What is the difference between a co-op and an internship?
Engineering Career Services defines a co-op as a full-time, paid, engineering-focused work experience requiring a minimum commitment of two work terms, usually a semester and a summer. An internship requires a commitment of only a summer term. Students accepting a co-op must receive academic credit; interns generally do not receive credit.

Who is eligible for a co-op?
Any undergraduate student accepted into a department in the College of Engineering and has at least two semesters of school remaining is welcome to register with the ECS office and pursue a co-op. Students in Physics, Computer Sciences and Agricultural Engineering may also participate.

I'm an international students, can I co-op?
Yes. A growing number of employers are actively recruiting F-1 visa holders. Under current INS regulations, any student in the U.S. with an F-1 visa may work up to 364 days under Curricular Practical Training authorization. Any international students working beyond 364 days will lose Optional Practical Training benefits. CPT requires that international students receive credit for co-op and internship assignments. INS regulations are complex, so you should verify, with ECS eligibility to work prior to beginning your search.

May I co-op if I’m on academic probation?
Co-ops and internships are educational experiences that may benefit students on probation. Contact the co-op staff to discuss receiving special permission to participate.

How are health insurance and students loans handled while I’m on co-op?
You must enroll in the one-credit co-op course to remain recognized as a full-time student. By doing so, your student loans will remain deferred and you will also be able to maintain parental or university health insurance. Every student accepting a co-op must register for the one-credit co-op course and complete educational assignments.

May I obtain credit for a co-op working 15-25 hours per week?
No. As defined earlier, a co-op is a full-time work experience. Students are expected to work approximately 40 hours per week, or as authorized overtime by their employer.

How many weeks am I required to work?
Co-op assignments during fall or spring semester must be for a minimum of 15 weeks. Summer co-op and intern assignments must be for a minimum of 12 weeks.

What does it cost me to pursue a co-op or internship?
There is a $20 fee for students to register with the ECS office and pursue a co-op or internship.

Do I pay any tuition while on co-op?
All undergraduate students participating in a co-op are required to enroll and pay for the one-credit co-op course. Students pay for only one credit of tuition. Many companies are providing tuition reimbursement, so be sure to ask if they would cover the cost associated with the one-credit course.

Am I eligible for financial aid while on co-op?
Students are not eligible for student loans or grants while on co-op. Some scholarships may be deferred until your return to campus. Please contact your scholarship official for more details.
May I take additional classes while on co-op?
Students are not allowed to take classes while on co-op since it is a full-time, professional work experience. An exception is made for distance/on-line courses that do not physically meet.

Can I get out of my university housing to participate in a co-op?
Yes. University Housing will allow you to be released from your contract if you choose to leave campus for a co-op. No payment will be required, however you will forfeit your $300 deposit. Contact the Division of University Housing for more information at 608-262-2522.

Do I need to register with ECS to obtain a co-op or internship?
There are many employers who do not come on campus to recruit our students. You may find co-ops or internships through classified ads, the internet or word of mouth. If you find a co-op or internship independently, we will work with you.

What are the requirements to receive a satisfactory grade for a co-op?
We expect each student to bring a high level of professionalism and willingness to learn to each work assignment. A 1500 word written work report is required along with a student evaluation and a supervisor evaluation. After one co-op term a student co-oping locally may elect to have a site visit in lieu of the written work report. Talk to the ECS staff for more information regarding these options.

What opportunities are available for international co-ops or internships?
Many companies who recruit UW-Madison engineering students are multi-national. The co-op office has a binder of companies who have expressed interest in hiring UW-Madison students for work abroad. Another option is to contact IAESTE (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience). IAESTE helps students locate jobs in more than 70 countries and will help you with the required work authorization paperwork. IAESTE’s annual registration deadline is January 1, so plan ahead. UW-Madison’s student chapter of IAESTE is one of the most active in the nation. Find out more information at www.engr.wisc.edu/~iaeste.

How do I decide on which position to accept?
You may be lucky enough to receive several offers. ECS can help you evaluate an offer before accepting it. However, once you accept a position, verbally or in writing, we will expect you to honor that commitment. Failure to honor your commitment will result in the loss of ECS privileges for the following semester and inability to register for cooperative education credit.

May I work in a family owned business?
Students are not eligible for academic credit if they are working in a family owned and managed organization.

What are the basic requirements to obtain credit?
Positions must meet the following: related to a students’ major, competitively paid, full-time, performing engineering work, and under the supervision of an engineer.

How does the 30-credit rule affect co-oping?
The last 30 credits of a degree must be completed in-residence. Students who plan to co-op within their last 30 credits, must receive a waiver from the assistant dean for academic affairs in advance of the assignment. Waivers are obtained through ECS.

How do I register for credit?
Students must submit an electronic notification of the JOB OFFER through myECS, attend a Work Meeting, submit a copy of the employer offer letter/email and submit a copy of a job description (if not found through ECS).