# Employer Resource Kit
## for Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

Career ✓ Ready
PROGRAM

# About ITAC Talent

ITAC Talent works with students, educational institutions, and policy-makers to proactively address the long-term talent and skills requirements of Canadian employers. We inspire young people to choose technology careers, support diversity in the industry, and shape public policy and education. We are growing the talent pipeline to ensure that Canada remains one of the top digitally enabled nations.

ITAC Talent is a division of the Information Technology Association of Canada. For more information, contact us at **www.itactalent.ca** or email: **info@itactalent.ca.**

# Table of Contents

# Introduction

## Work-integrated learning: A partnership to benefit students, post-secondary institutions—and you

A shortage of skilled workers is one of the most pressing issues faced by Canada's employers. In fact, one-third of Canadian employers say it is the biggest challenge they face today—and more than two-thirds claim that this skills shortage is reducing their global competitiveness.

New graduates should be the ones stepping into and filling these gaps. But although Canadian academic institutions are producing high numbers of graduates, these young adults, too often, do not have what employers are looking for. Students graduate with knowledge and enthusiasm—often without the targeted skills, confidence, and workplace readiness today's employers demand. It's an issue felt acutely in the fast-paced information, communications, and technology (ICT) sector.

Work-integrated learning—such as co-operative education, internship programs, and applied research projects—is essential for developing the skilled workforce Canada needs. These programs allow young adults to apply their formal education in the demanding real world. Students who take part gain a competitive edge, with work experience, connections, and better prospects. In many cases, they step directly into a job.

Importantly, these young adults emerge from university or college with an understanding of workplace culture and expectations. They're passionate, polished, professional, and ready to hit the ground running.

**This can't happen without the participation of employers.**

Companies of all sizes, in virtually all fields, from every corner of Canada, have benefited from the energy, intelligence, and capacity for innovation co-op students and interns bring to the workplace. By engaging in work-integrated learning, these employers tap directly into the talent pipeline and reap the rewards well into the future. The return on their investment is remarkable.

## What work-integrated learning is—and is not

Work-integrated learning is a broad term for education that combines academic learning and its practical applications. A workplace experience, it is a structured and intentional part of an academic program. And it's about engagement: between student and workplace, between theory and practice, between formal learning and productive work.

### It is *not* just a summer job.

Work-integrated learning is not, for example, an economics major landing a summer fill-in job at a bank. It is not just employment experience related to a field of study—it is much more rewarding to all involved.

### It *is* a partnership between student, post-secondary educational institution, and employer.

As such, all partners have obligations and responsibilities. Students bring their creativity, skills, and readiness to listen and learn. The university ensures that students are prepared and offers support and resources to match employers with the perfect candidate.

Employers are expected to foster a meaningful and practical work experience.

### We can help.

This toolkit is designed with you, the Canadian ICT employer, in mind. We'll take you through the workings of a successful work-integrated learning experience, including how to find the right student and how to maximize his or her strengths to your benefit. Whether you're looking to welcome your first work-term student or find ways to improve your current processes, let this toolkit be your guide.

## Employers respond: Why do you participate in work-integrated learning?

- ✔ **25%** to develop specific skills their industry needs
- ✔ **22%** to pre-screen potential new hires
- ✔ **15%** to give back to the community
- ✔ **11%** to access specific skills or talents
- ✔ **8%** to manage short-term pressures or special projects

*Source: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario*

# Section 1

## The business benefits of work-integrated learning: A value proposition

Well-implemented, organized, and accredited work-integrated learning (WIL) programs provide powerful educational opportunities for students and unmatched access to rising talent for employers. This is particularly true in the rapidly evolving ICT sector.

For employers, the business case for creating and fostering these opportunities is strong. Consider these proven benefits:

### 1) A low-cost way to increase capacity

Engaging a student is a cost-effective way to tackle ebbs and flows in the workplace—no matter the economic temperature. When the economy is hot and talent is at a premium, students can fill skills gaps. If the economy cools and budgets tighten, students can step up and be a resource to tackle value-added projects and those jobs on your task list you just can't get to.

### 2) Recruit once, hire twice

Think of work integrated learning as an extremely thorough job interview. If you're looking to identify and recruit talent, what better proactive step could you take than targeting bright students with the skills you need.

Many work placements result in long-term employment, which reduces future recruitment costs. A former student is an ideal new hire: already familiar with your workplace culture and ready to jump in and contribute.

