

**HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Final Work Term Report Options & Guide to Reflection

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Work Term Reports: A Guide to Reflection

Your Co-operative Education work term is an experiential opportunity in which you, as the student, are able to use your classroom knowledge to engage in a direct “hands-on” experience. One of the key components to understanding how your Co-op work term has transformed your learning is through reflection. The co-op term report is one of the ways that cooperative education facilitates reflection.

As a self-directed and process-oriented learning tool, reflection has many benefits. It can help you make sense of your experiences from a variety of perspectives including your competency development, career management, academic knowledge, values, assumptions and perceptions. Reflection is a foundation for critical thinking – a skill that employers are looking for.

The co-op report can enhance your reflection and learning through one, two, or all three of the following ways (Harvey et al, 2011??):

1. Academic Learning – considering the hands-on, technical or theoretical aspects of your work;
2. Skill Development – giving you an opportunity to master skills (e.g. a specific way of communicating) and reflective ability; and/or
3. Self-Knowledge – helping you build a greater understanding of your personal attributes and how you and your competencies can fit into the greater community.

This reflection can take place through a variety of formats and can focus on many different aspects of your work term experience such as a technical process you worked on, application of academic theory, your personal experience, and many more. The format and focus of your report depends on your program requirements.

In all cases, though, good co-op reports will follow a reflective cycle to show that you have examined the issues, experiences or outcomes from a variety of perspectives. The sample questions below go through the reflective cycle and are meant to help you think about what to consider and present in your report. Not all questions/aspects will be relevant for all report topics and some questions conceptually overlap; they are meant as a guide only. We encourage you to first identify what the main purpose/topic of the report is as the purpose will guide you in deciding which questions are most relevant.

Reflective Process



Based on Gibb's Reflective Cycle in *Learning by Doing* (1998)

Description
Using specific and relevant detail, give a concise description of your experience (i.e. what you are reflecting on).
Consider any of the following questions that you think are relevant to the experience/task/project:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did you work in terms of location, organization, and specific department? • What were your role and responsibilities? • What was the project, task or issue your report is focusing on? • What competencies did you focus on? • What were the goals that you set and did you achieve them? • Did you work with others? In what capacity?
<i>This part is not analytical, it is descriptive, it describes an experience</i>

Perception
Consider any of the following questions that you think are relevant to the work term experience/task/project:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel and what did you think prior to, during, and after the experience? • How did you react during the experience? • What did you enjoy about the experience? What did you like the least? • Were you surprised, anxious, excited, frustrated, or disappointed by anything? • Did the experience unfold according to your expectations?
<i>This part is not analytical, it is descriptive, it describes personal feelings and thoughts and actions (reactions)</i>

Evaluation

Consider any of the following questions that you think are **relevant** to the work term experience/task/project:

- What went well during the experience (what worked)?
- What went badly during the experience (what didn't work)?
- How did the experience end? Was the experience complete (was there a resolution) or incomplete?
- Were you able to develop the competencies that you'd hoped?
- What choices did you have to make and what were the consequences?
- Did your current experience resemble anything you had experienced before?
- What qualities do you admire in your team mates and/or supervisor?

*This part is **not** analytical, it makes positive and/or negative judgements about an experience*

If a lot of different things happened during the experience, focus on one or two, try to choose the things that are most important, most relevant or most representative of the experience

Analysis

Consider any of the following that you think is **relevant**:

- Reconsider the things that went well and/or badly and write **why** you think they went well and/or badly (causes of action). What internal and external factors influenced the outcome? What was your role and/or what choices did you make that made an impact?
- Reconsider the things that went well and/or badly and write **what you think this led to** (consequences of action).
- Think about what could have been done to have avoided these negative consequences/how this positive action could have been further improved
- Think about your contribution to the experience and say how useful it was and why it was useful (did a previous experience help you? can you compare it to a previous experience?).
- If you were unable to contribute to the experience say why.
- Think about other people present during the experience and try to assess whether their reactions were similar or different to yours. Try to say why they were the same or different.
- What connections and linkages did you see between your initial goals, competency development, and final outcomes?
- What impact did other perspectives or people have on your experience?
- What impact did your work have on other perspectives? What impact does this work and/or organization have on the world/community: e.g. impact on client's, customers, the public, stakeholders, etc.? How does this affect the way you see the world, the organization, or the work?
- When reflecting on your experience, were there any missing facts or information? If so, what significance did this have and how did you resolve this?
- How were your beliefs acknowledged, questioned or challenged through this experience?
- How was your academic learning applied in the workplace?
- How did your enjoyment or lack thereof impact your experience and the outcome?

