



Geography Co-op Work Term Report Guidelines

Overview

A co-op term report is an original submission inspired by your co-op experience. The intent is to provide a forum for you to express your learning and to support you in developing your relevant geography competencies – after all, this is part of your education!

In most cases, your report is marked by a Geography faculty member who does not know details about your co-op term, is interested in your understanding of Geography and has expectations for your academic professionalism. Reports are a mandatory part of passing your co-op term and they are a required component of accredited co-operative education programs.

Therefore, it should be completed to the highest academic standards in terms of structure, format and intent. It should also include references if applicable. The report must be analytical, which means that it articulates your analysis (e.g. explores the why, the how, your recommendations, etc). It should not merely be an overview of general impressions, a description of what you've done, or a literature review.

The Geography department's faculty members and Geography Co-op Coordinator revised the Geography work term report guidelines and processes in June 2016. Some of the intended benefits of these new guidelines include different approaches for each co-op term, which will help you to achieve higher learning as you progress through your co-op program and degree. Different guidelines for each report will also minimize redundancy if you complete consecutive co-op terms with the same employer. The oral presentation format also enables you to practice public speaking and to present your learning to the Geography community.

You will complete different co-op term assignments depending on which co-op or work experience term you are doing.

- **Co-op Term #1:** Reflective Report - students address prescribed questions in a report.
- **Co-op Term #2:** Oral Presentation – The oral presentation includes an overview of the co-op experience and how the experience related to geography. It will be scheduled as part of a Geography event, relevant class or during a Co-op and Career event.
- **Co-op Term #3:** 'Geography in Action' – this is an advanced analytical report, assessed by a geography faculty member, whereby students analyze their co-op experiences through the perspectives of their geography studies.

- **Optional Additional Co-op Terms:** Sometimes students choose to do additional co-op terms. If you are in an optional 4th or 5th co-op term, you can complete another format as agreed with your Co-op Coordinator. For example, one previous student created a career action plan as their work term assignment.

Students on a co-op term will receive more information on these reports. If you would like to learn more or have any questions, please contact the Geography Co-op Coordinator - ssco@uvic.ca.

Co-op Term #1 - REFLECTIVE REPORT GUIDELINES

The Co-op term report is an original document inspired by your co-operative education experience. The intent is to provide a forum for you to express your learning. It is a mandatory element for a passing grade for your cooperative education term.

Your report should be written to the highest academic standards in terms of structure, format and content. It should reference sources of information following a consistent referencing style. The report must articulate your analysis (eg explores the why, the how, your recommendations, etc). It should **not** merely be an overview of general impressions or description of what you've done. While quality is more important than quantity, the co-op work term report should be no less than 4 pages of text.

Your report will be assessed on presentation (clearly organized, 12pt font), quality of writing, and depth of analysis. Reports deemed weak (Poor grammar, spelling mistakes, point form, missing sections, and lack of analysis) will not result in a passing grade so will be returned to you for editing.

Content

Section I – Introduction (1-2 pages)

Provide a summary of this work term in a way that will inform the reader about the organization and the job (the context): provide a description of the company and its mandate, describe your role within that context and outline your primary duties and responsibilities.

Section II – Reflection and Analysis (3-5 pages)

