**CO-OP & INTERNSHIP FAQS**

**What is the difference between a co-op and an internship position?**

In general, our office defines a traditional co-op as a full or part time position that takes place during a regular fall or spring semester and typically continues during one or more summers or semesters. Students participating in a co-op are required to enroll in the Co-op/Internship Program (ENCO) for the semester they are working.

An internship is generally just one summer, or a part-time position during the school year. Most interns do not need to enroll in ENCO. However, some students who participate in summer internships or who work as interns part-time during the semester do need to enroll in the Co-op/Internship Program (ENCO). This is the case for all international students on F-1 visas and for some federal internship programs.

**Why should I do a co-op or internship?**

Co-op, summer internship positions, or part-time engineering jobs give you access to the many benefits of experiential learning:

- Apply the technical knowledge you’ve learned in the classroom to a real-world environment
- Develop your organizational, administrative, and interpersonal job skills
- Earn money for school or rent, save for a car, or for fun (most engineering internship and co-op positions are paid)
- Confirm your choice of major
- Gain confidence as you talk with other engineers as colleagues and build your network of great professional contacts in your field of interest
- Make yourself more marketable upon graduation with each professional experience. Have the possibility of a great full time job offer from your co-op or intern employer after graduation!

**Who can participate in a co-op?**

All degree-seeking University of Maryland Engineering students are eligible to participate in a co-op or internship, as long as they are eligible to work in the U.S. To enroll in ENCO you must be in good academic standing. For undergraduates, the minimum GPA is a 2.0. Graduate students must have at least a 3.0.

Important note for international students on F-1 visas: Please refer to the information on our website at [http://ter.ps/engrF1work](http://ter.ps/engrF1work) for specific requirements.

**So which is better, a co-op or an internship?**

There are benefits to both.

A summer internship gives you about 10-12 weeks of experience at one company and does not generally interfere with your four year academic plan. You can return to work with the same company in future school breaks, or work part time during the semester if it doesn’t interfere.

A co-op position, which typically includes one regular semester of work, may alter your graduation date, but your 6-12 months of experience with one company will make you extremely marketable upon graduation. As a co-op you will likely receive additional training and more significant projects that you can oversee from start to finish, simply because as a co-op you will probably work more total hours than as an intern. Many employers prefer to hire co-op students, while more students look for short term internships. Given that there is less competition for more opportunities, we highly encourage you to consider a co-op!
Assuming you meet the eligibility requirements, you may apply for both co-op and internship positions to consider all of your options simultaneously. Applying for positions does not obligate you to accept a job offer, nor does it guarantee you a job. However, once you accept a co-op or internship offer, you are then committed to that position.

**Can I work as a co-op and still graduate in four years?**

Some students who work in co-op positions do delay graduation for a semester. You should work with your academic advisor to review your plan of study if you want to consider a co-op position. Keep in mind that, when you are looking for your first full time job after graduation, the 6+ months of full time work experience in your field that you gain in a co-op will give you an advantage over students who have not worked. Employers prefer to hire graduates with work experience.

**Will I have to move to participate in a co-op or internship?**

We live in an area with a large number of employers that hire engineers. However, the more flexible you are about geographic location, the more likely you are to find a position. Some employers even help you pay for relocation.

**How do I apply for co-ops and/or internships through the Engineering Co-op Office?**

Most engineering co-op & internship opportunities are listed in our Careers4Engineers (C4E) database. You will need to submit a resume, and maybe your transcript, a cover letter or other documents. Keep in mind that peak recruiting occurs in September-October and February-March.

**How do I get started on my search for a co-op or internship?**

2. Come to a Resume Writing Workshop and create (or update) your resume in Microsoft Word.
3. Bring your resume to the Engineering Co-op Office for a critique so we can activate your C4E account.
4. Complete your Careers4Engineers profile and upload your resume.
5. Attend Cover Letter and Interview Techniques Workshops.
6. Review and apply for job listings and on-campus interviews through Careers4Engineers.
7. Network at Career Fairs and employer information sessions; apply for jobs posted outside Careers4Engineers, etc. to supplement your job search. Attend our Job Search 201 workshop.
8. Interview for positions, and remember to write a thank you note to your interviewer.
9. Learn about salary negotiation at our workshop on Evaluating Job Offers before you accept a position.

