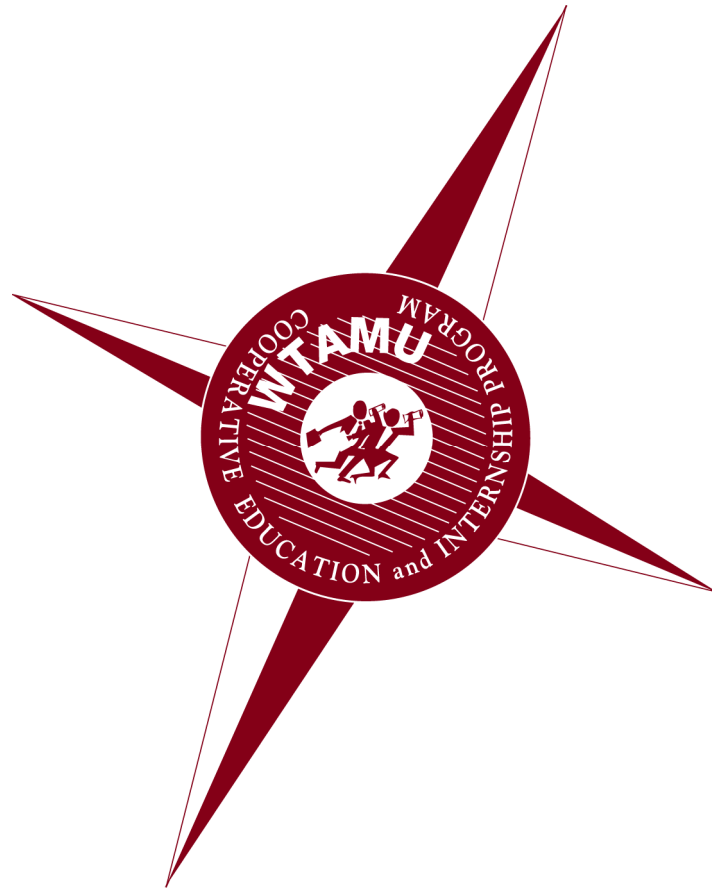


EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM



STUDENT HANDBOOK

**EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
STUDENT HANDBOOK
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More information on the Experiential Education Program can be found at:
<http://www.wtamu.edu/career>

WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK

Dear WTAMU Student:

The object of the Experiential Education Program is to provide you with work experience that supports your academic endeavors or career interests. This is done through Cooperative Education placements (Co-ops) and internships.

Co-ops are paid, multi-semester, related placements, which are eligible for academic credit. Internships, on the other hand, are usually one-semester experiences in which pay and credit may or may not be available. This depends on the placement and the faculty member from your area.

This handbook will be of substantial assistance as you become involved in West Texas A&M University's Experiential Education Program. The handbook has been written to assist you in understanding the responsibilities assumed by Experiential Education students and employers, and for identifying the people on campus who can provide you with assistance.

The program has proved to be an exciting and educationally enriching experience for many former and present WTAMU students. These students have realized many benefits of participation in the program, such as:

- Better identification of career choice
- Career-related experience prior to graduation
- Motivation to learn more from classroom studies as a result of applying theory on the job under the direction of professionals
- Enhanced employability for a full-time job after graduation
- Earnings which may be used to finance a substantial portion of a college education investment
- Academic credit for Co-op experience in most disciplines

As a student, you are important to us. We will treat you as an individual and provide assistance in any way we can. Over the years, we have found that by following proven strategies, we can serve your unique needs and the needs of employers. Therefore, this handbook has been prepared to help you with a well-planned educational experience.

The program calls for an "extra-dimensional commitment" on your part, the employer's part and the university's part. We hope you will be as committed as we are to making the program work for you.

Sincerely,

Steve Sellars, Coordinator
Experiential Education Program

INTRODUCTION

General Description

The Experiential Education Program at West Texas A&M University is a program designed to offer students in participating departments the opportunity to integrate academic study with work experience that is related to their major. This experience can take the form of either a Cooperative Education placement (Co-op) or an internship. It is important to understand the differences between each of these.