### 3) Target and develop specific skills

Are you looking for a niche skill set that isn't available in-house? Partnering with the right post-secondary educational institution could be the answer. Most universities and colleges have staff dedicated to matching employer with student and will assist you in recruiting candidates that fit your opportunity.
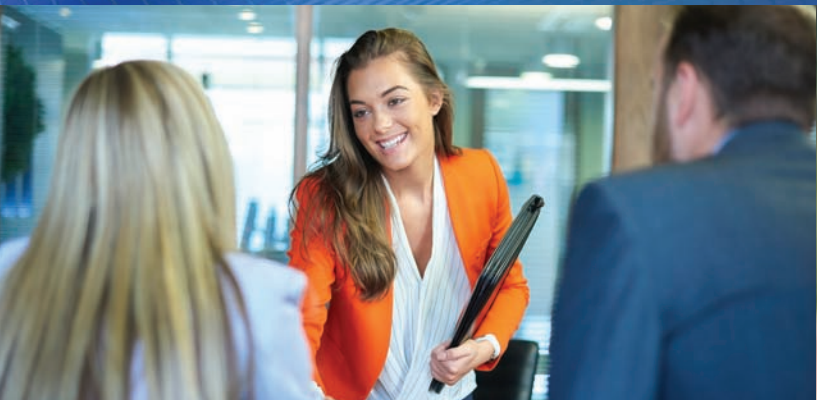
Similarly, your work-term student is ready to learn: if you'd like to train someone in a specific skill or technology, seize this opportunity.

## 4) Access new ideas and energy

Integrating a young employee into your team brings fresh enthusiasm and energy. Depending on your organization, hiring a student may increase diversity and relevance.

Many students are up-to-date on the latest technologies and trends and are drivers of innovation. Ask for, and listen to, the student's perspective—it may help you connect with new clients.

## 5) In-house professional development

Giving a junior staff member the responsibility of acting as a supervisor, manager, or mentor is valuable on-the-job training for them, and can be part of succession planning.

## 6) Raise community profile

Offering young adults an opportunity to explore their career goals and options is a valuable service to the community and to the future of Canada. You'll be broadening the industry workforce, alleviating skills shortages in the ICT sector, and serving as an inspiration for other employers.

## 7) Strengthen industry-university and industry-college relations

Partnering with a post-secondary institution offers rich opportunities for ICT enterprises of all sizes. You may tap into on-going research and development projects or connect with experts in ground-breaking technologies. You may find potential collaborators. Industry also plays an important role in strengthening and shaping education.

## 8) Access funding opportunities

Let's be frank: setting up and overseeing an exceptional work-integrated learning experience demands financial and time commitments. That's why Canada's provincial and federal governments offer a number of tax credits and grants to offset these expenses as an incentive to Canadian employers to open their doors to students.

## 9) Get ready to be surprised

Give your student a bit of independence and room for creativity and prepare to be wowed. Young workers are eager to impress, determined to do well, and brimming with ideas.

> *Less than one-quarter of the employers [posting entry-level job ads] would consider hiring candidates with no work experience. On average, employers wanted more than one year of experience and as much as two years."*
>
> —Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014

## Barriers to WIL engagement—and how to overcome them

Surveys show that many employers believe in the value of work-integrated learning but hesitate to take on a student employee. Their concerns are strikingly similar—and valid. Here we take a look at potential stumbling blocks, and the available supports and resources to conquer them.

## I don't have time to set this up.

It takes time to set up a student placement, and time and resources to train, supervise, and mentor a new employee.

Your university or college partner has systems in place to support you in sourcing and recruiting students, and in setting up the placement itself.

The first student you hire will require the most input of time. After that, logistics become easier to manage as you establish processes for hiring, on-boarding, and assessment. On that front, your first work-term student could be tasked to write training manuals for future hires. He or she could also be involved in hiring the next work-term student.

Consider hiring two students instead of one. Having a peer as a sounding board and partner can reduce the time required for supervision.

## There's no room in the budget.

Costs associated with work terms include student wages and the human resources used in training, on-boarding, and supervision.

Canada's federal and provincial governments offer a variety of funding programs to subsidize the wages of your student hire—enough to give many employers financial breathing room. A student wage is much less than you would pay to bring in later-career workers.

Work-integrated learning is an investment. But with careful planning and implementation, we're confident you'll see a remarkable return on that investment.

## I don't have any work for a student to do.

Students expect to participate in meaningful work, relevant to their studies and valuable to their employer.

Think of the tasks you don't get to. Value-added projects on your wish list. Skills missing among your current staff. Could the right young employee fill those gaps?

Contact the co-operative education office or Careers Services of a university or college in your area and ask for a meeting. Many of these departments have decades of experience working with employers and can offer insight into the skills available and where a work-term student might find a place within your organization.

## Special considerations for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Smaller businesses have tighter constraints than large enterprises in terms of budgets, time, and human resources. Job descriptions, especially for start-ups, may be fluid—everyone does a bit of everything. SMEs have unique needs, which also present unique opportunities for student learning.

### Some tips:

- **Funding is available.** Dozens of funding opportunities exist to help offset the cost of hiring a work-term student. See appendix 2 for more information.

