WORK-TERM REPORT GUIDELINES

I. Introduction

In today's world, all organizations depend on good communication for their success; consequently, communication skills are of particularly vital importance to your professional career. Paramount among those skills is the ability to write effectively, therefore, report writing is considered to be a very significant part of your education.

A work-term report offers you an opportunity to develop your skills in collecting, evaluating, organizing and presenting information on a particular subject. During each work term, you will get the chance to prepare a variety of reports, which will become, for you and your employer, a permanent record of your work.

All CO-OP students are required to submit a report for each work term. The report is graded by your Academic CO-OP Coordinator[*] (professor) and is an important factor in determining the grade for your Work-Term Report course. (Other factors include the transmittal letter, the employer's evaluation.

This outline is intended as a guideline only. Because of differences between disciplines, each department will place slightly different emphasis on the various objectives and ask for a different style of the report.

II. Report Requirements

A. Letter of Transmittal

The letter of transmittal should be typewritten, single -spaced and follow good business format. It should be addressed to your Academic CO-OP Coordinator. It must accompany your report but not be bound to it (e.g. not stapled). Your letter must contain the following information:

- Your name and student number.
- Name of employer and name of supervisor.
- Position held.
- Title of report submitted.
- Relationship between work performed and the submitted documents (if any).
- The academic term completed prior to the work term (e.g., 3A, 3B, 4A).
- The work term completed (first, second, etc.).
- Acknowledgment of assistance and statement that the report is your own work.

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[*]In this document all references to the Academic CO-OP Co-ordinator should also be considered to include his/her delegate.

You can also use the letter to pass on any further information regarding the work term or the report.

B. The Report

i)   Planning

Very early in the work term, you should meet with your work supervisor to discuss the report requirements of your program. This will enable you to decide which type of report is the most appropriate (see below). If necessary you may consult your Academic CO-OP Coordinator. Ask your supervisor whether any of your work will be of a proprietary nature.

Once you have decided on a suitable topic, draw up a schedule for the completion of your report. Don't wait until the last minute, as a good report involves planning; the work report must be part of the duties of your work term. You may want to consult the examples of outstanding reports available on our web site at http://www.coop.uottawa.ca/academic/coop/en/en-coop-students/en-wt-guidelines.asp. Make use of the library for your research or for books on report writing; a few titles are suggested in APPENDIX B.

Finally, take printing time into consideration; some students wait until the last day to print their report and then find that technical problems prevent them from printing it. Such an excuse for lateness is not acceptable.

ii) Type of Report

In consultation with your Academic CO-OP Coordinator, you can choose one of the following forms of report. Computer science students must always obtain *written approval* from the Academic CO-OP Coordinator prior to submitting either a TYPE I or TYPE III report.

TYPE I	**TYPE II**	**TYPE III**
During the course of a work term, some employers expect the student to prepare written reports on their work. These should be prepared for the employer according to the employer's required format.	The employer may not require reports; nevertheless you may wish to write one, which is completely related to your activities during the work term (although it should not become a diary of your daily activities).	If the nature of the work does not lend itself to one of the other forms, you should discuss a topic with your Academic CO-OP Co-ordinator and agree on a subject on which you will write a technical report. Such an agreement should be arrived at early in the term and you should confirm it by submitting an outline to your Academic CO-OP Co-ordinator.
In such a case, some or all of the reports may be submitted to meet the work report requirements. If you choose to do so, you must discuss it with your Academic CO-OP Co-ordinator to ensure that this is acceptable and obtain his or her approval in writing.	You should describe the major tasks you completed. If you were in a project-oriented position, you should describe these projects. Whenever possible it is advisable to give a detailed write-up of one project and briefly describe the other projects. You could also show	The topic you choose need not be an original one but

	your understanding of the purpose of the work and what you have learned. The introduction of your report should contain a brief description of your work environment.	the report must be your own work.

TYPE II and III reports should be prepared on your own time. Employers want to read your report before you submit it to the University. Therefore for all types of reports, you must submit a copy of it to your employer one week before the end of your work term.

iii) Confidential Reports

It is recommended that students choose topics and material, which do not contain any information of a proprietary nature. If this is not possible, then you must inform your Academic CO-OP Coordinator at least six weeks prior to the Co-op deadline for submitting the report. If your report is confidential, your employer must evaluate the report and submit a signed evaluation form (see appendix C). This form must be submitted with your letter of transmittal by the deadline for submitting work-term reports. The only exceptions to this will be for programs with specific guidelines regarding confidential reports.

