Political Science Co-op Work-term Report

Formatting
For formatting, please follow the Faculty of Arts guidelines:
https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/co-op/work-term-report

These guidelines are directed at undergraduate students, so disregard any of the length/content requirements and submission instructions, and just focus on the formatting.

Submission
Once complete, you can email a copy of your work-term report directly to the Graduate Chair for evaluation. There is no grade assigned, rather the milestone is recorded as Credit/No Credit on your transcript.

Your work-term report is due one month after your placement ends.

Work-term Report Requirements
Each co-op student is required to write a **10-12 page (double spaced)** work-term report. Your report should include:

1. 8-10 pages investigating an aspect of your work-term experience from an academic perspective
2. 1-2 pages of reflection on your work-term experience

Political Science guide to your work-term report
A work-term report illustrates your acquired understanding and experience. A good report shows evidence of critical analysis, good organization, clarity, and conciseness. It enables you to practice your skills of presentation, argument, evaluation, and calculation, and provides a permanent record of your work.

Choosing a topic
The Political Science Department sees the co-op work-term report as an opportunity to integrate the learning you do in the classroom with your on-the-job experience. The practical experience you gain during your work-term can nearly always be expected to illuminate the theoretical issues you study in class in a constructive way. Therefore, your work-term report should — wherever possible — make some effort to analyze some aspect of the political circumstances and consequences of your work-term activity in terms of the theories, concepts, and processes you have learned about in class.

Your work-term report must have an identifiable analytic component. A report that compares and evaluates several items or alternatives using various criteria is analytical. A report on a single topic can be analytic if it discusses advantages and disadvantages. The topic should be related to your employer, the line of work undertaken by the organization or business practices employed at their site. You could, for example, evaluate the way that the company implements research & development or wage incentive plans.

A report is unacceptable if it only contains a narrative, if it is simply a users' guide or other documentation, or if you simply summarize your work-term tasks. An analytic report contains **constructive criticism** and contains **conclusions** and **recommendations**. If you have difficulty identifying conclusions, then you likely have insufficient analytic content.

Here are some broad approaches to choosing a topic and questions that can help you focus your report:

Normative or philosophical
A normative approach serves to assess the values or norms of the organization for which you worked. How does the organization you worked for perceive its purpose with respect to the people it is intended to serve? Does it have a concept of the best society -- which it helps to promote -- or does it ignore this aspect of human existence? Is it on the right track, in your judgment, in pursuing that end? Why do you take this point of view?

Policy analytical
A policy analytical approach focuses attention on the particular policies at the centre of your work. Which policy issues emerge from the work you are doing, whether in a government department, the private sector, or a non-governmental organization? What theoretical assumptions or worldviews inform these policies? What are their impacts on society or their implications for the future? How do they compare to similar policies in another country?

Organizational
A final approach is organizational in nature. There may be special organizational features or challenges related to your particular work place that impede the delivery of the product or service your employer offers, or on other aspects of the organization's activity. How best can we understand those challenges and what solutions might be possible? How might your proposed solution be implemented?

In each case, you should be sensitive to concerns about private or confidential information to which you have been exposed during your work-term. Please consult the co-op advisor if you need advice.

Structure
You will be evaluated on your choice of topic, your thesis and argument, your analysis, the quality of the evidence you use to support your argument, your writing style, and the suitability and correctness of references.

Your work-term report is as piece of persuasive writing. It should contain an introduction and a conclusion, an argument, and a thesis. Topics discussed should be clearly laid out in a logical sequence. Sub-heads should be used as place markers and to break up large blocks of text, not as substitutes for transitions between paragraphs or sections. Quotations should be properly formatted with the appropriate references.

Consider reading one of the many available books on writing in the social sciences if you need advice for structuring persuasive writing. We suggest:
- Northey, Tepperman and Albanese. Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing (Social Sciences). 5th ed. Oxford, 2012.

Written expression
The work-term report should be written in clear, correct English. Sentences should be complete, paragraphs should have topic sentences, and sections should flow from one to another in a cohesive analytical narrative. Consider consulting a style guide if you need help writing well. We suggest:
- Williams, Joseph. Style: Toward Clarity and Grace. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Every idea which is not your own should be referenced, whether it is a direct quote or a paraphrase. Choose one citation style and stick to it. Political scientists generally use Modern Language Association (MLA) or Chicago Style. We suggest using a citation manager such as Refworks, Zotero or Mendeley.

You can register for workshops and schedule tutoring appointments at the Writing Centre. An online alternative is the Purdue Online Writing Lab. Have someone proofread your work for spelling and grammar errors as well as clarity. The best proofreader is someone with little or no knowledge of your subject matter, as this allows them to focus on your writing. Consider asking your Dad, your roommate, or a friend in another department. The proofreader should not make substantive changes or corrections (that would be academic dishonesty!) but should point out errors or things they don't understand, so you can correct them.

Plagiarism
Work-term reports must be your own work. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the University's policies on academic integrity and adhere to them. Ignorance of those policies is not an excuse, and violations will be treated with the utmost seriousness.