**What do I do once I accept a co-op or internship offer?**

- Discontinue your job search and notify any employers that may still be seriously considering you that you have decided to accept another position. Even if a more interesting offer comes along, you are bound to the offer you already accepted.
- If your position is a co-op or your employer requires you to be enrolled in our Co-op/Intern Program, see the following pages regarding enrollment in our program.
- If you are an international student, please see our handout entitled “Co-op/Intern Program: Steps for International Students” for instructions on the steps you need to follow (before you begin working) to obtain work authorization.
- Once you accept an offer, please let us know! Just stop by our office or go to our website at [careerregr.umd.edu/students/forms](http://careerregr.umd.edu/students/forms) to fill out our Student/Job Update Form.
CO-OP/INTERNSHIP (ENCO) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The School of Engineering offers a formal Co-op/Internship Program that may be appropriate for you if:

- you have been hired for a traditional co-op position (full-time work in a fall or spring semester, instead of taking courses)
- you will be both working and taking classes on a part-time basis during a fall or spring semester
- your employer requires you to be formally enrolled in your school’s co-op or internship program
- you are an international student on an F-1 Visa and are eligible to receive CPT work authorization by enrolling in your school’s co-op program
- you desire a transcript notation of your engineering work experience

Co-op/Internship Program Approval

To be eligible to enroll in the Engineering Co-op/Internship Program, you must be a degree-seeking student in the School of Engineering in good academic standing. Undergraduate students must maintain an overall GPA of 2.0, and graduate students must maintain a 3.0 GPA.

If you wish to enroll in the Engineering Co-op/Intern Program, prior to starting each co-op work assignment and preferably before the first day of classes, you must register for the 0-credit co-op course (ENCO) and pay the necessary fees. If you receive a job offer after the first day of classes, we can add ENCO to your schedule retroactively and you will not accrue a late fee.

Although ENCO is a 0 credit course, it is mandatory that students participating in the co-op program register for ENCO for the following reasons:

- So that Cooperative Education will appear on your transcript. A grade indicating Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) will also appear.
- So that if you are not taking enough course credits to keep you in full-time status, you will be able to maintain some of the privileges entitled to full-time students, such as living in a University residence hall, pre-registering for the following term, and staying on your parents’ health insurance plan (the Co-op Office can provide you with a letter verifying your student status for insurance companies if you need one).

Please note, however, that unless you are enrolled in credit-bearing classes on at least a half-time basis, you may not be eligible for financial aid, including loans and scholarships, during your co-op semesters (see below).

Important Notes:

- You should register for regular classes until you actually receive a written job offer. It is much easier to drop those courses after you accept an offer than to try to add them later if an offer never materializes. You should not drop your classes to add ENCO until you have your job offer in writing!
- If you are only registered for the 0 credit ENCO course you will not be charged mandatory fees, which may prevent you from participating in some campus activities or services, such as eligibility for student football and basketball tickets.

Co-op/Internship Program Registration (ENCO)

To receive permission to register for ENCO you must first bring an offer letter on company letterhead to the Engineering Co-op &Career Services Office and meet with an advisor. (Be sure you have a written offer letter before dropping classes from your schedule.) At this meeting you will complete the following three forms, which can be found at careerengr.umd.edu/students/forms.
1. **Co-op Student Agreement Form:** This form outlines the basic policies of co-op and ensures that each student is aware of the obligations and commitments of the program. All students enrolling in ENCO must sign this agreement.

2. **Work/Study Schedule Form:** You will fill out a tentative Work/Study Schedule during your meeting with a Co-op Office staff member to indicate how your work tours fit into your academic plan.

3. **Work/Study Plan (Advisor Approval):** If you will be working full- or part time as a co-op during the semester and will not be taking a full course load, you should check in with your academic advisor. 

   **If you will be working for a full year, you are required to have the Work/Study Plan signed by your academic advisor,** to ensure your ability to meet all graduation requirements for your major and for co-op. Fill out the form in pencil before you see your advisor. All major changes, such as switching co-op semesters, must be approved by the Co-op Office first.

   See the list of departmental co-op advisors below. If you have difficulty reaching your departmental advisor, you may see an advisor in the Office of Academic Advising and Academic Support, 1131 Glenn L. Martin Hall.

   **DEPARTMENTAL CO-OP ADVISORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Advisor(s)</th>
<th>Office/Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Once you meet with a Co-op Office staff member and complete the forms described above, you will receive an electronic stamp to register for the ENCO course on Testudo. The **course fee** will be charged to your UMD account.

- For fall & spring the course is ENCO 099 and the fee is $60.00, plus an $18.00 registration fee.
- For the summer and winter sessions the course is ENCO 098 and the fee is $30.00, plus a $12.00 registration fee.

There are no class meetings for the ENCO course. However, in order to receive a satisfactory grade, you must complete the online Work Report at the end of the term. See below for details.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE CO-OP/INTERNSHIP (ENCO) PROGRAM

Financial Aid
Any student receiving financial aid should see an advisor in the Office of Student Financial Aid (Room 1135, Lee Building, 314-9000) to learn how co-op will affect your aid package, ideally before you accept a co-op position. You should also contact the sponsors of any private scholarships.