Students in SITE should follow the specific guidelines for confidential reports as outlined in APPENDIX A.

iv) Language

As for any course at the University of Ottawa, you may write the letter of transmittal and your report in English or French. However, for a TYPE I report the employer determines the language.

We recommend that you use the language in which you are more comfortable, since your report will be also graded on style, grammar and spelling. It is always preferable to ask for advice on the language from your supervisor and Academic CO-OP Coordinator before starting to write your report.

v) Format

TYPE I REPORTS	TYPE II & III REPORTS
For TYPE I reports, check the required format with your employer. The report should be bound and include a title page, a table of contents and an introduction. This introduction should summarize your tasks and responsibilities and list the skills and other benefits for professional development gained during the term. It can also serve to introduce the different individual reports. The	For all other reports, the following format is required: – title page – table of contents – summary or abstract – introduction – body – conclusion

introduction should normally be one to two pages in length.	– bibliography – appendix (optional)

Please note the following additional requirements:
- The report must be bound and held together with a binding mechanism. <u>Reports stapled at the top are not acceptable;</u>
- All pages should be numbered (including any appendices);
- References to other publications or to appendices should be precise (page numbers, etc.);
- Avoid adding generic descriptions of the company or products unless relevant to your topic;
- Add a glossary if the text includes numerous technical terms;
- The appendix may contain such items as lengthy tables, computer code or maps;
- Use of figures, graphs, or histograms may add clarity and shorten your text;
- Organize your report in sections and use headings;
- Use a font size of 12 or 14 points and line spacing of 1.5.

vi) Length

The length of your report should be such as to adequately cover the chosen topic. Usually a report is between 10 to 20 pages long, excluding appendices.

vii) Due Date

Your work-term report must be submitted to your employer for his or her approval one week before the end of your work term. The accompanying letter and work-term report (or report evaluation form filled out by your employer if your report is confidential) are usually due **at the Co-operative Education Programs Office** by the second Friday after classes resume. ==**Be sure to check under "Upcoming Key Dates" on the CO-OP Programs Web site for the exact date.**== You must also complete the "STUDENT EVALUATION" in COOP Navigator by this date. Be sure to SAVE the evaluation once you have completed it. You will be notified of the exact date each term. <u>Do not submit</u> your work-term report to your CO-OP academic coordinator. <u>Late reports will not be accepted</u>.

viii) Audience (for Type II and III reports)

Try to target your report to be understood by your student peers. Avoid using too much specialized jargon with which you have become familiar during the work term and which might be unfamiliar to your peers.

ix) Evaluation

The Academic CO-OP Coordinator will evaluate both the letter of transmittal and the work term report. The content, style and grammar, as well as organization and presentation, of your report will be evaluated. The form used for confidential report evaluation (<u>appendix C</u>) is also a guideline for the evaluation of all types of reports.

If your report is judged unsatisfactory, you may be given an opportunity to submit a revised version within a prescribed period of time.

Reports are usually corrected by mid-semester. Please see your departments at that time as the reports are not returned to the CO-OP office.

SUPPLEMENTARY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SCHOOL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING (SITE)

The objectives of work-term reports in SITE are to help you to:

- Develop technical writing skills;
- Develop skills in analytical thinking and design;
- Advance your career by giving you the opportunity to evaluate the work you have done.

The following requirements are in addition to the general CO-OP work-term report requirements, and will help to ensure that reports submitted by SITE students meet the above objectives. The following applies to CO-OP students in Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Software Engineering, Computer Science and any future SITE programs.

1. LENGTH OF REPORT

Your report must contain at least 10 pages of single -spaced text (12 point Times New Roman font or similar, using a standard report format). The main body of the report must be at least 5,000 words. You should also, in addition, include figures, tables, appendices, etc., as necessary. The total length of the report should not exceed 30 pages (15,000 words). Normal reports are the equivalent of 15 to 18 pages (7,500 to 9,000 words). Figures, tables, program listings, quoted material and the like do not count in report length.

2. REPORTS MUST BE ANALYTICAL

The report must be analytical in nature. In other words, the report must do one or more of the following:

o Explain why something is the way it is.

o Give thoughtful commentary about what is good and bad about something (pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages).

o Discuss problems faced by you, the company or its customers and explain how they were solved and why they were solved that way.

o Discuss how something could be improved.

Reports filled with large amounts of technical facts are not acceptable. Technical facts should only be presented to justify an argument or to give just enough background material so that the reader can understand the remainder of the report.