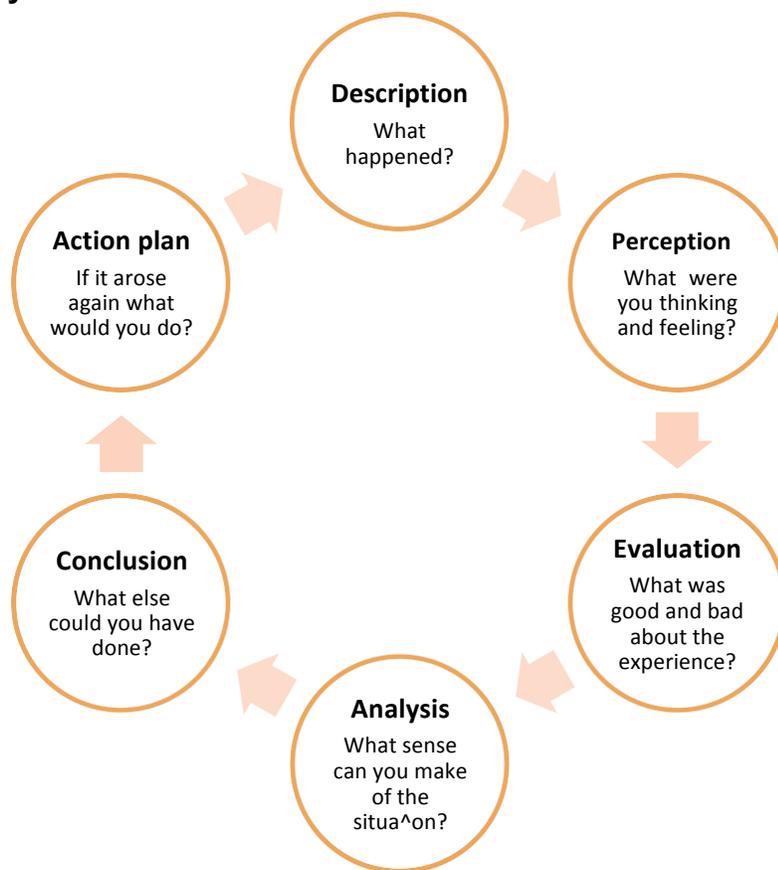
Reflection can revolve around many aspects of your work term experience such as academic theory application, competency development, personal motivation and interests, understanding of organizational & society structures, and much more.

Therefore, you should choose a particular experience within your placement to

reflect on, such a specific project you worked on or a task you performed. Much has happened in 3-4 months, you cannot reflect on it all!

Use the reflective cycle as a guide to writing your report. All stages in the cycle should be considered although the information does not need to be presented in a specific way. Most questions are meant to prompt your thinking, but they aren't an exclusive list. All geography students must reflect on the relevance of the work to their geography studies. (See the following underlined questions.)

Reflective Cycle



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

Description – *This is a concise description of what aspect of your experience you are reflecting on using specific and relevant detail.*

Consider the following questions that you think are relevant:

- What was the project, task or issue your report is focusing on?
- What were your role and responsibilities?

- What were your goals and did you achieve them? These can include competency development, academic learning, and project/task goals. As geography student, what did you want to learn or experience at this work place? What did you hope to take away from this experience? Why?
- Did you work with others? In what capacity?

Perception --- *This describes feelings, thoughts and actions (reactions).*

Consider the following questions that you think are relevant:

- How did you feel and what did you think prior to, during, and after the experience? Were you surprised, anxious, excited, frustrated, or disappointed by anything?
- How did you react during the experience?
- What did you enjoy about the experience? What did you like the least?

Evaluation --- *This stage makes judgements about an experience, including all the people, organizations, and processes involved. Focus on aspects that are most important or most relevant to the experience and the learning.*

Consider the following questions:

- What went well (what worked)? What didn't?
- How did the experience end? Was it complete or incomplete?

Analysis --- *This stage explains the causes and consequences of things that happened, it answers questions like why and so what?*

Consider the following questions that you think are relevant:

- WHY:
 - How did your geography studies help you? How did they hinder you? Were there specific Geography courses/concepts that were especially relevant? Which ones and why? (This is where academic references should be used.)
 - Why do you think things went well and/or badly? What internal and external factors influenced the outcome? What was your role and/or what choices did you make? 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?

- SO WHAT:
 - What impact did the work have on others (people, organization, society)? How does this affect the way you see the world, the organization, or the work?
 - What larger geography questions arise out of your experience?
 - How have your perspectives on the work, the organization, the world, your geography degree or yourself changed? How were your beliefs acknowledged, questioned or challenged through this experience?
 - How did your enjoyment or lack thereof impact your experience and the outcome?