- **Students are skilled.** Students expect to learn on the job, but they'll come to you with valuable and up-to-date technical skills that can contribute to your vision and goals.

- **Students are ready to work.** Get out your to-do list, your project wish list, your list of routine jobs. A student is a cost-effective way to get tasks on those lists accomplished.

- **Support is available.** Academic institutions have dedicated managers that will give you as much—or as little—guidance and support as you would like.

- **Still not sure?** Set up a meeting at a school in your region and talk it through. Or contact Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada) for advice on who to reach out to. It's worth it.



## Benefits for the student

A growing number of Canadian university and college students are enrolled in academic programs that include work-integrated learning. As you evaluate the benefits such a student could bring to your organization, take a moment to consider the student's perspective. You will be offering students the opportunity to:

- ✔ Link classroom theory and practice
- ✔ Gain work experience in an authentic work environment
- ✔ Break the no-job-no-experience cycle
- ✔ Earn wages to help with education and living expenses
- ✔ Graduate with industry connections (and maybe even a job)
- ✔ Earn higher wages upon graduation—between $2000–$8000/year higher
- ✔ Understand the skills employers are seeking
- ✔ Understand workplace culture and expectations
- ✔ Explore job preferences and better plan their careers
- ✔ Build professionalism, self-awareness, and confidence

# Section 2

## Getting Started

No one work integrated learning design will work for all employers. How you approach work-integrated learning will depend on the skills you seek, the projects you want to tackle, and your workplace culture, vision, and priorities.

That said, certain strategies can be used by virtually all employers to plan for, and execute, a productive and successful experience.

### 1) Set your objectives

Hiring a student must benefit your organization, and it must align with your overall vision and goals. Try to articulate exactly why you are doing it—re-read Section 1 and think about what you hope to achieve. Ask yourself some pointed questions:

- How will a student employee benefit your organization? What's most important: finding talent, hiring extra help, raising your business profile, or giving a student a learning opportunity?

- What will be the impacts on your employees/colleagues? Survey them for feedback.

- What are the tasks you just can't get to? Do you have a research or value-added project you could assign to an enthusiastic young worker?

- How will a student fit into your organization? Who will act as supervisor or mentor? How long would you like to hire a student for?

- Is your workplace equipped to work with and guide a student employee? What supports do you need, if any?

Define your objectives clearly and make sure they are realistic, specific, and measurable.

### 2) Assess your needs

What skills are you looking for? What gaps—in terms of roles or capabilities—do you need to fill? Be as detailed as possible in what you are looking for: it is essential that the student is a good match for your workplace.

Many universities and colleges have offices dedicated to work-integrated learning. You are encouraged to reach out with questions, or to ask for guidance or advice. They can also provide precise information about their programs: how long work placements last (usually 4 or 6 months), relevant deadlines, dates, and details about the academic cycle. Can you work within these parameters?

## 3) Engage your workplace

Engaged employees are invested, enthusiastic, and loyal. They are the strength of your company and they get the work done. It's no different with your student hire: engage both the student, and the rest of the workforce to ensure the best experience possible.

**Assign a mentor.** Identify an experienced employee who would be a welcoming mentor to the student. The mentor should guide the student through orientation, offer insight into workplace culture, and answer any questions that may arise. Because the work-term student may have moved to a new city to work within your organization, the mentor should also be prepared to guide the student to local amenities.

**Integrate your student into the workplace.** Instill a sense of belonging right from the on-boarding process. Although you have probably selected one individual to act as supervisor or mentor, encourage your work-term student to connect with other co-workers and to be an active part of the team. Assign the student to at least one project with someone other than the direct supervisor. Include him or her in community outreach activities, volunteer work, and team-building events.

Plan at least a couple of workplace social activities—make sure the student is included and made to feel welcome—as opportunities to meet and informally network with all levels of employees.

**Lead by example.** Although senior leadership may not be involved in the day to day work of the student, they should meet with the student. By understanding work-integrated learning, leadership will be prepared to promote the student program throughout the organization and the broader community.

**Share the story.** Tell success stories through social media, media releases, and company newsletters. Strategic communication will raise the profile of the program in the community—and inspire pride and loyalty internally.

## 4) Understand your role and responsibilities

First and foremost, your role is to provide meaningful work that is relevant to the student's academic program and of value to the student and your organization. The work and expectations for the student should be comparable to those of other employees, while taking into account the individual's experience level.

Think of work-term students as temporary employees—they deserve appropriate wages, training, and supervision. You will also be responsible for formally evaluating the student according to the school's requirements. Ideally, you will also offer constructive feedback throughout the work term.

If you hire a student from a co-op program, you must work with your post-secondary institution partner and respect their schedules, policies, and procedures. Be clear that you are working with a university or college and that you are supporting their work-integrated learning programs. Do not accept job applications directly from students—please follow the institution's student hiring process. You must communicate with the institution to confirm which students have been hired and to verify that they are part of a qualified program.