3. UNITY OF THEME

Your report should mention all the work your were asked to perform in the introduction so the reader clearly understand your entire work term duties, but then should concentrate on one topic, so it is a coherent in depth discussion of that topic rather than a superficial report on many things. The introduction should explain the key ideas you will be discussing, with the body of the report provided detailed discussion. The conclusion should summarize what you have said. The entire report should be written to an audience of other students in the same program as yourself, not your manager or the professor who might read your report later. Anything that you did not know from your studies to that point and is needed to understand the report will have to be explained in the report.

It is important that all the information presented in the report be there for a valid reason. Do not add additional material just so the report is the required length, instead expand on the discussion to meet length requirements or choose another topic for the entire report. This applies also for appendices - only add appendices if they serve to justify points you have made in the body of the report. For example, don't include large amounts of source code; if you feel source code is truly necessary to illustrate points you are making - provide only a few samples (maximum 100 lines) and normally put these in an appendix.

4. REFERENCES

You must pay very careful attention to explain where all of the information in your report comes from. This means that you must give full references for all the ideas you talk about (not only quotations).

Remember that referencing material improperly exposes you to a charge of plagiarism. This serious academic offence results in a failed report and possibly further University sanctions (Consult www.uottawa.ca/plagiarism.pdf and the examples shown there.).

You should include references even if the information is from an internal company source. If the information comes from an individual, you should give the reference as "Person's name, personal communication." If the information comes from a web page, your reference should include the title of the web page, the URL and the date you looked at the page.

The references should be given as a numbered list at the end of the report. When you mention an idea or quotation in the body of the report, cite the number of the corresponding bibliography item like this.

5. PROOFREADING

Excessive numbers of spelling, typographic and grammatical errors are grounds for rejection of your report. If you are not proficient in the language of the report, make a special effort to become proficient, and carefully review your report before submitting it. All students are presumed to be able to write a report in clear, proper English or French, and lack of proficiency is not an acceptable excuse for a badly written report.

6. TYPE I, II and III Reports

You should write a Type II report unless there is no other reasonable alternative. Many students feel that their jobs have not been analytical in nature and that therefore they cannot do a Type II report. However, even if you did relatively mundane tasks, you can normally discuss problems you encountered and how you solved them. Your job does not have to be analytical for you to write an analytical report about it.

If you really feel that you cannot do a Type II report, you must contact the SITE Academic COOP Coordinator by email (coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca) to get permission for this well in advance of the end of your work term. When you request permission, you must explain why you cannot do a Type II report, and include an outline of the proposed report as ASCII text. You may not proceed with your report unless you receive written confirmation by e-mail.

Most common types of reports written for employers fail to meet the above guidelines as they generally focus on the results or a product and not the student's role in the work:

  o   reference manuals, user guides, configuration guides: never acceptable;

  o   design documents: only acceptable if the bulk of the report focuses on explaining the rationale for design decisions and your role in those decisions;

  o   specifications or requirements documents: unacceptable, unless the majority of the document explains in detail the rationale for the requirements and your role in the creation of the document;

  o   research reports where you have gathered information on a certain topic: unlikely to be acceptable.

Reports edited by company staff are not acceptable, unless they were reviewed solely for confidentiality reasons.

If a report you have written for your employer does not meet the above criteria, you may still be able to take the report as it stands and enhance it so that it does meet the criteria –effectively creating a new document based on the original. If you do this, you should say so in your letter of transmittal. For example, if you have written a very long document with many technical details, you can cut out most of the technical details and enhance the analytical component as well as explain your role in the work.

If you are authorized to write a report other than a Type II, explain why you were not able to submit a Type II report in your letter of transmittal.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

You must discuss the issue of potential confidentiality with your supervisor well before you start writing your report. Employers will not want you to publicly reveal information that exposes

company trade secrets, makes the company look bad, exposes the company to potential lawsuits, or gives other useful information to competitors.

You must make every effort to avoid a report that your employer is not willing to let faculty members read. This is for two reasons: We want to learn about what you are doing, and we want to ensure that you are treated in the same way as other CO-OP students.

You can explain to your employer that, a) the document is not made officially 'public' in any way, b) marking is done by some faculty member within SITE, and c) it is returned to you after it is marked. Nevertheless, this might not be enough to satisfy your employer.

