

## THE CO-OP PAPER & PROJECT GUIDELINES

All Antioch College students are required to write a paper or develop a project that demonstrates and evaluates learning during each co-op period. Examples of co-op papers are on file for you to review. Writing a co-op paper is easier if you keep a daily journal of your impressions and experiences. Each co-op experience builds upon previous learning experiences. Writing co-op papers is actually a process that focuses your thinking about the experience.

Antioch aims to prepare students to live responsibly and effectively in a complex world. Since 1921, Antioch has used cooperative education to enable students to live in environments that differ from the academic setting and to broaden their understanding of the world in which they live. Nine co-op learning outcomes have been developed from many conversations involving students, faculty and staff. At least some of your educational objectives were created through referencing these objectives. Suggestions are included below about where and how they might fit into your co-op paper or project.

The paper should be analytical rather than descriptive. It should: 1) clearly document and communicate what you learned; 2) show evidence of thoughtfulness about your learning; and 3) be carefully prepared. Choose a style and format that best allows you to critically examine your learning through co-op. Papers must meet the standards of written work at Antioch and be between 6 and 8 pages in length. Spell check and proofread your paper before giving it to your co-op adviser. You may take it to the Writing Center for feedback. When you hand in your paper, schedule a meeting with your adviser and allow at least two days for him or her to read and make comments on it. The first page of your paper should include your name, the semester and year worked and your co-op employer.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR CO-OP PAPER CONTENT

Below are some topics to consider when documenting and evaluating your experience.

**I. Individual Growth and Learning:** This section of your paper could include discussions about the following co-op learning outcomes: 3) Survival and life skills, 6) Personal growth, 7) Connections and Networking; and 9) Having meaningful experiences.

**A. Educational Goals:** Discuss the educational goals and whether or not you achieved them. Were they realistic? How did you deal with them? Were there any surprises?

**B. Adjusting:** How did you handle personal issues such as budgeting money, making friends, relating to a new community or culture, or relating to people outside of your own age group? Do you wish you had done some things differently? If so, how? What advice would you give to other students about to go on co-op?

**C. Choices:** How has this co-op experience helped you make choices concerning your academic major, courses you plan to take, or your career? How did your classes help prepare you for this co-op position? What links among your co-op, classes, and community involvement can you document?

**II. Learning from the Job and the Workplace:** People's motivations and understanding of themselves in the workplace differ. The meaning they derive from work also differs. Please reflect on what you learned through observing your co-workers. This section of your paper could include discussions about the following co-op learning outcomes: 1) Orientation to the world of work and service, and 5) Praxis.

**A. Placement and Preparation:** What were your hopes regarding the job? What did you learn how to do? What were your first impressions of the people on the job? How did these change? What information do you think future students should have in planning for this co-op? Did you encounter any difficulties? If so, how did you overcome them?

**B. The Workplace:** How is the job environment organized? What are the chains of authority, or hierarchies? What are your observations on authority, hierarchy, and responsibility? What are the values of the workplace? Comment on any issues of note, such as safety, politics, or improvements that might be made.

**C. Work and Society:** What roles in society do the employer and the worker in this workplace play? How does the workplace relate to the community in which it is located? Are the reasons for working and the meaning of work different for women or men, for older or younger workers, for those of different racial and ethnic groups, for workers in positions of greater or lesser authority, for you as a student?

**D. Ethics:** What ethical issues arose in this work setting? What did you do?

**III. Learning from the Place:** Antioch students live and work in several places that may differ in size; region; and ethnic, cultural, racial or class structure. The communities in which you lived and worked may significantly influence your co-op learning. This section of your paper could include discussions about the following co-op learning outcomes: 2) Travel and exploration of the world, 4) Cross cultural experiences and learning, and 8) Learning other communities.

**The Communities:** In what kinds of neighborhoods did you live and work? Who lived there and why? Describe any unusual or significant events and discuss their meaning and importance. How has the place changed during the past several years? What influences are causing change there?

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Since growth can only be evaluated based upon where you began, you should also be self-critical, explaining the areas in which you may still need further growth or skill development. What did it all mean to you? Why? What were the pivotal moments or events during the experience? What decisions have you made as a result of this experience? What might you like to explore in your future classes or co-ops? Has this experience influenced how you view your classes this semester? What questions do you have?

### **THE PROJECT ALTERNATIVE**

Please discuss your co-op project idea with your co-op adviser. The following are examples that have been successful in the past.

- a website about your experience that allows others to provide comments and feedback.
- a photo presentation which is open to the community with time for discussion and questions.
- a musical composition and performance.
- a play, performed or written only.
- an analytic photo journal with prints and text.
- a series of poems based on the experience and the environment.
- a series of paintings with descriptive prose relating the pieces to your learning.

- a video or written zine documenting and evaluating your co-op learning.