Cooperative Education placements are paid, multi-semester, relevant learning experiences. Co-op placements allow job responsibilities to progress and change as you are exposed to different areas and concepts in the classroom, as well as being eligible for academic credit.

Internships are designed to be a one-semester major-related work experience. The placement may or may not be paid and credit is at the discretion of the appropriate faculty member.

Both internships and Co-op placements are effective means of learning more about your chosen career field and improving your full-time job prospects upon graduation.

Experiential Education at West Texas A&M University

The goals of the Experiential Education Program's are to provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience through employment in business, industry, or government agencies. The benefits include:

- Opportunity to apply classroom learning to practical problems encountered on the job;
- Work with professionals in fields they are preparing to enter;
- Provide relevance to the education process and direction in career planning.

The Experiential Education office is a service unit to the academic departments and as such seeks to promote the employment of graduates by leading employers.

Eligibility

Undergraduate students must have completed 30 semester credit hours, have a minimum overall GPA of 2.5, be currently enrolled in West Texas A&M University, and have the approval of the department head. Graduate students must have a minimum overall GPA of 3.0. The students must maintain the above GPAs in order to continue participation in the program. Transfer students must meet the above requirements and have completed at least one full semester at WT. Students who are not U.S. citizens must present evidence that they are eligible to work.

Academic Credit for Co-op Placements

During the second semester of work, the student must register for the appropriate course through their major department and pay all applicable tuition and fees. Some academic departments require that the student complete a minimum of two work periods in order to receive academic credit that can be counted towards the degree. A work period is defined as Fall, Spring, or the entire Summer.

Failure to complete two work periods will result in no credit being allowed on the degree plan unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by the student's department head.

The individual department will have final approval over all aspects of the Cooperative Education experience. This includes determining the appropriateness of the proposed Co-op work experience, academic work, supervision of the academic portion of the work including site visits, reports, and the assignment of an appropriate grade. The amount and type of credit awarded is determined by the student's major department. Credit will not be granted retroactively.

Academic Credit for Internships

Credit may or may not be available for one-semester internships. It will depend on the position and the appropriate faculty member from your department. At the time of placement, we will review the job description and determine if credit is available.

PROCEDURES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Application Procedures

Students must complete the Experiential Education application, attend an orientation, sign the Statement of Ethics, and submit a current transcript and resume. Attending a workshop on resume writing and viewing an online Professional Development Workshop is also required.

Once these steps are completed, the Experiential Education office will start sending the information out to potential employers. When a match of the applicant and an eligible position is found, documents will be forwarded to the student's department for approval. Once the approval is obtained, the student is eligible to start work.

THE EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION COMMITMENT

Student Responsibility

By filling out the Experiential Education Program application, signing the Statement of Ethics, and uploading a resume & transcript into our database, the student has indicated that he/she understands that participating in the Experiential Education Program is a serious commitment, intends to conduct himself/herself in a professional manner, and agrees to abide by the regulations of the employers, including work schedules, and the West Texas A&M University's Experiential Education Program.

When the work semester has commenced, the student is required to complete the semester in the employment position according to the terms, which have been agreed upon for that particular position. If receiving credit, the student and employer will also be required to submit goals and evaluations each semester.

Statement of Ethics

Both intern and co-op students will forfeit their option to receive credit if they violate the Experiential Education Program Statement of Ethics. A copy of this statement is at the end of this handbook.

Employer Responsibility

Academic and career relevance are vital components for the student's work experience. Participating employers are committed to providing professional level training that approximates the level of work that the student can expect after graduation. The impetus to provide professional level training and work experience, for the Experiential Education employer, is the desire to attract well-qualified and educated professionals to their profession upon graduation. While employment after graduation is not guaranteed by the employers, in many instances employment offers are made.

Employers are to develop specific training plans for students. Employers are required to submit position descriptions to the Experiential Education Program office so that the individual departmental faculty advisor can determine the acceptability of the proposed job for granting academic credit.

Employers are encouraged to seek approval of the Experiential Education Faculty Advisor prior to modifying the Experiential Education student's work schedule.

