advice. It is important to address issues as they arise, rather than postpone such a discussion or ignore the problem.



Failure to Complete Co-op - Termination: Firing or Quitting

Employers may terminate a co-op employee just as they would any other employee. If your supervisor has advised you of performance issues, please contact your co-op coordinator. Your co-op coordinator will work with you to offer guidance and advice. If you are ultimately terminated from a co-op position, contact your co-op coordinator immediately.

There may be extenuating circumstances that result in a student quitting their graduate co-op. If you find yourself in a situation like this, contact your co-op coordinator immediately. You must make every effort to discuss your situation with your co-op coordinator, who will work with you to develop a strategy for successful completion or a mutually agreed-upon separation plan.

Because situations and learning outcomes vary, consequences of failing to complete your graduate co-op, whether it be from termination or the choice to quit the co-op, also vary. Students who fail to complete a co-op position without their co-op coordinator's approval may be subject to academic or disciplinary action. These may include, but are not limited to, withdrawal from the University for the co-op term, receiving an unsatisfactory grade for co-op, and/or losing future co-op privileges. Students have the right to appeal grades and co-op coordinator decisions to their college academic standing committee.

Please remember that graduate co-op positions have been developed for several reasons, including assisting students with their personal and professional development. The co-op coordinators work hard to help identify positions that deliver learning outcomes that lead to lifelong learning and successful professional careers. As a Northeastern co-op student, you represent not only yourself but also Northeastern University as a whole. Your actions as a co-op student impact you as a professional, as well as on your college and Northeastern University.

Completing a Co-op Job



Student Co-op Self-Assessment

Towards the end of your co-op, you will be asked to complete and submit a co-op student self-assessment, which will allow you to assess what you learned and discuss how your co-op experience can relate to your coursework and inform your post-graduate goals. Your supervisor will also be asked to complete a Student Performance Evaluation. Before your last day of co-op, students are expected to discuss the performance evaluation with their supervisor.

In order to receive a satisfactory grade for co-op, you must also complete any reflective assignments required by your program. Check your email regularly for prompts and notifications.

Getting Credit for Co-op

Students who fully and successfully participate in co-op receive Experiential Learning Credit (ELC) for each co-op experience. Grades of Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), or Incomplete (I) are assigned and will appear on your academic transcript. Although ELC is not added to the academic credit hours required for graduation, your transcript will reflect your grade for each co-op cycle. Your co-op coordinator determines whether you have satisfactorily completed the requirements for co-op participation and assigns a grade.

Government Policies

International students are subject to federal rules and regulations regarding their ability to legally work in the U.S. For complete information for international students, please refer to page 18.



Identification/Work Eligibility

Each time you begin a new job in the United States, federal law requires that you verify both your work eligibility and your identity by completing an I-9 form provided by the employer.

Social Security Number Requirement

All students, including international students, must have a Social Security number from the U.S. Social Security Administration, or have a pending application for the same, before working on co-op.

Income Tax

Federal law requires you to complete a W-4 form with your employer before beginning work. This form ensures that the appropriate federal and state taxes will be deducted from your wages. If your employer does not deduct these taxes, you are still responsible for paying them. International students are required to pay federal and state taxes.

Working as a Consultant or an Independent Contractor

The university's expectation is that co-op is a supervised educational experience. Thus, Northeastern does not grant co-op credit for work performed as a consultant or an independent contractor. Such supervision is inconsistent with consultant/independent contractor status. Please check with your employer at the beginning of your co-op to make sure that you will be receiving a W2 form (not a 1099) at the end of the year.

Students with Disabilities

If you think you will need a reasonable accommodation to apply for a co-op position or perform essential job functions, you should inform your co-op coordinator early in the co-op application process. Your co-op coordinator and the staff at the Disability Resource Center can answer any questions you may have. The Disability Resource Center may be reached at 617.373.2675.

Information for International Students

As an international student, you are subject to U.S. immigration regulations that govern your employment eligibility, including co-op employment. Thus, written authorization for each co-op from the OGS is a federal requirement prior to engaging in approved co-op positions.



This information is applicable as of the date of publication, however, circumstances impacting the privileges and responsibilities of foreign students are without notice subject to change by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This guideline is not intended as and does not constitute individual legal advice, but is general and informational in nature. Information may be obtained from OGS.

Identification/Work Eligibility

Each time you begin a new job in the United States, you must verify both your work eligibility and your identity by completing an I-9 form provided by the employer. In order to be eligible to complete an I-9, international students will need to show the employer both an “International Student Eligibility for Cooperative Education Employment Form” (OGS Form 153F) and a SEVIS Form I-20 (with an OGS co-op authorization on page 3), as well as provide a Social Security number.

Co-op Authorization Process

The process for obtaining CPT authorization begins once students have accepted a graduate co-op and confirmed their start/end dates. Students complete their CPT application using myOGS, which, upon submission, is forwarded to the student’s co-op coordinator or program for final review. Once OGS approves your request, it will issue the student an updated SEVIS (Form I-20) with co-op authorization, which they must present to their employer. This process can take up to ten business days, so plan ahead. This document authorizes the terms of the employment with the named co-op employer, including the location, start date, and end date of employment authorization. Any changes to the terms of employment must be submitted to OGS immediately.