You should choose a topic that is not confidential to avoid this problem. Even if the bulk of your work is highly confidential, you can normally discuss issues that are non-confidential. Another approach that is often possible is to carefully mask confidential information by changing names, omitting key details, etc. If you do mask information, you should say so in either the report or the letter of transmittal.

If you can't avoid confidentiality in your report, ask your employer if he or she would allow only one SITE CO-OP Coordinator to see it. The Coordinator can sign a non-disclosure agreement if the company so desires. If your employer allows you to proceed this way, you must then make all necessary arrangements with the CO-OP Coordinator. You must get permission from the appropriate SITE CO-OP Coordinator by e-mail (ceg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca, csi-coopcoord@site.uottawa.ca, elg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca or seg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca) at least one month before the end of the work term. If you are granted permission to follow this approach, you must then hand in the report in a sealed envelope to the Co-operative Education Programs Office with the letter of transmittal on the outside of the envelope.

8. APPROVAL BY SUPERVISOR

You must include a page signed by your supervisor at the end of your report with the following wording:

As supervisor of CO-OP student <your name>_____, I, <supervisor's name>_____ certify that, to the best of my knowledge, this report is entirely the student's work and is free of confidential information to the extent that it can be read by university faculty members.

Signature_____

Date _____

9. FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROGRAM

In your report or letter of transmittal, please consider the following issues and provide us with any feedback you may have so that we may make improvements:

- o How well have the courses you have taken in your program prepared you for your COOP work term? How could we improve our courses or programs?

o   Did your CO-OP work term provide a suitable environment for you to expand your knowledge and skills, and enhance your career? What could your employer, SITE or the CO-OP office improve?

10. CONTACTING A SITE ACADEMIC CO-OP COORDINATOR

If your CO-OP work term involves unusual circumstances, and you are therefore unsure about whether your report meets the above requirements, you should contact a SITE Academic CO-OP Coordinator. You should do this by e-mail since the Coordinators have a large number of students to deal with, and a record of the discussion is important to have in case there is a problem later.

Before contacting the Coordinator, please re-read both the general CO-OP guidelines and these SITE requirements again to ensure that your question has not been answered. In your e-mail, explain the difficulties you are having and provide the outline for your proposed report in the body of your message (NOT AS AN ATTACHMENT). The Coordinator will then indicate whether you are on the right track. In the end, you remain responsible to ensure that your final report meets the requirements.

Once again, here are the e-mail addresses of the SITE Academic CO-OP Coordinators:

ceg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca
csi-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca
elg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca
seg-coop-coord@site.uottawa.ca.

Please allow a few days for the Coordinators to answer your message. Note that during the summer, they often take lengthy vacations; so make sure you don't leave your questions or requests until the last minute.

REFERENCES

Gibaldi, Joseph, 1999. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* Modern Language
      Association of America, New York.

Turabian, Kate L., 1996. Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertation, 6th edition.
      University of Chicago Press, Chicago

There are a number of books on business report writing on the 4th floor at the Morisset Library.
(They begin with the call number HF 57.) Books on technical writing can be found on the 6th
floor. (They begin with the call number T11...)

Please visit our Web site at http://www.coop.uottawa.ca/academic/coop/en/en-coop-students/en-
wt-guidelines.asp for samples of work-term reports for all CO-OP programs.

EVALUATION OF CONFIDENTIAL WORK-TERM REPORT

Note: The CO-OP student's supervisor must complete this form if the work-term report contains proprietary information and cannot be released for evaluation. It must be submitted by the deadline for submission of the work-term report.

Student's name: _____ **Program of study:** _____

CO-OP employer: _____

Evaluated by: _____ **Phone no.:** _____

Work term: **1ˢᵗ**____   **2ⁿᵈ**____   **3ʳᵈ**____   **4ᵗʰ**____   **5ᵗʰ**____

Criteria	**E = excellent** **G = good** **F = fair** **U = unsatisfactory**	**Comments**
Presentation • Letter of submittal • Front cover • Title page • Table of contents • List of tables and appendices • Overall appearance	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
Structure • Summary/abstract • Introduction • Conclusions • Recommendations • Appendices • References	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
Literary quality • Grammar • Spelling • Clarity • Style	_____ _____ _____ _____	
Quality of subject matter • Relevance of ideas/solutions presented • Quality of analysis • Understanding and depth of the concepts discussed • Understanding of significance of the work within the employer's environment	_____ _____ _____ _____	

Overall appraisal   Pass _____   Fail _____   Resubmit _____

Signature of evaluator: _____ Date: _____