Furthermore, if students are receiving credit, employers are required to evaluate the student's work near the end of each work term. Employers will evaluate the student objectively, based on communicated expectations and the student's performance. A copy of this form must be forwarded to the Experiential Education coordinator who will forward a copy to the Faculty Advisor.

Academic Assignments

The student's Experiential Education Faculty Advisor will make academic assignments at the beginning of the term in which the student is registered. These assignments may include research papers, written reports, assigned readings, oral reports, or other assignments that the Co-op Faculty Advisor may deem appropriate. The assignments are due on the deadlines set by the Co-op Faculty Advisor. The student will also submit a copy of the Student Evaluation of Employer to the Experiential Education office. The student is responsible for ensuring that the employer has forwarded an Employer Evaluation to the university. It is expected that the Employer Evaluations will be discussed by the employer and student.

Grade

The final grade is determined solely by the Faculty Advisor. The grade will be determined by the criteria that the Faculty Advisor communicated to the student when the academic assignments were made. The Faculty Advisor is responsible for submitting the grade to the Registrar's office.

Academic Credit

The amount and type of credit to be awarded for an individual Experiential Education experience will be determined by the student's academic department. The number of credit hours that may be granted will range from one to three hours. Normally, three hours credit is given for two semesters of work; however, the amount and type of credit is solely determined by your academic department.

POLICIES OF THE EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Change of Address and/or Phone Number

Every Experiential Education student is required to notify Experiential Education office and update the Career Services database with changes of address and/or phone number. The student may call the Experiential Education office at (806) 651-2345 to notify the office of these changes. It is extremely important to have correct information so potential employers can contact you about co-op and intern jobs.

Interviewing for a Experiential Education Job

Let the Experiential Education office know if you are contacted for an interview; we want to assist you in any way possible. Review the online interviewing workshop on the Career Services web site. You can also participate in our Mock Interview Program if you feel you need additional work on interviewing. Take advantage of all the resources available to you.

Receiving a Job Offer

Notify the Experiential Education office at once. We need to know every offer and not just every acceptance.

If you have accepted the offer, let us know so we don't continue to refer your classmates for a job that is already filled. If you are receiving credit, we'll provide you with registration information and notify the appropriate Faculty Advisor.

Accepting a Job Offer

Before you accept an offer, make sure you know what the employer expects of you and what you can expect of the employer. Remember, you can always decline an offer.

- If the job description was rather general, ask about specific projects that you might be involved with.
- What is your rate of pay? Some employers pay first-time students a base rate and a higher rate to returning students.
- If you've got to make living arrangements, can they suggest affordable housing in their area? Or can they help to link you up with other students in the area?
- What day do they expect you to start and when you will finish up? Those beginning and ending dates should approximate our semesters. Remember there is a minimum number of semesters you must complete if you are receiving Co-op credit.

Unresolved Problems with Employer

If the student encounters difficulties with the employer, which can't be resolved, the student should contact the Experiential Education Coordinator. The Coordinator will consult with the Faculty Advisor, the employer, and the student in an attempt to resolve the conflict.

Withdrawal / Termination From Co-op

- 1) **STUDENT:** If the student decides to drop the Co-op course and terminate his/her employment, then all of the university rules and regulations regarding the dropping of a course apply as well as the following special rules:
 - a) Consult with the Faculty Advisor or Co-op Coordinator prior to any communication with the employer.
 - b) Write a formal letter of resignation to the employer stating the reasons for the resignation. This letter should be reviewed by the Faculty Advisor or Co-op Coordinator.
- 2) **FACULTY:** The Faculty Advisor, in consultation with his/her department head, and the employer, may terminate the student's participation in the Experiential Education Program at any time.

Completing the Experiential Education Semester

Approximately two weeks prior to the end of the semester, the student will complete an evaluation of the employer and the employer will complete a performance appraisal on the student. Copies of both evaluations should be forwarded to the Experiential Education Coordinator who will in turn forward to the appropriate Faculty Advisor if necessary.

During the evaluation, the employer should indicate whether they desire the student to return for another semester. If this is not done, then the Experiential Education Coordinator will communicate with the employer and determine if an opportunity for the student still exists.