This part is analytical, it does not describe, it tries to explain the causes and consequences of things that happened, it asks questions like why, so what, and what if?

Conclusion

Reconsider the experience and answer any of the following questions that you think are **relevant**:

- What should or could you have done differently?
- What stopped you from doing this?
- What did you learn about yourself during the experience (positive and/or negative)?
- What did you learn about your current knowledge or level of practice (strengths and weaknesses)?
- Did the experience achieve any of your learning goals or meet any of your required competencies?
- Did you use multiple perspectives (e.g. various stakeholders' or theoretical perspectives)? How did you ensure that you had supporting evidence for your arguments and that your reasoning was logical? What forms of analysis did you use and why?
- How has this co-op influenced your career direction/path/plans?
- How has this experience changed your perception of being a professional and performance as an emerging professional?
- How are the competencies you developed transferable to other work or learning situations?
- Were there interesting reflections regarding the relationship between your expectations, the outcomes, and your conclusions?
- Have your beliefs been acknowledged, changed or confirmed through this experience?
- How will your workplace learning contribute to your academic knowledge and personal/career development?

This part sums up what you replaced from the experience

Try to be specific about what you replaced or realised about yourself, think about specific details (avoid making general statements like "I didn't have the adequate knowledge")

Action Plan

Consider any of the following questions that you think are **relevant** to making a plan:

- What do you need to do in order to be better prepared to face this experience in future?
- Even if the experience was positive and you did well, in which areas can you improve?
- What are the priority areas that need to be developed?
- What are the competencies that you still need to develop?
- What specific steps do you need to take in order to achieve these improvements?
- If you pursue work in this field, what further technical/academic knowledge would you need? What else will you need? (e.g. professional development, experiences, professional accreditation, specific/expanded network of contacts)
- What advice would you give to someone else embarking on a similar project or starting a similar role?

*This part is **not** analytical, it states actions designed to improve knowledge, ability, experience etc., think about the justification for and value of actions in the action plan (i.e. why you plan to do something)*

Try to think about specific things you plan to do (e.g. state specific training you may need to undergo, books or policy guidelines you will need to read, resources you may need to use and become proficient in etc.)

Traditional Co-op Report

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- Academic Learning (hands-on, meaningful and substantial work with linkages to your academic program);
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- Self-Knowledge (building an understanding of your personal attributes, developing a capacity to contribute and effect change within your community, and gaining a broader world view).

This reflection can also take place through a variety of formats and can focus on many different aspects of your work term experience such as:

- An experiment or technical process
- Academic theory application
- Professional development
- Personal motivation
- Understanding organizational structures and their effectiveness
- Handling new situations outside your comfort zone or perceived level of ability
- And many more

It is also important to consider how reflection is taking place, that is, In-Action (during the work term); On-Action (after the work term or the particular project/experience is complete); and For-Action (how does the experience apply moving forward).

As a self-directed and process-oriented learning tool, reflection has many benefits. It is something that you can do on an on-going basis and at any time. It brings tacit knowledge about practice and experience to the surface, which promotes further consideration of assumptions and perceptions, and builds key skills such as critical thinking – a skill that employers are looking for.

Description of Assignment – Traditional Co-op Report:

This assignment will help you summarize your experience during your work term and should include reflections on the following sections:

Introduction

- History of organization
- Work environment
- Role within organization and team members

Main Body

- Examples of detailed tasks and projects
- Reflections on your learning outcomes over the term (competency development). Be sure to reflect on both core competencies and discipline specific competencies (in reference to academic studies). If you had an international work term or are an international student, we also encourage you to reflect on your intercultural competency development during the work term.