As in any hiring situation, your job posting must be accurate, you should confirm job offers in writing, and, of course, you must comply with provincial and federal employment legislation. The hiring process for a non-coop student is less formal and usually involves direct contact and work relationship between the student and the employer.

## What is meaningful work?

Students aren't just looking for a job to get them through to the next school term. They are looking for an opportunity to actively contribute to a business or organization. They expect to be pulled out of their comfort zone and challenged.

When you design your work placement, include opportunities for the student to work with different people and teams and to develop new expertise. Don't be afraid to give the student a task, as well as the freedom to find a way to complete it. Consider the individual's skills and encourage him or her to expand on them.

Meaningful work will be valuable to you and to your student employee.

## Student responsibilities and ethics

The students you hire will have reasonable expectations of being given meaningful work, as well as guidance, feedback, and an opportunity to grow.

In return, you should expect a high level of ethics and personal responsibility from your student hires. Students participating in work-integrated learning programs must:

- Follow the policies of their post-secondary institution if they are in formal co-op program
- Not discuss or mislead employers about ranking or job acceptance intentions
- Be honest and accurate about their qualifications
- Honour the acceptance of employment as a contractual agreement with the employer
- Respect employer policies, including confidentiality and workplace protocols
- Observe all rules and regulations set by the employer
- Conduct themselves ethically at all times
- Work to improve professional and academic skills, and accept feedback graciously

## Where does the academic institution fit in?

The university or college you have partnered with does more than open a job board. It is responsible for ensuring that work-term students are ready for the workplace and for facilitating the entire work-placement process, including:

- Ensuring student career training and personal and professional development is relevant and up-to-date
- Developing work-integrated learning opportunities that fulfill the academic program's requirement
- Maintaining open communication with employer partners
- Assisting employers with recruitment, including job posting, interview space, presentation facilities
- Supporting employers throughout the work term
- Advising and supporting students and/or employers if challenges arise during the work term
- Informing all parties of hiring policies and procedures and of any hiring limitations

## The way we work: communicating workplace culture

Students may enter your workplace with little experience in organizational culture. Navigating expectations and accepted (but not necessarily intuitive) behavioural norms is tricky for any new employee—as a student just starting a career, it can be rife with pitfalls.

Most student hires will come to you with enthusiasm and openness. They will expect a workplace that is diverse and accepting, and they will be looking for a clear purpose. Are you ready to provide this? Is your workplace culture set up to welcome a student?

Work with your team, especially human resources and those who will be directly supervising the student, to facilitate openness and to create an atmosphere that welcomes new ideas. Create inclusive teams ready to work toward a shared goal. Ensure that your work-term student has enough meaningful work.

Introduce your students to the basics of your workplace culture during on-boarding. Include frank discussions about clothing, work hours, work flow, lines of communication, and how work gets done. Be clear about your company policy regarding social media and employee expectations for accessing their mobile devices at the workplace. Be aware that this may be new territory and the student will benefit from regular coaching throughout the placement.

Gaining an understanding of workplace culture may be one of the most valuable parts of the work placement for your student.

## What types of work-integrated learning will work for you?

Work-integrated learning can come in many formats, including co-operative education (co-op), internships, applied research projects, community service, apprenticeships, field placements, practicums, and service learning. The first three are most commonly found in ICT industries.

- **Co-operative education:** paid, full-time study terms alternate with full-time work terms throughout an academic program.
- **Internship:** a workplace experience usually under the mentorship of an experienced professional, of varying lengths.
- **Applied research project:** the student is a contributing part of a team working on a specific research or development project.

*[Work-integrated learning is] an essential component to building a highly skilled and productive labour force for an innovative, strong and growing economy."*

–*Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Skills development discussion paper, 2012*

# Section 3



# Step-by-step guide, from recruitment to final evaluation

## 1) Recruitment and hiring

### Design the position

Try to put yourself in a student's shoes. What would make a valuable work experience? What are the professional growth needs of the students in the program you have identified? What will a student expect, look forward to—and what will they fear?

Then think about your objectives. What work do you need and want completed? Can you align your objectives with those of the student?

Finding that fit will ensure a successful experience. As you design your work-term position, consider:

- What level of expertise do you require? Is the work complex, challenging? Are you looking for a first- or second-year student, or someone nearing graduation?

- What type of program suits your workplace best? Co-op education, internship, research project, or something else?

- For how many hours, or weeks, would you like to have a student? Does the university or college's academic cycle align with your project?

No matter how much care and thought you invest in designing a position, it will evolve as the student takes ownership of it. Assign a supervisor who understands the objective of the work term to monitor both the student and the execution of the work experience, and to ensure the goals of the employer, the school, and the student remain aligned.