In order to receive financial aid during your co-op work tours, you must be enrolled in at least 6 credits for undergraduates, 24 units for graduate students. You must make arrangements in advance in order to defer your financial aid until you return to school. As long as you are registered for ENCO 099 during your co-op work tours, you will not enter repayment for any previous student loans.

Taking Courses during a Work Tour
If you decide to take a course during your co-op semester, keep in mind the following:

• Be sure there are no time conflicts with your work hours and responsibilities (ask your employer about the company policy before you enroll)
• If you drop the course during the first five days of classes you will only receive an 80% tuition refund. After the first five days you will not receive any refund!
• If you plan to take a course at any school other than College Park, you must FIRST get permission from the Office of Academic Advising and Academic Support (1131 Martin Hall). (UMUC courses require permission too.)

Registering for Classes for the Semester after your Work Tour
If you are registered for ENCO 099, you will be able to register for classes for the semester you return to school just like any other UMD student. You will receive an e-mail from the Co-op Office reminding you when registration begins. You can access registration, schedules, grades, and other UMD administrative services at www.testudo.umd.edu. To obtain electronic stamps to register for regular courses, simply call your departmental advisor listed above. If you have trouble reaching an advisor, contact the Co-op Office.

On-Campus Housing
Once you receive a co-op job offer, you may decide to move off-campus. You can be released from your Resident Life contract without incurring any penalties as long as you get a letter from the Engineering Co-op Office verifying your employment and you meet the release deadlines established by the Department of Resident Life.

If you wish to stay in your on-campus housing, ENCO 099 satisfies the requirement that you be a registered student for the semester you are on co-op. If you live in an on-campus apartment, you may elect to reduce or eliminate your meal plan depending on your work hours and your commute. Co-op students in non-kitchen equipped spaces on campus may also be able to reduce their meal plan; to do so you must request a letter from the Engineering Co-op Office verifying your employment, and then take the letter to Dining Services.

Students who leave the area for a co-op and wish to return to residence halls must log in to the Resident Life website to complete the online Housing Agreement by the posted deadlines. Please note, students not living in the halls during spring semesters due to a co-op are only eligible to be pulled-in at Room Selection meetings in April and will not have new priority numbers calculated until they return to campus the next fall. Only current spring semester residents living in the halls are eligible to "shop" for
spaces at Room Selection. Co-op students are individually assisted with assignments by Resident Life based upon their preferences if they are not pulled-in by other residents.

If you have any questions regarding your housing status before you leave for a co-op or when you wish to return to the residence halls after your co-op, please call Resident Life directly at (301) 314-2100 or email reslife@umd.edu.

Resignations
While we hope that any work experience is both positive and challenging, you may encounter conflicts at work. If you are considering resigning from a co-op position, you must first speak to both your supervisor at work and the Engineering Co-op Office at school. Be prepared to discuss the reasons for your resignation and the implications of your decision. If you decide to resign after completing one or more work terms with an employer and your employer is expecting you to return, you must submit a resignation letter at least four weeks in advance so that your employer has ample time to find a replacement. Send a copy of your resignation letter to the Engineering Co-op Office.

Co-op Work Reports
The evaluation process is an excellent opportunity for you to reflect on your work experience and articulate the ways in which co-op has contributed to your education. The Engineering Co-op Office will notify you by e-mail (at the address on file through Testudo) at the end of each work term to remind you to complete your co-op work report online through our website. After you complete a work report, a grade of “Satisfactory” will be submitted for ENCO 099/098. If we do not receive your work report by the given deadline, we will give you an “Incomplete” grade for ENCO. You cannot graduate with co-op distinction (see below) on your diploma if any work reports are missing from your file.

Supervisor Evaluations
At the end of each work assignment, the Co-op Office will send your employer a performance evaluation form that asks your supervisor to evaluate you in areas such as dependability, attitude, ability to learn, attendance and punctuality, communication skills, and relations with others. This is an excellent opportunity for you to discuss your mutual perceptions of your position and performance. These evaluations will be returned to the Engineering Co-op Office and kept in your file. You are welcome to read them at any time.

Permanent Employment
Your co-op/intern employer may, but is not obligated to, offer you a permanent position after completion of your work assignment. You are not obligated to accept such an offer if it is made. If you have a co-op position with the federal government, there are very specific requirements for non-competitive conversion to a permanent position. You are responsible for learning what these requirements are from your employer. In fact, you should probably discuss them as soon as you are hired.

Co-op Distinction
Co-op Distinction is a special designation that co-op students receive on their transcript after their graduating semester if the following requirements have been satisfied:

1. Completion of work-study schedule including the equivalent of 50 weeks of full-time work.
2. Completion of all work reports.
3. Grade point average of 2.0 or above for undergraduates; 3.0 or above for graduate students.
4. Completion of senior survey.