Conclusion

- Reflect on/discuss how this work term relates to your long-term co-op and career goals. Share what you have discovered about possible careers that may or may not be a good fit for you.
- Make recommendations for future co-op students who may work at this organization.

Article

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Description of Assignment – Media Article:

This is an opportunity for you to write an article. You can choose a topic that relates to any aspect of your work – indirectly or directly - but it must focus on something that you learned during the term. It should follow media (eg magazine or newspaper) formatting & content features, including appropriate length, a strong headline, and appropriate style (eg narrative, promotional, or persuasive). The article must also include at least one graphic such as a photo. In addition to the article itself, you are required to identify the article’s purpose, distribution (what media), and target audience and explain how and why you made the decisions you did. *For example, if your article is about how leadership styles can influence worker motivation and satisfaction, why did you choose that topic and submit it to the National Geographic magazine? Does that magazine target the audience you hope would read it?* Lastly, comment on how this assignment is or will be helpful to your competency development.

The article’s length will depend on the media (eg publication, journal, online site) chosen. Ensure you provide references for your graphic(s). The additional write-up must be at least 2 pages.

Blog Post

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Description of Assignment - Blog Post:

Blogs are a popular way to disseminate information on the Internet. They can provide commentary on a particular subject, promote ideas or brands, or be a personal narrative like a diary. Becoming a good blogger is a good way to develop your communication competencies.

Write 8-10 posts of approximately 250 words each during the course of your work term. You can combine text, images, and links to other blogs or web pages related to your topic. You must include: information about the organization; your role and tasks within the organization and the work environment to put your blog into context. Your blogs must show a progression of competency development and depth of analysis as you reflect on your academic learning, skills development and/or self-knowledge. Later blogs should include your own conclusions as well as recommendations for future action.

The blog can be in the format/platform/software of your choice but there are various factors to consider. Research your options and consider which option would best support your professional competency development.

Career Action Plan

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Description of Assignment - Career Action Plan:

A Career Action Plan will help you summarize your academic learning, skills that you have developed and your own personal attributes. It will also help you think about steps that you might take to prepare for a career after graduation. In developing a 3 to 5 year Plan you should consider:

- **Career Goals and Assessments:** Describe your overall career goals and what you believe are at least 2 ways to achieve these goals. Describe how the competencies and experiences you have will help you reach long-term career goals by completing a gap analysis (in relation to your education, experience, skills, and contacts). Assess your strengths and areas needing development and outline your action steps to develop these such as additional Co-op work terms, courses, pro-d, professional membership(s), stepping-stone jobs, volunteering, networking, etc.
- **Career Exploration:** List the types of qualifications / certifications / professional memberships you need for your career after graduation (additional training, certification or experiences). Outline options where you can attain these qualifications, the cost of completing these and the benefits you will receive from this additional learning. Complete a market analysis of your career(s) of interest: labour market, salary, description of duties, current postings, requirements to get into

the field etc.

- **Action Plan:** Using the SMART model (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and within a specific Timeframe) to develop a timeline and action plan for achieving your short and long-term goals. Be specific as to where and when you plan to take these steps. Think of steps that you can take immediately and which need a longer time frame. Also think about direct and indirect steps that you've already taken towards achieving your career goals.

In addition to the requirements listed above, two to three of the following should also be completed and included in your Career Action Plan:

Informational Interviews:

Conduct Informational Interviews with at least 3 people who are doing work related to your career interest. At least 2 of the people you interview must be outside your immediate network. In 200-300 words per interview describe information from each info interview and discuss how it applies to your current goals – how it may guide your career ideas, steps, etc. In 200 - 300 words compare the interviews – trends/similarities/differences/competing information. Include a list of questions you asked during each interview.