## Write the perfect job description

To attract the right applicants, you need to create a job description that is both accurate and enticing. Be sure to include:

- **The main responsibilities:** brief and to the point. Be informative, but don't be too rigid. It's good practice to leave a buffer in the job description for creativity or a value-added project. Give the student enough routine tasks he or she can do with minimal supervision.

- **Qualifications required:** remember that many of the applicants will not have much work experience. Focus on skills, attitudes, and goals. Highlight essential skills only—do not intimidate potential qualified students with a demanding list.

- **About your organization:** tell students about your organization, the work you do, your goals and vision. Include some details about your workplace culture to let students identify how they might fit in.

- **Your objectives:** why are you posting the position? Candidates want to actively contribute; they want to know they can make a difference to your company.

- **Benefits to the student:** include salary—but also networking and professional development opportunities, community work, training, and other benefits. Encourage the student to see working for you as a crucial step in their career path.

The process for posting jobs and conducting interviews will vary from school to school. In most cases, you will receive applications from a number of students, conduct interviews, rank the candidates and, eventually, submit an offer letter.

Many schools organize recruitment fairs and promotional events and offer advertising opportunities on campus. Contact the academic institution(s) you have partnered with for options.

## 2) On-boarding

You've selected a qualified work-term student, set up a desk or workspace, and have a work plan ready to go.

Before the student's first day of work, assign a supervisor or mentor who understands the goals of work-integrated learning as the student's main contact. Encourage the supervisor to schedule regular check-in meetings with the student, particularly at the start of the program.

On day one, provide the student with a complete orientation to the workplace and policies and procedures—just as you would with any new employee. Unlike most new employees, though, the student may not have other workplace experience to draw on—so pay attention to details and be patient.

### Anticipate barriers to success

Discuss expectations about attire, work hours, vacation and sick day policies, communications, standards of performance, reporting procedures (chain of command), confidentiality, and human resources. Introduce concepts of your company culture. If you haven't already done so, discuss salary, payment schedule, and benefits. Be open and leave space for questions.

## Set goals

Work with the student and supervisor/mentor to set achievable goals for the work placement. These should be both practical, work-related goals and learning or career development goals. Write them down. Discuss performance assessment timelines and procedures.

## Introduce projects and people

Discuss the student's specific role and provide any project background information required. Introduce key team players and their roles.

## Discuss expectations

Encourage a two-sided conversation about expectations for the work term. This will set the stage for open communication and help ensure the goals of you and the student align.

## Set a second meeting

The first day on the job is going to be overwhelming for the student. Arrange for a second meeting, toward the end of the first week, and agree on specific and measurable learning and work goals. This can be a discussion between the mentor and the student.

## 3) Performance assessment

Assessment is a crucial part of work-integrated learning. Set clear goals during on-boarding and review them regularly as part of the ongoing assessment process.

Performance feedback should be given regularly in one-on-one meetings. Focus on both the tasks accomplished and the way they were handled. Discuss deliverables, but also workplace skills such as time management and collaboration. Evaluate the goals you set in week one and adjust them if required.

Check in regularly with the student throughout the work term, not just to offer feedback but to answer questions. Ensure that the student has enough work—and that it increases in complexity as the work term continues.

Give more responsibility as the work and student's ability allow. Effective assessment will help you catch areas of concern early and maximize the student's capabilities.

## Tips for work-term mentors or supervisors

Stepping into the role of mentor or supervisor can be extremely rewarding—but it can also be challenging. Quite often, students have more difficulty navigating workplace culture than completing their task list.

✔ **Communication is key.** Let the student know how he or she can contact you, and how often you expect meetings. Be available for questions. Explain workplace communications: what is the best way to reach people? Email, phone, in person? What tone is appropriate for different stakeholders?

✔ **Give constructive feedback.** Feedback is vital to the student's learning experience. Gather input from others who have worked with the student. Be clear and honest, but constructive. Give the student time to process anything you say and offer time for questions or further discussion. Always maintain confidentiality and respect.

✔ **Document progress and feedback.** A student evaluation will be required by the educational institution at the end of the program, and perhaps at points midway. Keeping notes on the feedback you give and the progress toward goals will help you write accurate evaluations and allow you to track progress.

