Best practices for a successful work term

1. **Before day 1: provide background information to the student**
   Prior to the student's first day at work, forward any materials, websites, past project summaries or other information that will help the student prepare.

2. **Arrange a ‘welcome orientation’**
   Orientation could include a department walk through, an overview of your organizational chart, and a staff-wide introductory email. You could also arrange one-on-one meetings between the student and their co-workers. This can help students better understand their roles and how they fit into your workplace.

3. **Assign a buddy or mentor who is not the student’s direct supervisor**
   This can help students settle in and set them up with a contact to go to with questions beyond their usual job duties.

4. **Rotate students through multiple departments**
   This will give students the opportunity to build a holistic understanding of company operations.

5. **Encourage students to invite senior staff to lunch or coffee**
   This will enhance students’ connection to the company and provide opportunities for them to learn about your organization’s culture.

6. **Include students during staff meetings and training sessions**
   This can give co-op students the opportunity to practice meeting etiquette and develop a greater understanding of departmental responsibilities. This can also help them learn new skills.

7. **In large organizations, coordinate ‘co-op student coffee socials’**
   Encourage students to share ideas, experiences, protocols and training. Students appreciate being connected to other students, even if just for moral support.

8. **Facilitate meetings between students and professional contacts**
   This can help co-op students explore their career goals and the ways these goals align with your industry.

9. **Involve current students in the hiring of the next co-op student**
   Give co-op students the opportunity to learn how your organization screens and interviews applicants, and reduce work for the hiring manager. You could also ask students to write a training manual for future co-op students or to support the onboarding process.

10. **Include students in extracurricular and social activities**
    This could include inviting students to social events, team and staff meetings and lunch and learns, or connecting students to relevant associations or distribution lists. You'll increase co-op students’ familiarity, comfort and sense of commitment to coworkers and to your organization.

Have you hired an international student? Help the student feel at home by checking in regularly. Discuss your organization’s work culture, communication styles and expectations, as these may be different from what the student has experiences in their own culture.
Taking the time to cover important information during the first week can help co-op students settle in—for many students, this may be their first time in this type of work environment. By the end of the first week, you should share the following information with the co-op student:

- **Basic workplace contact information**
  - The workplace address, mailing address and phone number
  - The supervisor’s name, title, email and phone number(s)
  - The student’s position title, email address and work phone number

- **Expectations for hours of work**
  - Work start and end times as well as break times
  - Overtime policies and procedures
  - Policies for medical and other appointments
  - Whom to contact if the student will be late or absent

- **Orientation to the work environment**
  - Location of and access to restrooms
  - Location of eating and break areas, as well as workplace policies
  - Where to find supplies and how to request them
  - Where to access reference materials and manuals as well as updates and notices
  - Information about commuting, including bike and car parking facilities
  - Workplace access details (e.g., access hours, keys, security passes)

- **Computer access and policies**
  - WiFi and network access details
  - Which computers and software should be used
  - How to use network printers, scanners and copiers
  - What distribution lists to sign up for or use
  - Any relevant computer systems policies

- **Health, safety and wellbeing policies and procedures**
  - First aid protocols, including the name of the first aid attendant and how to contact them
  - Locations of first aid kits, fire extinguishers and emergency exits
  - How to report safety concerns, accidents, harassment or discrimination
  - How to sign out equipment and find safety information on materials
  - How to safely operate equipment and use personal protective equipment

- **Payroll and human resources details**
  - The student and employer should complete any necessary HR paperwork, including confidentiality agreements if applicable
  - The student should understand how the pay process works, including the method and frequency

- **Workplace policies and procedures**
  - How to use the voicemail and calendar system, as well as appropriate greetings and signatures
  - Policies around phone use (e.g., long distance calls, use of personal devices, whether personal calls/texts are permitted)
  - Details about the organizational structure and communication channels
  - Which meetings to attend
  - Travel policies, if applicable
  - Whether and from whom, the student can expect administrative assistance

*Note: As an employer, you must meet the minimum employment standards established by your province. Students are subject to CPP and income tax deductions and typically receive vacation pay (4%) in lieu of vacation days. Benefits are generally consistent with your company policy.*