LinkedIn Account:

Create a solid LinkedIn account. Must include: Professional photo, at least 10 professional contacts, Summary, Experience - including coop - & work & volunteer if applicable, at least 5 skills, Education, following some relevant organizations, and a written description – at least 300 words - about how you plan to strategically use LinkedIn to advance your career - can include some steps you've already done.

Engagement In and Identification of Networking Opportunities:

Research and describe at least 3 organized networking opportunities, for example, through organizations, events, pro-d opportunities, conferences, associations (how will networking take place at these). Be specific re. how networking will take place, is membership necessary? Is there an entry fee? If so what does it cost? Once you have identified three networking opportunities, engage in at least two of these opportunities and describe the outcomes in 200-300 words.

Updated Resume/Cover Letter For Two Different Jobs:

Find two different job postings of interest (one could be a career job, and the other could be a more immediate entry level job). Develop a different resume and cover letter for each job. Tailor your documents towards what they're looking for in each job posting. In the description of your coop(s) and the rest of the documents, make sure that you highlight *related* technical skills & experience and transferrable skills & experience – and keep the descriptions relevant to the reader.

Forum Theatre

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Description of Assignment - Forum Theatre:

The purpose of forum theatre is to create an engaging group environment that encourages audience interaction (even debate) and explores solutions to a problem. For your co-op assignment present a theatrical presentation that relates to an issue that you encountered during your co-op work term. Stimulate audience participation throughout your play to encourage discussion, interactive role-playing and sharing experiences. After the play has been performed, encourage audience members to re-enact the characters' actions in a different way. Forum theatre can generate a community of practice, in which experiences and ideas are rehearsed and shared, generating both solidarity and a sense of empowerment, as well as further developing problem solving competence.

Your play should be approximately 5 minutes in length with a subsequent discussion/re-enactment. Plan for the session to be about 45 minutes. In terms of logistics, discuss your topic with your co-op coordinator at least a month before your co-op term is finished so that you can choose an appropriate audience, setting, and timing. Within a week after the theatre, you must also submit a minimum 2 page summary, including what issue was explored, the enacted scenario, what kinds of audience engagement strategies you planned, which audience engagement strategies you used, whether you had any surprises or ‘ah-ah’ moments as a result of the forum theatre, and tips to yourself or others about using forum theatre as a learning tool.

Journal

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Description of Assignment - Journal:

Being accountable for your work and actions is an important part of your learning and development as a professional. Keeping track of your daily tasks, questions, accomplishments or other factors can help you trace the impact of your work to project, organizational, and learning outcomes. Documenting can create a resource manual. You can also track indirect aspects of your placements such as observations at the workplace or with current events that may impact the placement, project or organization. In some professions such as engineering, work journals are key part of professional practice and therefore journaling requirements may be specific to the needs of those professional requirements.

In general, journals may be in paper or computer-based. Students should enter in their journals at least twice a week, if not daily. Journals should be presented to Coordinators during the site visit and at the end of the co-op term. There should be evidence of reflective analysis, versus simple descriptions. Answering simple reflective questions may guide your writing: what, so what, and now what?

Letter to a Future Co-op Student

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Description of Assignment - Letter to A Future Co-op Student:

This assignment requires that you describe and reflect on your workplace experience with an external audience in mind (versus for yourself). Write a letter to a future co-op student to prepare them for a co-op placement in your organization. Include a description of the position, the organization, and how the position contributes to the organization’s mandate. Also, reflect on your experiences with an emphasis on your learning (professional, academic, and self). Share what you have gained through your experiences including highlights and “ah-ha” moments. It may be helpful to explain what your first weeks were like and how you felt, and then compare this to how you felt when you were finishing your term. Include advice on how another student might prepare for this workplace and their tasks, how to navigate the workplace culture, how to make the most of the time there, and how to overcome some of the challenges you faced. Remember to balance honesty with professional integrity!

Your letter should be a minimum of 10 pages – double-spaced. You can also include photos to illustrate your points but do not replace textual descriptions or reflections with photos. The format can be casual – like a letter, or it can include formal features like the use of headings and graphics. Creativity is encouraged!