✔ **Confront concerns.** If you have concerns about a student's suitability for the workplace, or if a conflict arises, contact the post-secondary institution for assistance or advice.
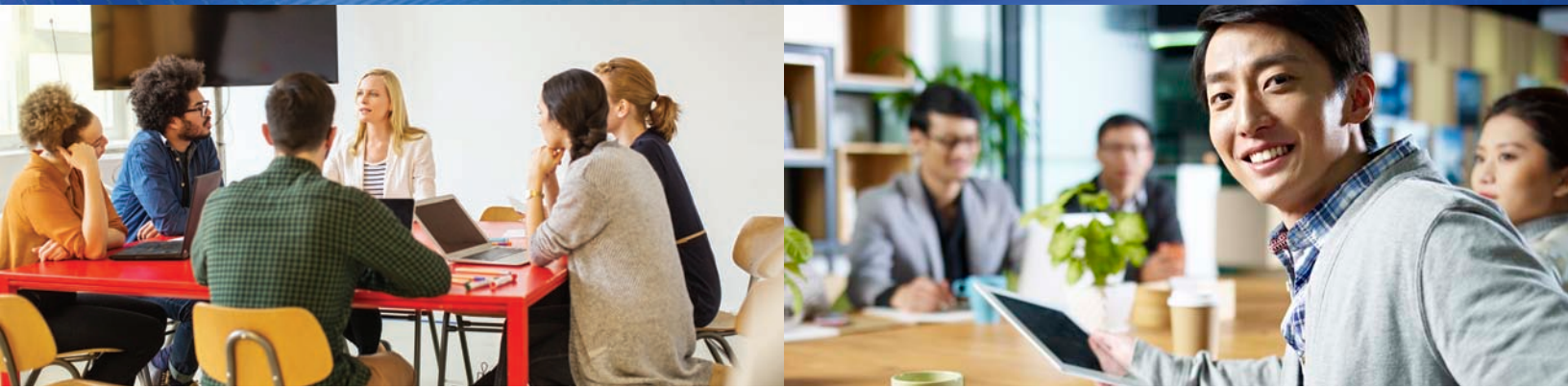
Most work-integrated learning programs will have formal evaluation requirements, set by the post-secondary institution, which may include mid-term check-ins or a site visit by an instructor. Ensure that you are aware of these obligations and ready to facilitate them.

### Encourage reflection and learning

Allowing space and time for self-reflection is an important part of fostering a productive learning environment. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Give the student a survey at the beginning of the work term, and at the end. This will provide you with important insight into the program, and also require the student to think through and articulate his or her experience.

- Ask students for feedback on the placement: what do they like or dislike? Where do they see their strengths? What do they need to focus on improving?

- Throughout the placement, offer professional development opportunities such as invitations to workshops or networking events. Ask for feedback from the student.

- Ask for a written self-assessment at the end of the program. Again, this will be of value to you and the student.

## 4) Ongoing engagement

The work-term student, like any employee, must be made to feel part of the organization. Keeping in mind the education goals of the work placement, consider organizing networking events with colleagues or partnering the student with different employees on varied projects.

Use social media to encourage connections between the students and other employees and with other students engaged in similar programs. Keep the conversations happening.

This is also an opportunity to tap into the insights of a younger generation by including the student in your communications strategy. Perhaps the student could design and conduct a survey or focus group to gather marketing data or product insights. A lot can be accomplished during the few months of a work term. Allow the student the opportunity to collaborate, contribute, and shine.

## 5) Evaluation

If you hired a co-op student, you will have to complete a final evaluation for the partnering post-secondary institution. This, along with any other formal assessments, will become part of the student's academic record. Be sure to set aside time to complete the evaluations in detail.

Beyond that obligation, though, take time to evaluate the program from your own standpoint. Consider:

### The student experience.

Reflect on your meetings with the student, as well as your less formal interactions with him or her. Were the learning goals you set out in the beginning met? How about the student's career development goals? Did he or she engage with others within the company? Find a fit within workplace culture?

**The supporting employees' experience.**
What feedback did you receive from other employees, formally or anecdotally? Did the student have the necessary requirements? Who was involved in supporting the student? What is their assessment of the value of the program?

**The impact on the company.**
What did the student contribute to the company, in terms of deliverables, energy, ideas, or perspective? Did other employees engage in the work-integrated learning process? Did the wider community within the company notice? What about the external community? What were the actual costs, in terms of money and time, of the work term?

By setting goals and tracking progress throughout the work placement you will have the data and tools you need to meet the school's evaluation requirements, as well as your own internal evaluation. At the end of the work term you should have a clear sense of the impact of the work experience on the student, on your organization, and on the employees who played a role in it.