Please note that working outside the terms of authorized employment is considered a serious violation of your immigration status and may result in the loss of ability to work or study in the U.S. This includes co-op extensions that are not previously approved by OGS.

<https://international.northeastern.edu/ogs/employment/curricular-practical-training-cpt-f1/>

Social Security Requirement

All international students must either have a Social Security number or a pending application from the U.S. Social Security Administration before working on co-op. When you first arrive at Northeastern, you will be required to complete Immigration clearance at OGS and attend mandatory SEVIS and co-op information sessions held during OGS Orientation, at which time staff will advise you on the process for obtaining a Social Security number.

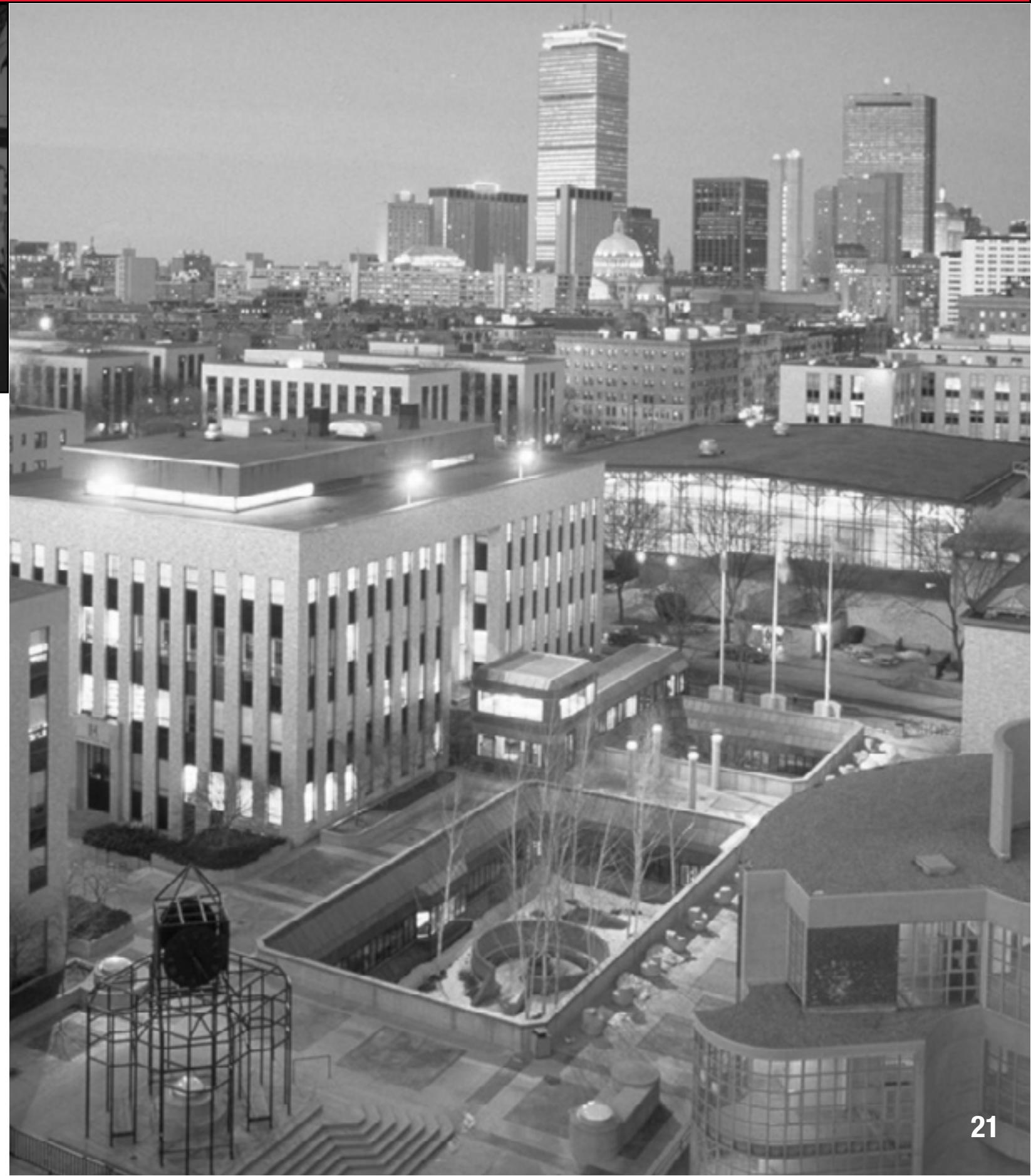
Income Tax

Federal law requires you to complete a W-4 form with your employer before beginning work. If your employer does not deduct taxes, you are still responsible for paying them. International students are normally exempt from paying Social Security and FICA tax unless you are considered a resident for tax purposes, which is based upon your length of time in the United States. Also, those students who are from what are referred to as “Tax Treaty” countries have additional tax laxity benefits (visit www.irs.gov to determine whether your country qualifies).

