Department of Chemical Engineering
Work Term Report FAQ

Normally, undergraduate students in the Chemical Engineering program are required to write three technical work term reports, as described in the WKRPT 200/300/400 course outline.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Chemical Engineering students who need to submit a co-op work term report based on the Winter 2020 to Fall 2021 co-op terms may submit either a technical work term report or a reflective work term report.

See the WKRPT 200/300/400: Work Term Report Course Outline posted on LEARN for more information about reflective work term reports.

Note that we are currently planning for the Fall 2021 work term to be the last one for this pandemic accommodation.

Where can I get help with my writing skills?
The University of Waterloo Writing and Communication Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines.

Writing and Communication Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/resources/waterloo-writing-works. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations and papers are also available.

Please note that writing specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not proof-read or edit for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

Online appointments (using video and audio) are available to students on co-op. Simply request an online appointment when you book an appointment.

What is the report deadline?
Work term reports should be submitted on LEARN at the beginning of the academic term in which they are due. See LEARN for details.

May I have an extension to the report deadline?
You may have an extension only under significant circumstances. Speak with your instructor for more information.

Where do I submit?
These reports should be submitted on LEARN. See LEARN for details.

Who should the cover letter be addressed to?
The cover letter should be addressed to the interim chair of the department, Professor Marc Aucoin.
What terms are work term reports due?
Work term reports count as courses, and they are coded WKRPT 200, 300 and 400. You must submit three work term reports. Your due dates are dependent upon the co-op stream in which you are enrolled:

- 4-stream students submit a report near the beginning of the 2B, 3A and 4A academic terms.
- 8-stream students submit a report near the beginning of the 3A, 3B and 4A academic terms.

Can my employer grade my report?
Your work term report must be marked by a faculty member. Chemical engineering does not permit employer-marked reports, except where the employer is appointed as an adjunct faculty member.

I would like to write a report on my current work term, but there is no report due. May I submit it early?
You may not submit your work term report early, but you may write it ahead of schedule and submit it when your work term report is due.

A work term report may be associated with a previous employer, so it does not matter if you move to another company for the following work term.

What are the implications of a failed work term report?
A failed work term report is considered a failed course, therefore:

1. It counts as a failed course under promotion rules. If you have other failed courses, a failed work term report could prevent you from proceeding to your next term. Should you fail a work term report, you are advised to clear that failure as soon as possible.

2. You must clear the failure in order to graduate. You can clear the failure by submitting an acceptable report; the department is flexible in terms of the timing for you to submit this.

I have two failed courses and expect to fail this term’s work term report. What does this mean?
The total number of failed courses matters only when academic promotion decisions are made, which is at the end of each academic term.

If you have two failed courses at the beginning of an academic term and then fail the work report, this does not affect your standing until the end of that term. Note that this may give you an opportunity to clear one failed course before the end of term and keep your fail count at two, which will allow you conditional promotion into the next term.

If your status becomes “MNP” (May Not Proceed) due to three failed courses, then you must reduce the fail course count back to one before you can be promoted.

My term sequencing is unusual due to not working/ exchange/non-degree terms/stream switching/etc. When are my work term reports due?
Your work term reports remain due at the regular deadlines based on the term you are in (see above).

If you are uncertain, check with CHE’s undergrad office. If you do not submit a report when it is due, it will be recorded as a failed course.
If you have switched streams, then you adopt the submission schedule of the stream that you have switched into. If this means that you will miss submitting a report, please contact the department’s undergrad office.

**What does ‘DRNA’ mean?**

DRNA stands for ‘Degree Requirement, Not in Average.’ This code indicates that you must complete the course, but the grade will not be included in your GPA.

**Does the work term report grade affect my average?**

No, the work term report grades are not included in your average. However, the courses are degree requirements. If you fail the course, it contributes to the failed course count. (For promotion decisions, see above).

**What are ‘engineering tools’?**

Put briefly, engineering tools are techniques, systems, software or devices that can be used in engineering analysis, design or implementation. This includes physical tools (e.g., a pipe wrench, a gas chromatograph), software-based tools (e.g., Aspen, Excel, SCADA systems) and techniques or systems (e.g., an environmental management system, the method of factorial experimental design). One way to assess whether something may be a tool is to consider whether it is reusable for a similar application.

**Does my report have to be about the current work term?**

It is usually best to write about a work term and easiest to write about the most recent one; however, this is not a requirement. You can write about a previous work term, describing work that you have not previously submitted a report for, or write a self-directed (research-based) report. Note that only one self-directed report is permitted over the course of your undergraduate degree.

**What should I do if my work term report is confidential?**

If your work term report is confidential, you have the following options:

1. ‘Sanitize’ the data (e.g., rescale into arbitrary units; replace compound names with X, Y, Z, etc.) to mask the confidential aspects and submit the report as usual. Ensure that any embedded data (e.g., tables and figures imported from Excel into Word) are also clean.

2. Indicate that the information is confidential when you submit the report. The marker will treat it as such.

3. Include a signed non-disclosure agreement (NDA) between the company and a CHE faculty member. Check with the CHE office to find out which faculty member is responsible for signing DNAs. The department prefers to use its own NDA.

   Complete the company’s parts of the NDA and submit the NDA with your work term report. The department marker will complete and sign the other part of the NDA before marking.

   If this is not acceptable to your employer, check with the CHE office to find out who is marking confidential reports and complete full NDA before submitting your report.

   After it is marked, the hardcopy report will be returned to you or sent for confidential shredding. Confidential reports are not eligible for awards.

   OR
4. If the options above are unacceptable, you may submit either a report based on a previous work term or a self-directed (research-based) report.

Note: Chemical Engineering does not permit employer-marked work term reports. The only exception is for individuals who are appointed as adjunct faculty members.

**What if I don’t have a suitable topic to write about?**

You can write either a report based on a previous term or a self-directed (research-based) report. Only one self-directed report is permitted over the course of your degree.

Sometimes, this situation can be avoided if you consider the need for a work term report during the work term. For example, if you are running some lab samples, could you run a few more to make a study suitable for a report? Employers understand that you need to write a report. Your supervisor may be able to help you identify a suitable topic.

A self-directed report must involve some analysis. For example, the synthesis of information from different sources or critical analysis of the literature (e.g., in what areas is there consensus/disagreement? what is the potential for the technology? what direction should further work lead in? etc.). In particular, a literature review that simply describes the current literature is not acceptable.

**What is the WKRPT 200/300/400 course calendar description?**

From the 2018-19 Undergraduate Calendar:

“A work-term report presenting in detail a technical project, activity, or analysis engaged by the student normally during the preceding work term. The report is evaluated on the basis of written communication skills and technical proficiency in the subject matter as demonstrated by the report. Work-term reports are required courses for the degree but their grades are not included in the average. However, failed work-term report evaluations may delay a student's progress as indicated in the Examinations and Promotions section of this calendar. Details regarding the evaluation of the work-term reports can be obtained from the student's program advisor.”