# Strategies and Practices Across a Talent Cycle*
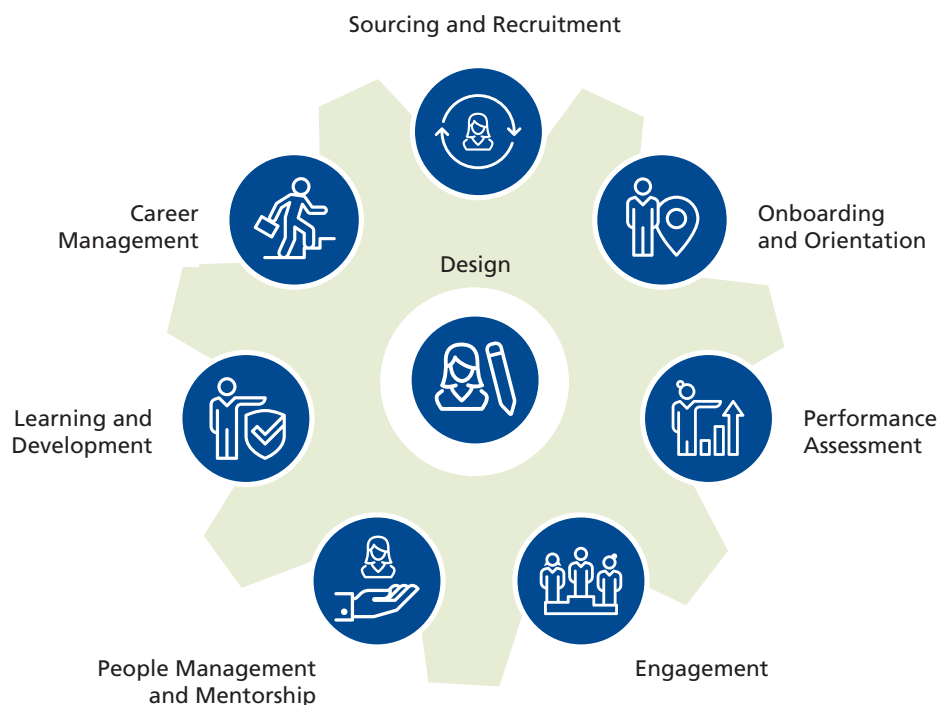


*courtesy RBC Launching Careers*

# Appendix A

## Checklist

### Getting started

❏ Determine who will be the primary contact with your post-secondary institution partner if you are hiring a co-op student

❏ Meet with a representative of the co-operative education or work-integrated learning office to discuss your goals and responsibilities

❏ Allocate funds for the work term salary

❏ Investigate government funding opportunities

❏ Determine the benefits a work-term student can bring to your organization

❏ Identify what can you offer the student, and how you will create a learning environment

❏ Articulate measurable outcomes for the organization and for the student

### Assessing your needs

❏ List the skills you would like your work-term student to possess. Consider both hard and soft skills; focus on any niche skills missing in-house

❏ Examine your to-do list, as well as your wish list. Where can the student fit in? Develop a draft task list for the student

❏ Review the schedules, deadlines, and other parameters set by the post-secondary institution. Ensure they align with your needs

❏ Reflect on your workplace resources and overall culture. Determine what you will need to support the student, in terms of space, budget, and staff resources

❏ Determine what supports or resources you need to support a student employee

### Engage your workplace

❏ Inform your team about the work term and expectations for the student. Encourage employees to welcome and engage with the student. Be available to answer questions

❏ Engage your employees/colleagues in a discussion about the benefits and responsibilities of hiring a work-term student. Speak to other businesses for insight

❏ Be ready to connect your work-term student with employees outside of his or her direct mentor/supervisor

❏ Schedule social events, community outreach activities, volunteer work, and team-building exercises that will include the student and offer networking opportunities

❏ Develop a communications strategy to promote the work term internally and externally

### Design the position

❏ Consider the student perspective, and what would make a valuable work experience.

❏ Ensure you are clear on the expectations of the university or college and what is required of the academic program

❏ Review your objectives. Build a position that fits both the work you need and want completed—and the student's academic goals

❏ Consider the level of expertise you require, the length of the work term, and the program expectations. Can all stakeholders be satisfied?

❏ Build in time for creativity and growth. The position should include routine tasks, special projects, and space to explore—and surprise you

❏ Be flexible. Depending on the applications you receive and the candidates you meet, you may be inspired to take the position in a different direction

# Write the job description

❏ Include a brief overview of the main responsibilities

❏ State the base-level qualifications you are looking for, highlighting skills and attitudes over traditional work experience

❏ Tell students a little about your organization, the work you do, your goals and vision

❏ Add a line or two about your objectives for the work-term. Students will want to be certain their goals fit with yours, and that they will be a contributing member of your team

❏ Outline salary, benefits, and professional development opportunities

❏ Contact the university or college about recruitment fairs and promotional events to get your name out before students

# On-boarding and orientation

❏ Set up a welcoming workspace dedicated to your work-term student

❏ Let the student's mentor/supervisor take the lead in orientation and introductions. Encourage the supervisor to schedule regular check-in meetings with the student, particularly at the start of the program

❏ Provide the student with a complete orientation to the workplace and policies and procedures, being aware the student may not have other work experience to draw on

❏ Discuss expectations with regards to breaks, work hours, vacation and sick day policies, standards of performance, confidentiality, social media and cell-phone use policies, and human resources

❏ Introduce concepts of your company culture, including preferred methods of communication and chain of command. Discuss standards for attire and grooming

❏ Encourage the student to approach you at any time with questions and concerns. Let him or her know how and when are the best times to reach you

❏ Work with the student and supervisor/mentor to set achievable and measurable goals for the work placement.

