

# ***Co-operative Education & Career Services (CECS)***

## **Feasibility Study**

### ***Purpose***

In keeping with the *Guidelines for Academic Program Reviews at the University of Waterloo, June 2004* and *Procedures for Establishing New Undergraduate Programs at the University of Waterloo (UW), September 2007*, CECS feasibility studies are conducted to assess expected changes in the supply of students in a program or plan, the employability of those students who will be admitted to the proposed program or plan as well as the employment demand, or the potential for shifts in demand, for students with the skills being taught by the proposed program/plan. The feasibility study also allows CECS to assess the lead time anticipated to develop appropriate job opportunities for the projected supply of students as well as what, if any, additional resources may be needed to undertake and maintain the necessary job development.

### ***Protocol***

- Feasibility studies are conducted in conjunction with the development of new or evolving co-op plans or programs as well as when significant changes in curriculum or any course realignments may affect the employability of co-op students.
- An initial discussion between the Faculty/Department sponsor and CECS representative determines the necessary extent, depending on the nature of the proposal, of the feasibility study.
- CECS representative manages the overall feasibility study process including establishing the lead times necessary to complete the study and implement the proposal. The template checklist suggests the parties responsible for gathering and compiling the necessary information.
- The feasibility study is a collaboration of the proposal sponsor and CECS and the interests of each party are considered equally.

### ***Guiding Principles***

- ❖ Feasibility studies are conducted to ensure the viability and longevity of co-op plans for all stakeholders: students, employers, faculty and CECS.
- ❖ A feasibility study will only be conducted when the need has been confirmed by the Faculty and CECS.
- ❖ Feasibility studies are not intended to be an obstacle or onerous to complete but will involve the degree of due diligence commensurate with the scope of the initiative being proposed.
- ❖ Feasibility studies are completed in a timely fashion and regular updates on the status of the study are provided to all applicable stakeholders.

### ***Steps and Deliverables***

1. Initial meeting between Faculty/Department (sponsor) and CECS to determine the necessary components of this feasibility study.
2. CECS representative completes and submits a study timeline to the proposal sponsor.
3. Study principals complete their respective components concurrently with the development of the proposal itself.
4. CECS delivers a *Draft Feasibility Study* to sponsor for discussion
5. CECS delivers *Final Feasibility Study* to sponsor for implementation

## **Study Checklist**

The following list of components is considered when conducting a feasibility study. Some components may be required for all studies while others may vary from study to study depending on the nature of the proposal.

### **PREFACE**

- Name of proposal
  - New program or plan
  - Amended program/plan including name of former program/plan
  - Suggested start date of the new program/plan
  
- Proposal sponsors
  - Primary/secondary faculty contact(s)
  - Primary/secondary CECS contact(s)
  - Other
  
- Executive Summary

### **TIMELINES / RESOURCES**

- Timelines
  - Initial investigation – how much time will be needed to complete the study?
  - Job development - how much time does CECS anticipate will be necessary to develop the number of jobs needed to maintain the proposal at steady state?
  
- Resource implications for CECS
  - Staffing - will CECS need to recruit additional staff (e.g., co-ordinators, co-op advisors, etc.) to implement and manage the proposal at steady state
  - Budget – what, if any, projected increase in budget allotment results from the proposal

### **PROPOSAL SPECIFICS**

- Proposal objective and rationale
  - What are the educational goals of the proposal?
  - What is/are its contribution(s) to the learning objectives of the degree?
  - Rationale for renaming/restructuring an existing co-op program or plan?
  
- Context / Competition
  - How does the proposed program/plan fit with other programs/plans offered within or external to the faculty? (faculty sponsor)
  - Are there co-op programs of a similar nature offered at UW or by other post-secondary institutions that may/will provide competition to this proposed program/plan? (CECS representative)

Societal Goals / Employability Expectations:

- What are the dimensions of the societal need for students/graduates (e.g., socio-cultural, economic, scientific, technological etc.)?
- What is the geographic scope of the societal need (e.g., local, regional, provincial, national)?
- What is the evidence of employment demand for co-op students and graduates of the proposed program (i.e., economic sectors, and the level of support from business and industry in those sectors to employ students in appropriate positions, in which the Faculty expects its students to secure employment)?
- Industry/labour analysis (e.g., trends, growth estimates, job market prospects, potential obstacles to growth, etc.).
- Is the proposed program/plan congruent with current regulatory requirements of the profession (as appropriate) as well as the current accreditation requirements of the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education [CAFCE]?

Admission / enrollment strategy

- Requirements for admission (e.g., grades, special courses, certain academic level, etc.)
- Enrollment target – (e.g., what is the enrollment target for this particular program, will enrollment increase or not change at all, what will be the net effect and nature of the change, etc.?)

PROPOSAL METRICS

Enrollment numbers

- Number of students enrolled in program at present (amended programs/plans only)
- Incremental increase, if applicable, in the number of students expected and the rate at which those students will be added to the program
- Enrollment at steady state (including the timing needed to reach steady state)
- Enrollment mix (percentage domestic to international students)

Co-op Sequence

- Number of work terms proposed
- Co-op sequence(s) / effective date

|  | F | W | S | F | W | S | F | W | S | F | W | S | F | W | S |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Current employment data for students in the program/plan (amended plans only)

- What is the percentage employment during last 6 terms (i.e., at all levels)?
- What types of jobs have been secured by current students?
- What is the geographic distribution of employment for current students (i.e., local, regional, provincial, national or international)?
- Other employment-related data?

- Other metrics (as applicable and available)
  - # of large employers with confirmed interest in employing students
  - # of medium-sized employers with confirmed interest in employing students
  - # of small employers with confirmed interest in employing students
  - # domestic employers
  - # international employers
  - # existing employers versus # new employers required
  - preferred length of work term by employers surveyed
  - types of positions available from employers surveyed
  - other
  
- Employer feedback (survey responses, about the program and the students who will be available from this program, as applicable)

### CECS RECOMMENDATION

- Supportable
- Supportable with conditions
  - Conditions necessary for proposal to be supportable
- Not supportable
- Recommendation rationale
- Endorsements from Faculty sponsor(s) and CECS representative(s) (i.e., dates and signatures)