Literature Review

Your Co-operative Education work term is an experiential opportunity in which you, as the student, are able to use your classroom knowledge to engage in a direct “hands-on” experience. One of the key components to understanding how your Co-op work term has transformed your learning is through reflection.

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Description of Assignment - Literature Review:

For some students, academic research can seem too theory based without a direct link to practice or action. This assignment is meant to help you bring academic research to life! The work that you engaged in during your co-op term likely relates to much research in your academic discipline so with this assignment, you will find some. Identify two publications that relate to your co-op term within the research areas of your academic discipline. The research may relate directly to the key function of your role (for example, if you worked in ecological restoration, then you may find a publication on restoration methodology) or it may relate indirectly to the work (for example an article on employee motivation between different sized organizations).

In your submission, summarize your work, summarize those publications, and share your analysis and reflections on how the two relate. In terms of your analysis and reflection, consider whether your work supported, expanded, or negated the information from the publication? Did the research findings change the way you understand your work process or impact? Include how you chose the publications – what process do you follow to identify the publications. For example, did you search based on a process or did you remember a topic of interest from class? Finally, consider and explain whether this analysis your competency development (core and discipline-specific).

In terms of format, this report should be professionally presented. The use of headings, a legible font, good grammar, and clear writing are important. Referencing is required but you can choose the referencing guide of your choice, as long as you use it consistently. The report should be a minimum of 8 pages (not including a title page, table of contents, or bibliography).

Interactive Online Discussion

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- Self-Knowledge (building an understanding of your personal attributes, developing a capacity to contribute and effect change within your community, and gaining a broader world view).

This reflection can also take place through a variety of formats and can focus on many different aspects of your work term experience such as:

- An experiment or technical process
- Academic theory application
- Professional development
- Personal motivation
- Understanding organizational structures and their effectiveness
- Handling new situations outside your comfort zone or perceived level of ability
- And many more

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Description of Assignment - Online Interactive Discussion:

Online discussions have many advantages for students. It creates a community of learners, which enables you to see that often you are not alone in the kinds of experiences you are having and can see how these kinds of experiences can manifest in different workplaces. By sharing experiences, you create synergies that can lead to greater reflection and problem solving - reflection for action.

For this assignment, you will participate in interactive discussion with other Co-op students and your co-op coordinator, and sometimes faculty members, through a moderated site, such as Coursespaces or SharePoint. You will create a weekly online post in response to questions or topics set forth by the site facilitator (typically your co-op coordinator). Topics can relate to work placement details (tasks, location, organizational structure, culture, and more); learning goals, challenges and successes; indirect learning experiences such as networking, training and certifications and applicability to academic courses and career planning. You are required to comment weekly on the topic presented as well as on at least one student peers' posts – that is at least 75 words per week.

You are encouraged to be honest in your posts, while remaining professional. If you have a serious issue to discuss, please contact your coordinator.

Online Portfolio

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Description of Assignment - Online Portfolio:

Portfolios are useful when seeking employment, applying to post-secondary programs, applying for awards, or simply reflecting on your professional journey. This assignment will help you summarize your knowledge, skills and experiences, and showcase these in an online portfolio.

Using an online tool such as Mahara, Wix or Google Docs, develop a professional electronic portfolio that outlines your competencies, work samples and career goals. Different than a resume, this will contain many pages and showcases the variety of your accomplishments both in and out of school. You should include outcomes of your work such as things you’ve created (reports, articles, maps, photos taken, policy briefs, etc) and external references about you or your work (eg articles, reference letters certificates of achievement, transcript), versus just explaining the work you were involved in. Remember, your audience includes future interviewers, professional presentations or graduate school applications so be extra mindful of spelling, grammar, visual presentation and content.

Include in your electronic portfolio:

- Introduction – overview/profile of self, including your strengths/competencies and professional goals
- Table of contents – index to guide readers through your portfolio
- Updated resume
- Between 10 & 20 samples of professional outcomes – remember they can come from a variety of sources including school, work, volunteering, and extra-curricular activities. Always seek permission if you do not 'own' the document (eg you must get permission to submit a work report and never include confidential items.)

