



**School of Environmental &
Natural Resource Sciences**

Frost Campus | Fleming College

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Co-operative Education Student Manual

1.0 Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	3
3.0 Responsibilities	3
4.0 Professionalism	5
5.0 Evaluation.....	5
6.0 Health & Safety.....	5
7.0 Helping You Get Prepared for Co-op	6
8.0 Contact Information.....	9

1.0 Introduction

The Sustainable Agriculture Co-op is intended to give students experience with real world organizations engaged in farming activity. It provides a practical, hands-on opportunity to apply knowledge and skills obtained in the program.

The placement is at least 580 hours (approximately 16 weeks) and takes place from the end of April until the end of August. The location of the placement is up to the student, provided it meets the criteria outlined, and is reviewed by the Program Coordinator, the Co-operative Education & Placement Officer, or the Program Technician.

The co-op course costs approximately \$558.00. Students will receive a Fee Notification letter from Admissions. Co-op fees are to cover administration, tracking, and monitoring progress of co-op work terms. All additional expenses incurred during the co-op are the student's responsibility (i.e. lodging, transportation, food, clothing, criminal records check, etc.).

Co-op wages may be negotiable and are established between the student and the employer.

It is strongly recommended that students get started on finding and securing a placement early, in order to get a suitable location. Any questions on your work description should be discussed with the Program Coordinator, the Co-operative Education & Placement Officer, or the Program Technician, prior to accepting the co-op.

2.0 Co-op Criteria

The co-op is a paid position; therefore it is the employer's responsibility to provide appropriate WSIB and liability insurance coverage for the duration of the student's placement.

All co-op placements must meet the following criteria:

- Must be reviewed by the Program Coordinator, the Co-operative Education & Placement Officer, or the Program Technician as a suitable learning environment
- The student must be engaged in relevant learning, instead of merely observing
- Student performance and attendance is monitored by the employer and reported at the end of the placement
- The student will be assigned a direct on-site supervisor that will provide professional mentorship and learning opportunities

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Abide by Fleming College's policies, procedures, and code of conduct
- Know and comply with the employer's policies and regulations (Confidentiality, Freedom of Information, Codes of Ethics or Conduct)
- Accrue the required number of co-op hours in the work place (travel time is not included)

- Provide the employer with accurate and appropriate information regarding qualifications and interests
- Actively engage in the activities of the co-op with a professional and positive attitude
- Attend employer orientations or sessions designed to familiarize the student with the organization
- Achieve a minimum final rating of a “pass” on each performance measure
- Attend all placement interviews and orientation seminars prior to the placement
- Accept that some employers will require students to work non-traditional hours (afternoons, evenings, & weekends)

3.2 Employer Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the employer to:

- Be informed and adhere to Fleming College’s co-op policies and procedures
- Comply with all Provincial and Federal Freedom of Information, Human Rights, and Employment Legislation
- Provide orientation, supervision and training for students
- Provide productive, relevant work experiences
- Maintain contact with the Co-operative Education & Placement Officer concerning any problems or changes
- Complete mid-term and final performance evaluations
- Provide an experienced member of the organization who can supervise the student, and provide them with mentorship
- Inform Fleming College of any concerns with the student including failure to meet their learning goals and learning outcomes

3.3 Supervisor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

- Help transition the student from an education environment to a work environment
- Provide daily supervision, mentoring, and monitoring of student progress
- Facilitate student orientation to specific routines, policies, procedures, practices, guidelines and protocols
- Consider the health and safety of the student when planning and suggesting placement learning experiences
- Facilitate the student’s learning through supervision, teaching and gradually increasing appropriate independence in the work setting
- Provide exposure to a variety of industry specific tasks
- Participate in the student’s ongoing evaluation by:
 - Providing ongoing constructive feedback
 - Participating in the evaluation of the student by providing input and support documentation