The student should send a letter of appreciation to his/her employer thanking him/her for the opportunity of working at the company.

The student will visit with the Experiential Education Faculty Advisor prior to the end of the work semester to ensure that all obligations have been satisfied so that a grade may be assigned.

The Faculty Advisor will then submit a report to the Experiential Education office to indicate that the student has satisfied all of the requirements for the course and that a grade was assigned. It is understood that the Experiential Education Faculty Advisor is solely responsible for submitting grades to the registrar.

**West Texas A&M University
Experiential Education Program
Statement of Ethics**

1. I will provide accurate information about my academic work and records, including courses taken, grades, positions held, and duties performed.

You can, however, refuse to provide an employer with specific information about any job offers you may have received from other employers. You do not have to name the organizations that have made you internship or co-op offers, nor do you have to provide specific information about what wage rates you've discussed with those organizations. Instead, you can give broad responses to such questions, naming types of employers—*"I've interviewed with employers in the retail industry"*—and offering wage ranges rather than specific dollar amounts—*"The wage offers I've received have been in the \$10 to \$12 per hour."* Incidentally, it's in your best interest to research wage rates within certain majors. This information for past WT interns is on our web site- <http://wtcareer/coop/Co-op%20Wages.htm>

2. I will interview genuinely.

That means interviewing only with employers you are sincerely interested in working for and whose eligibility requirements you meet. "Practice" interviewing is misleading to employers—wasting both their time and money—and prevents sincerely interested candidates from using those interview slots.

3. I will adhere to schedules.

Appear for all interviews, on campus and elsewhere, unless unforeseeable events prevent you from doing so. And, if you can't make the interview because of an unforeseeable event, notify your career center or the employer at the earliest possible moment.

4. I will not keep employers hanging.

Communicate your acceptance or refusal of an internship or co-op position offer to employers as promptly as possible, so they can notify other candidates that they are still being considered or that the position is filled.

5. I will accept intern or co-op position offers in good faith.

When you accept an internship or co-op position, you should have every intention of honoring that commitment. Accepting an offer only as a precautionary measure is misleading to the employer and may restrict opportunities for others who are genuinely interested in that employer.

6. I will withdraw from the recruiting process when my job search is completed.

If you accept an internship or co-op position, notify your career center and withdraw from the recruiting process immediately. Let employers that are actively considering you for a job know that you are now out of the running.

By informing everyone that you've got a job or are headed to graduate school, you not only get the chance to brag but also to help your friends who are trying to get on interview schedules or who are being considered for positions.

7. I will obtain the career information I need to make an informed choice about my future.

It's up to you to acquire the information about internship and co-op opportunities, organizations, and any other information that might influence your decisions about an employing organization. The WTAMU Experiential Education program can assist in finding much of this information.

8. I will complete all requirements to be involved in the WTAMU Experiential Education Program. These include filling out an application, web registration and submitting a current transcript and resume. Attending a resume writing workshop and viewing an online Professional Development Workshop is also required.

9. I authorize investigation of all statements contained in my resume. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of facts shall be sufficient cause for cancellation or consideration for employment and dismissal from the company's or agency's service if I have been employed.

10. I understand my employment may be contingent on a physical exam and/or drug screening.

11. I understand that I may be required to provide evidence of my ability to work in the U.S. without sponsorship beyond a curricular or optional practical training period.

12. I understand my employment as a Co-op student is part of an educational program, and I am not entitled to unemployment benefits according to the Texas Unemployment Act Section 201.069.

13. I will comply with the Experiential Education policies and procedures as outlined in the Experiential Education Program Student Handbook.

Release of Records / Acceptance of Terms

I accept the above conditions for my participation in the Experiential Education Program. *Not following the above terms may result in forfeiting the option of receiving academic credit for my co-op or internship experience. It may also result in being barred from participating in the program.*

I authorize the Experiential Education Office to release any and all information to actual and potential employers as it is necessary for my participation in the program. Issues not covered in this agreement will be decided by the Co-op Coordinator in conjunction with the student, employer and faculty advisor.

Student Signature

Date

Student ID #

Experiential Education Staff Signature

Date