Orientation Package for Next Co-op Student

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Description of Assignment - Orientation Package:

Thinking about your first few weeks on the job, are there things that you wish you knew (or didn't)? In this assignment, you will create an orientation/information package for the next co-op student or new employee. Doing this will require you to describe and reflect on your experiences, as well as provide solutions to enhance employee orientation, motivation and productivity.

The resource you create can be in hardcopy (eg binder) or could be soft copy (eg a website).. A required component will be a description of your position, your organization, and your training/orientation process. You are encouraged to compile external resources for your orientation package but you are expected to create/write many components yourself. You must include an annotated Table of Contents that lists each component and why you deemed it important to include. You should also comment on how your academic courses helped or hindered your experience, and provide recommendation on helpful courses or skill development opportunities. You should also consider how you would approach your next job, assuming that they do not have a package like this; perhaps some components will be things that you plan to use in your next job.

Your written component should equate to a minimum of 8 pages with at least 4 external resources. You must reference your external sources.

Photo Essay

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Description of Assignment - Photo Essay:

Telling a story through images versus through text can provide a completely different narrative and expose different perspectives on your learning experience. It can also help you develop your creativity and photographic skills!

For this assignment, use photos to tell the story of your Co-op learning experience or to unpack a specific issue, process, or competency relevant to your work term. You can use your own photos, others' photos, or other graphics to express your thoughts. You must provide photo credits or other references. You can also use explanatory notes to compliment or explain the significance of the image used. Be creative!

You must preface the photo essay with an introduction, including information about the organization and your role, as well as why you chose the photo essay and how the activity was useful (or not). The preface must be a minimum of 2 pages and the essay should include a minimum of 12 images. It can be submitted in hard copy or electronic format.

Presentation

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Description of Assignment - Presentation:

Being able to present information orally in an engaging way is a transferable skill, relevant in many occupations and organizations. This option enables you to practice this skill, but also includes a document that supplements the oral presentation— either electronic (like a slideshow) or hard copy (like a poster or executive summary). The document should present your information in a creative, professional, and comprehensive way, but should not completely duplicate the content of your oral presentation. The format will depend on the presentation topic. The oral presentation will typically be 10-15 minutes long plus 5 minutes for questions. It may occur in a class, a campus event, or a workplace setting.

Speak to your Co-op Coordinator to clarify an appropriate topic, location and timing for your presentation. You may also determine that you should speak to your co-op employer.

Video

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Description of Assignment - Video:

Videos can be an effective communication medium used in many contexts and for many purposes. It is a great way to use creativity in expressing your co-op learning outcomes, and can be a piece to add to your professional portfolio. Your video may even be used for co-op promotional or educational uses.

For this assignment, produce a 2-5 minute edited video that represents your co-op learning experience or a certain aspect of it (eg an issue, process, project, or competency). Ensure your video has a title. In addition, provide a short written description (2 pages) including information about the organization and your role, as well as why you chose the video and how developing it was useful (or not).

Be prepared to present your video if your Co-op program requires oral presentations upon your return to campus.

You may be required to submit a video release form so your work may be published on the university's website.

Workshop

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Description of Assignment - Workshop:

Developing and facilitating a workshop is a skill that is relevant in many workplaces. Additionally, to the skill development, facilitating a workshop will enhance your expertise in the content of the workshop.

For this assignment, create an instructional workshop on a skill or topic that relates to your co-op work term. Perhaps there was a key skill or process that is important for workplace success that you could teach others, or perhaps there is a topic that you feel people should learn more about. To prepare, you should also consider different methods of workshop delivery and which would be most effective and relevant to your area of study.

The length of the workshop should be approximately 45 minutes long, including discussion and Q&A. It can be delivered either in the workplace or back on campus. Speak to your coordinator during the site visit to discuss your plans and ideas.

After the workshop, you must submit a minimum 2-page summary that outlines the workshop topic, your approach, and what you learned from the process – personally, professionally, and academically.