3.4 College Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Fleming College to:

- Inform students and employers of required policies and procedures
- Maintain and enhance relationships with new and existing employers
- Provide career training, personal and professional development seminars and resources to enhance students' on-going employability
- Provide administrative support for the recruitment process (i.e. assist employers and students with job postings, interview scheduling, interview facilities, etc.)
- Maintain contact (via site visits, email, or phone) with students and employers during the co-op
- Provide advice and support to students and employers if difficulties arise during the co-op
- Comply with all Provincial and Federal Freedom of Information, Human Rights, and Employment Legislation

4.0 Professionalism

Students enrolled in the co-op program are representing Fleming College, and are expected to demonstrate professionalism, communicate clearly and effectively, and develop harmonious working relationships. Students are expected to respect and appreciate diversity and human rights. Unprofessional conduct may adversely affect any future opportunities for other students at a particular organization.

A positive attitude will help maximize the learning opportunity and the overall co-op experience. Students are expected to arrive at their placement on time, be prepared, and ready to engage. Students must dress appropriately, including the necessary personal protective equipment, and come with the basic hand tools needed to do the job (unless provided by the employer).

5.0 Evaluation

There are four main components to the evaluation process:

- a) Employer evaluation
- b) Student evaluation
- c) Completion of the required total hours. Provide a copy of the Record of Employment, or the Attendance Journal, signed by the employer
- d) Assessment of the learning outcomes and competencies

6.0 Health & Safety

Safety in the workplace is governed by the Occupational Health & Safety Act. Details concerning the regulations are available at College libraries, and from members of the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee members at the College or at the placement workplace.

6.1 Employer Responsibilities

- To have a Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee with workers and management represented when 20 or more people are employed. Sec 9-2-a

- To provide information, instruction and supervision to protect the health of the worker. Sec 25-2-a
- To ensure that equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided. Sec 25-1-a
- To take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker. Sec 25-2-h
- To carry out such training programs for workers, supervisors, and committee members as may be prescribed. Sec 26-1-1

6.2 Worker Responsibilities

- To work in compliance with the ACT and its regulations. Sec 28-1-a
- To use or wear the equipment, protective devices, or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn. Sec 28-1-b
- To report to the employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger himself or herself or another worker. Sec 28-1-c
- To report to the employer any contravention of the Act or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows. Sec 28-1-d

6.3 Worker Rights

- To refuse unsafe work. Sec 4-3-5
- To know of exposure to hazardous products or conditions. Sec 43-5¹

Note: The College's policies and procedures with respect to co-op placement are consistent with standards and legislation around Human Rights, Employment Equity, Harassment & Discrimination and Freedom of Information. Students in co-op placements are covered by these policies.

7.0 Helping You Get Prepared for Co-op

To help you get prepared for your co-op experience, we asked the SAG Class of 2015 a couple questions. Here is how they answered:

What went well on your co-op? Why?

- Working with fellow classmates was quite advantageous and contributed to a better on-farm sense of community (this from a student who did co-op on a farm with 2 fellow students).
- Living off farm. On rain days or general bad conditions days, you will most likely not be working.
- Good time management and organization at my farm and lots of valuable learning opportunities!
- My farm offered a diversity of experiences which I really enjoyed and found beneficial to my learning.
- I loved being outside in nature.

- I had management responsibilities at my farm. I found that to be a really rich and rewarding part of my co-op.
- I learned “what not to do” in many instances. I think this is valuable.
- My farmer made an honest effort to make the experience educational.
- There was good team work and cooperation on the farm.
- One on one learning with the right farmer can be a very rich learning experience!!!
- Focused on intern interests if the relationship is good.
- Independent projects on my farm were a big part of my learning.
- I found my co-op to be a good education about lifestyle.

What did not go well on your co-op? Why?