Conclusion – *This part sums up what you learned from the experience. Be specific; avoid making general statements like “I didn’t have adequate knowledge.”*

Questions to consider:

- How are you a better geographer now that you have had this experience? What skills or knowledge areas did you develop that are relevant to geographers?
- What did you learn about yourself during the experience (positive and/or negative)? How did your competencies develop? Have your beliefs been acknowledged, changed or confirmed through this experience?
- How has this co-op influenced your career direction/path/plans?

Action Plan – *This is the ‘now what?’ This part describes actions designed to improve knowledge, ability, experience etc. Think about specific things you should 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.) and why you would plan to do that.*

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

- What are the competencies that you still need to develop? In what priority?
- What do you need to do in order to be *better* prepared to face this kind of experience in future? 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?
- Are there any courses or specialization areas that you will pursue because of this experience?

Co-op Term #2 - ORAL PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Being able to present information in a concise, engaging way is a transferable skill, relevant in many occupations and organizations. This option enables you to further develop your communication competence, both orally and in writing.

Topic

How was your Co-op experience a good professional development and learning experience for a Geography student? How did you bring value to your work as a geography student? In answering these questions, you should address

- the job description, organization, and possibly your location
- how your life will evolve (or not) as a result of this position – personally, socially, professionally, and academically (learning outcomes)
- geography courses, theories, practices, etc

This could be an extensive topic, so you may not be able to cover it all. It will be important for you to decide on key aspects to focus on.

Format & Style

The oral presentation should be between 4--5 minutes. There will be also be 5 minutes for questions. Your presentation should include a visual aid, like PowerPoint, with 3--5 slides. Your visual aid should complement your oral presentation using photos, graphics, and key themes. It should not be a source of information, it should emphasize or illustrate information that you are speaking about.

Normally your oral presentation will be scheduled during a Geography Colloquium session in the term succeeding your co-op term. Colloquium is a forum where academics present/learn about research and other learning activities. They are scheduled on Fridays, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Your presentation will be assessed on delivery, including clarity of speech and effectiveness of the visual aid, as well as content. You should show evidence of reflective analysis, not just provide an overview or description. See the Term #1 guidelines to review the reflective cycle.

Co-op Term #3 – ‘GEOGRAPHY IN ACTION’ WORK TERM REPORT GUIDELINES

For *some* students, academic learning and co-op learning seems like two distinct activities, where course work focuses on theory and co-op placements focus on practice. This assignment is meant to help you relate your academic studies to your co-op terms. You have studied various theories, tools, techniques and perspectives

that influence the way you approach problems and create solutions. So, think about some aspect of your co-op placement and reflect on how it relates to geography.

Format and Style

Follow one of the standard guides for research papers such as the Guide for Writing Research Papers, American Psychological Association or the American Sociological Association. You must reference sources that you refer to using a consistent citation format.

Your report should be well written, employ good grammar and syntax, and be professional in format and tone. An excellent report will go beyond a simple summary and will make connections to a larger context both for you personally and to Geography. While quality should be the focus, your report should be between 6 and 10 pages, with 1.5 spacing.

Content

Section I --- Description of Work Term

Provide a summary of this work term in a way that will inform your faculty marker and fellow co-op students about the organization and the job. Provide a description of the company and its mandate, describe your role within that context and outline your primary duties and responsibilities.

Section II – Analysis of Geography in Action

Tell us how your understanding of at least three aspects of geography has been enhanced, challenged, or remained unchanged through this co-op experience. Think about how your learning has evolved through your 3 co-op terms and degree program activities. In what specific ways did your co-op work terms bring geography material to life, push it further, or outright contradict it? Specific questions to consider:

- Were there specific Geography courses that were especially helpful to you? Were there any surprises between what was covered in the class versus what you observed in the workplace?
- What do you think that your geography studies were missing to prepare you for this work? When you think over all your co-op terms, are there skills or content that you feel should have been covered?
- What larger geography questions arise out of the work or the subject matter of the work?