

Wentworth

Co-ops & Careers

Co-op With A Professor: How to approach this option & work together

Research with a professor is one way to fulfill a mandatory co-op requirement. Some students have an interest in graduate school, and a deep dive into research is good preparation for that goal. Other students may have an interest in the subject matter or a desire to work closely with a professor. Co-ops & Careers supports this opportunity only under certain circumstances and with permission from your Coop & Career Advisor. These experiences are quite often *unpaid*, unless a professor has secured grant-funding or the department is willing and able to provide additional funds.

Guidelines for Outreach

- Consider which professors may be a good fit for you
- ASK, do not assume a professor will simply take you on
- Create a research/project outline and set dates for check-in with the professor
- Set expectations for each other
- Have a tangible product/paper/deliverable by the end of the term

How to Inquire About Projects

Professors who have an established rapport with you may be more open to having you join their research/project than those who do not know you. Consider speaking to a professor whose class you did well in, or one you consider a mentor. Keep in mind that not all professors have the time to supervise a student through a co-op experience. It takes a lot of time to supervise a co-op student – work that is added to an already full workload. Also, while some professors are seasoned veterans in supervising co-ops, other professors are not.

Create an Outline/Timeline

If a professor agrees to work with you, we strongly suggest creating an outline/timeline to keep you on track throughout the coop. Classes & labs are typically highly structured, but this type of experience is NOT. A timeline will help take some of the pressure off of the professor, as you can both refer back to the it to track progress. It can always be revisited should obstacles prevent you from moving forward at the pace you anticipated.

Set Expectations

Communication is critical for success in this type of co-op. You may not be working 9AM – 5PM side-by-side and much of the experience could be independent and outside the physical bounds of the Institute. Set expectations surrounding how often you will check-in and how you will communicate progress or ask questions. Does the professor want you to have a face-to-face meeting twice per week? Would they prefer you do all of the work on-campus in their lab space? How will you know if you are on the right track? Can there be a method for feedback? Answering these questions at the onset of the term will make the experience run more smoothly.

Create an End-of-Term Deliverable

Having a goal is important to being successful as a co-op student, and a product/paper at the end of the semester is a recommended deliverable. Discuss what you and the professor envision for this end-of-semester tangible and discuss the progress toward this goal at each supervisory meeting. Such a deliverable will both help keep the co-op on track and provide you with something to share in future job/graduate school interviews.