❏ Outline performance assessment timelines and procedures.

❏ Discuss the student's specific role and provide any project background information required. Introduce key team players and their roles.

❏ Encourage a two-sided conversation about expectations for the work term

❏ Arrange for a second meeting, toward the end of first week, between the mentor and student. After a few days to get used to the work environment, the student will be better prepared for a productive discussion about specific and measurable learning and work goals

❏ Schedule a meeting between senior leadership and the student

# Giving useful feedback

❏ Don't rely on your own observations alone. Speak to others who work with the student for insight into how he or she is fitting in

❏ Schedule set meeting times to offer set feedback and discuss goals. But remember that the best feedback is on-going

❏ Be constructive at all time. Focus on actions, not traits

❏ Be clear and allow the student time to process any feedback you offer

❏ Answer questions and always maintain confidentiality and respect

❏ Document progress and feedback. This will help you prepare formal evaluations, and will be useful for reflections on the program

❏ If issues or conflicts arise, contact the post-secondary institution for assistance or advice

## Performance assessment

❏ Schedule regular one-on-one meetings for formal assessments. Focus on both the tasks accomplished and the way they were handled. Evaluate the goals you set in week one, and adjust them if required.

❏ Make sure the student has enough work—and ensure that it increases in complexity as the work term continues.

❏ Ensure you are aware of formal evaluation requirements, set by the post-secondary institution, and be ready to facilitate them.

## Foster a learning environment

❏ Allow space and time for self-reflection through surveys. Ask for honest feedback about the placement and the work experience.

❏ Offer professional development opportunities, including networking evets and access to workshops or webinars.

❏ Invite the work-term student to sit in on team meetings for projects he or she isn't directly involved in

❏ Ask for a written self-assessment at the end of the program. This is a good tool to encourage self-reflection for the student, and will provide you with valuable insight into the experience

❏ Discuss and revise the student's work assignment and learning goals as appropriate

## Continuous engagement

❏ Make the work-term student feel welcome across your organize. Hold networking events with colleagues, or partner the student with different employees on varied project, for example

❏ Use social media to encourage connections between the students and other employees, and with other students engaged in similar programs

❏ Include the student in your communications planning. Invite him or her to design and conduct a survey or focus group to gather marketing data or product insights

## Formal evaluation

❏ Set aside time to complete a final evaluation for the post-secondary institution you are working with. This will become part of the student's academic record

❏ Evaluate the program from your own standpoint. Consider the student experience, the experience of the mentor and other supporting employees, and the overall impact on the company

❏ Calculate the overall cost of the program, in terms of finances and time. Survey the mentor and your employees about their experiences. Include the student's feedback in any assessment

❏ If the student was a good fit within your organization and you would like to work with him or her again in the future, make the invitation clear. Take the time to discuss possible future assignments.

# Appendix B

## Further resources

**Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL)**

(www.cewilcanada.ca)
The voice for post-secondary co-operative education and work-integrated learning in Canada. Includes useful contacts and information, including a co-op program directory and recruiting ethics for the student, employer, and institution (https://www.cewilcanada.ca/_Library/_documents/RecruitingEthics.pdf).

**A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning: Effective practices to enhance the educational quality of structured work experiences offered through colleges and universities**

(http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO_WIL_Guide_ENG_ACC.pdf)
From the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (2016).

**Work-Integrated Learning in Ontario's Post-Secondary Sector: The Experience of Ontario Graduates**

(http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/WIL_Experience_ON_Graduates_ENG.pdf)
From the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (2014).

**Work-Integrated Learning and Postsecondary Graduates: The Perspective of Ontario Employers**

(http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/WIL%20Employer%20Survey%20ENG.pdf)
A comprehensive survey published by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (2012).

**Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada**

(http://bher.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/BHER-Academica-report-full.pdf).
By the Business/High Education Roundtable (2016).

**Good Practice Report: Work-Integrated Learning**

(https://www.newcastle.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/90034/WIL-Good-Practice-Report.pdf)
From the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (2011).

**Engaging Employers in Work-Integrated Learning: Current state and future priorities**

(https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/phillipskpa-wil-research-report.pdf)
By PhillipsKPA, Victoria, Australia (2014).

# Appendix C

## Funding resources for employers

*Note:* this list of national programs is by no means comprehensive, but it is a place to start. Contact CEWIL and/or your partner university or college for more options, including varied province-specific programs.

**Student Work-Integrated Learning Program**

**(https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/work-integrated-learning.html)**

**Industrial Research Assistance Program**

**(https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/irap/index.html)**

**Canadian Heritage Young Canada Works Program**

**(https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/young-canada-works.html)**

**MITACS-Accelerate**

**(http://www.mitacs.ca/en/about-mitacs):** A national internship program for Canadian university graduate students