

Flexible pathways: know your options for your first work term

You have many great ways to [find your first co-op job](#). Each path can lead to a valuable work experience and co-op credit.

[WaterlooWorks \(WW\) job boards](#) – All boards are equally valuable; explore broadly!

- **[Full-Cycle Service](#)**: Pre-approved for co-op and follows the co-op hiring cycle (apply, interview, match). Find jobs that align with your sequence.
- **[Employer–Student Direct](#)**: Pre-approved for co-op but follows employer timelines (not always in sync with your work term). Flexible timing — apply directly!
- **[Contract, Part-Time & Volunteer](#)**: Includes roles that could count through an Arrange Own Job (AOJ). Great for building skills and gaining experience.

Arrange your own job (AOJ) – Found something outside WaterlooWorks/ via the External Job Boards?

- Talk to your Co-op Advisor and **submit your job offer for approval** through the [AOJ process](#).
- Review the “[Tips for talking to employers about hiring and supporting the cost of a co-op student](#)” section.
- Download the “[Letter of introduction](#)” to help explain the benefits of hiring a Waterloo co-op student.
- Explore **funding opportunities** — ENV students can consider the [ECO Canada Student Work Placement Program](#), which provides **\$5,000–\$7,000** in funding for organizations to hire students in environment-related roles.
- Use [JADA](#) (Job Aggregator Digital Assistant) – it pulls opportunities from sites like **ECO Canada**.
- [Unpaid or underpaid roles](#) may still count! Volunteer experiences can qualify — check out the [Volunteer Fair](#).

Tip: Use both **WaterlooWorks** and **external job boards** to maximize your success. Many opportunities can count as co-op!

Standard vs. flexible work terms – First Work Term = lots of flexibility!

- You need at least 3 [Standard work terms](#) that meet co-op criteria (full time, at least 12 weeks, 420+ hours, etc.).
- Your remaining work terms can be [Flexible work terms](#) (at least 8 weeks, min 280 hours, etc.); e.g. WE Accelerate, short term roles, part-time positions. Check the [co-op requirements](#) for your program.
- Explore broadly and build your co-op journey your way!

WE Accelerate & E Co-op – Alternative co-op work term options

- [Waterloo Experience \(WE\) Accelerate](#): Designed for **1st work term students**! Build skills and earn a **flexible co-op credit**. Tip: Opt in first — you can always opt out if you find a standard co-op job!
- [Enterprise Co-op](#) (E Co-op): Start your own venture and earn a standard co-op credit — open to all co-op students!

What if I still don't find a job? – Don't panic – there's support and flexibility built in!

- Know your Co-op Degree Requirements – talk to your Academic Advisor to confirm what applies to your program.
- **Co-op programs typically allow one buffer term** — meaning you can usually graduate with **one fewer completed work term** than your prescribed sequence.
- Use that term strategically to build skills, volunteer, or prep for your next job search.
- We're here to help! [Meet with your Co-op advisor](#) for AOJ or [talk to a Career Advisor](#) about résumé /job search/interview.

Key takeaways

- Explore all options at once — they're all valid!
- Combine WaterlooWorks + external searches to maximize your chances.
- First work term = maximum flexibility
- Reach out early for co-op, résumé, and interview support.