- The condition of the rental house was not good.
- We did not have good access to shopping/market/town for food and laundry.
- Expectations of long working hours.
- Insufficient monetary compensation.
- Poor conflict resolutions skills of my farmer negatively impacted my co-op experience.
- I felt isolated from my family, culture, society.
- There was a lack of farm business transparency at my farm. I wished I could know more about aspects of the farm operations.
- I worked on a farm where there was no commitment to education and poor time management.
- My first placement was at a farm where the farmers had, in my opinion, mislead me about the farm business and the amount of time they themselves actually dedicated to work vs. how much time they expected their interns to dedicate.
- There was a significant lack of personal time and space on the farm I worked on. I found this extremely challenging.
- As time went on at my co-op I found that I became a babysitter to their kids. This was not “expected” but the living arrangements made it very difficult for me to avoid (ie. I was living in their house with them).
- I found my moral compass challenged by certain situations I encountered on my farm.

What questions would you encourage future students to ask potential co-op hosts BEFORE they agree to work on a particular farm? What recommendations would you give to future students as they prepare for co-op?

Workload

1. You should have a written agreement with your co-op host about the hours worked/week. The agreement should state clearly the compensation for overtime.
2. The agreement should indicate how hours are logged.

Safety and Safety Protocols

1. You need to have a clear understanding of what safety training and what safety gear you will be provided with.
2. You should understand what safety protocols exist for the farm operation.

Other Protocols/Discussion points

1. Illness protocol
2. Injury protocol
3. Severance protocol (if you need to leave your co-op)
4. Lost or broken tools/equipment
5. Poor weather protocol
6. Compensation for the use of personal vehicle and/or equipment.

Living Arrangements

1. If you are going to a farm that provides “room and board” you will want to tour the accommodations so you have a clear understanding of the living conditions (eg. will you have your own bedroom? will you share a kitchen with your farmers and/or with other interns? etc.)
2. You will want to know how far it is to town and what transportation to town is available (if you do not have your own vehicle and will live on farm).
3. Ask about availability of internet, cable, phone service if you are living on-farm.
4. Ask about whether or not you would be allowed pets, friends, family to visit/stay with you sometimes.

Learning Opportunities

1. Will you have the opportunity to participate in workshops, learning days, events (eg. CRAFT learning days).
2. How much financial transparency they are willing to share with you.
3. Will they talk to you about their business entity designation and management structure.
4. What farm connections do they have...ideally you co-op with a really well connected farmer as this expands the learning opportunities available to you.
5. Are there opportunities for co-op student to undertake independent project(s) on farm.
6. What farm networks exist in the area (especially young/starting farmers).

Roles and Responsibilities

1. What farm and non-farm related roles are interns expected to fill.
2. Who will you report to?
3. What role does the farmer have in daily routine/how much time does she/he spend working alongside the co-op student.
4. Does role of co-op student differ from that of “hired hand”.
5. How often are meetings held? Are there opportunities to receive feedback and/or express concern for both parties?
6. How are tasks divided and delegated?

Miscellaneous

1. Is there an opportunity for you to spend 1 – 2 days trial days at the farm in February/March?
2. Can they provide references from previous employees/students?
3. What future hiring potential exists at the farm?
4. Will they allow you to take photos while on farm?
5. What is the water access in the field?

8.0 Contact Information

Fleming College, School of Environmental & Natural Resource Sciences
Frost Campus, 200 Albert St. S., Lindsay, ON K9V 5E6
Phone: (705) 324-9144 Toll Free: 1-866-353-6464 Fax: (705) 878-9501

Paula Anderson, Program Coordinator

Phone: (705) 324-9144 ext. 3020 Email: paula.anderson@flemingcollege.ca

Rick Cornelissen, Program Technician

Phone: (705) 324-9144 ext. 3019 Email: rick.cornelissen@flemingcollege.ca

Anne Torwesten, Co-operative Education & Placement Officer

Phone: (705) 324-9144 ext. 3030 Email: anne.torwesten@flemingcollege.ca