Co-op Employment Outside of the United States

If you wish to pursue a co-op position outside of the United States (in your home country or other country), you will be referred to OGS to discuss the amount of time on co-op, re-entry to the U.S., and eligibility for a U.S. co-op upon return. If you seek co-op employment in your country of citizenship or another country in which you have employment rights based on birth or lineage, you will have to provide evidence of obtaining a work permit for that country before applying for graduate co-op positions. Each college has a different process for approving global co-ops, so check with your Coordinator to see if they can help you with the process.

Working on Co-op



Active Military Duty

If you are in the military reserves and are activated for service while on co-op, you must contact your program and co-op coordinator to ensure the appropriate military leave is recorded with the University.

Healthcare

Full-time students are eligible for care at University Health and Counseling Services (UHCS) even when they are on co-op, regardless of their insurance. If you are enrolled in the student health plan, your coverage continues during co-op. If you have questions regarding the benefits of the student health plan or your responsibilities in filing a claim, please contact the student health insurance coordinator at 617.373.2775.

Liability Insurance

The employer is responsible for general liability and professional liability insurance. In clinical settings, where a student is performing clinical job duties, the University has a Professional Liability Policy that may provide coverage. Please refer to your co-op coordinator regarding applicability.

Co-oping Abroad: Global Co-op Program

Additional Resources

The Global Cooperative Education Program provides students with an opportunity to explore global career options, develop intercultural and political competence, and utilize and strengthen foreign language skills. Students should work with their co-op coordinator to explore existing global opportunities or to develop their options. Colleges may also have designated coordinators who work with students seeking global opportunities.



The Department of Employer Engagement and Career Design provides a complete toolkit of resources for students preparing for co-op and full-time positions. Seniors, alumni, and graduate students seeking career guidance and full-time jobs may also use Career Design services, which are free for life!



Who can participate in global co-op?

Students from all colleges at Northeastern are encouraged to participate. Northeastern co-op employees span the globe and contribute to solving many of today's most challenging problems. Global experiences allow Northeastern students to live, learn, and immerse themselves in new cultures.

Can I co-op in a country that is on the U.S. State Department's Travel Warning List?

Northeastern does not allow students to travel and work on Northeastern University affiliated programs in countries listed on

the U.S. State Department's Travel Warning List without a petition. Students who are considering doing a co-op in such countries must submit a petition to the International Safety and Security Assessment Committee (ISSAC). ISSAC will review the petition and make recommendations to the Provost. The Provost's decision will be final.

What kinds of global positions are available?

Existing jobs are available in a variety of fields. Students work with foreign and multinational employers, U.S. employers doing business in other countries, and other international organizations.

How and when do I get started?

Students interested in pursuing a global co-op are encouraged to meet with their co-op coordinator, or the global co-op coordinator in your college, who will help you clarify specific skills, interests, and goals. The co-op coordinator will help you apply for appropriate jobs and prepare for departure.

It would be best if you began planning for a global co-op at least six months before you would like to go.

Department of Employer Engagement and Career Design

Stearns Center 617.373.2430
www.careers.northeastern.edu

How can the Employer Engagement and Career Design Department help me?

Employer Engagement & Career Design provides students professional career advising, helping you:

- Explore career opportunities
- Write and perfect a resume and cover letter.
- Practice interviewing skills
- Navigate your job search before and after graduation.

What resources are available?

- Individual appointments with a career advisor
- The Career Studio for daily drop-in appointments
- Workshops on topics such as domestic job search, international job search, salary negotiation and interviewing skills
- Career fairs featuring employers hiring for co-op, internships, and full-time positions
- Employer events and alumni panel discussions

What Online Tools are Available?

Career Design offers free access to:

- NUworks - a comprehensive online database (powered by Symplicity) where students can search open co-op positions, internships, part-time job openings, as well as full-time positions. You may also view a schedule

of upcoming workshops and events that will guide you through the job search processes.

- Buzzfile, the most comprehensive resource available to search employers by major, allows you to discover and research thousands of potential employers in your field and geographic area.
- PathSource helps you connect the dots between education, careers, lifestyle, and budget. You can view a range of career videos about informational interviews with professionals, giving you unbiased insights into thousands of careers. You will need a code provided on our website, the first time you sign on.
- GoinGlobal provides a wide range of resources about industries, internships, job openings, and country-specific career information. You can access this tool after logging on to NUworks. For a more extensive list of Career Design's online resources, please visit: www.careers.northeastern.edu/

The Northeastern University Employer Engagement and Career Design Graduate Student Cooperative Education Handbook does not supersede any Northeastern policies and procedures. Students should refer to and comply with all Northeastern policies and program and degree requirements. Policies can be found in the Graduate Student Catalog, the Code of Student Conduct, and at <https://www.northeastern.edu/policies/>.

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