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Self-Designed Co-op Experience Policy

The Cooperative Education (Co-op) Program is committed to broadening its conception of the co-op experience in response to changes in the world of work. It is understood that a significant number of students hope to use their cooperative work term to explore entrepreneurial opportunities with start-up firms, conduct research related to their majors, become involved in artistic ventures, or experiment with their own ideas. It is also clear that numerous students are interested in proposing a co-op job of their own design. For these reasons, as explained in the Antioch College Curriculum Catalog, by “formal petition to the dean of cooperative education, students may seek approval to substitute one or more cooperative education job(s) with self-selected major-related paid or unpaid internship(s); research appointment(s); or other academically or professionally significant experience(s)” that fulfill their ambitions for learning off-campus.

If a student desires to propose a Self-Designed Co-op Experience, they are required to work with their co-op advisors to develop their plan and to write a formal proposal. Draft proposals must be submitted by the fourth week of the quarter preceding the cooperative work term in question. Final proposals with a signed employer/mentor verification form are due by the seventh week of the term.

The proposal must be in narrative form addressing all of the following points: How the opportunity relates to the student’s immediate academic interests, long-term educational goals, career objectives, previous work experiences, ambitions for skill development, and/or personal needs. Proposals should be approved by the co-op advisor before being submitted to the Dean of Cooperative, Experiential, and International Education.

If the student proposes to be self-employed, involved in research, or engaged in some form of artistic work of their own design, they must identify someone with legitimacy in the proposed field of interest who has agreed to serve as a mentor and provide guidance in planning their co-op. They are required to provide the name, contact information, and signature of the individual in order to verify the mentorship relationship.

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria:

- **A safe, ethical, legal, and supportive working/learning environment** – Is the workplace or study site safe? Will the student be able to adhere to safe, ethical, and legal operating procedures? In this regard, students are informed that employers in the United States are bound by workplace fairness standards as codified in federal and state law and are required to maintain an environment that is free from harassment and other forms of

discrimination as stipulated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

- **Reciprocity** – Will the student commit to work in situations where other people would have legitimate expectations of them, and thus, those individuals would be reasonably expected to offer compensation, training, or other forms of support for the student?
- **Appropriate preparation and clear definition of activities** – Will the student receive appropriate training so that they understand clearly the activities to be performed? Is approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) required for this experience?
- **Adequate supervision** – What kind of oversight will be afforded to ensure that the experience will be rigorous beyond the Work Portfolio course? Will the student be able to communicate sufficiently with colleagues so that they will be successful in their efforts?
- **Thematic Consistency** - If the student will work in different locations with different sets of people, their work should be within a particular field or focused on a consistent purpose throughout the co-op in order to afford them a coherent learning experience.
- **Sustained Engagement** - Will the student be occupied full-time throughout the cooperative work term? Please keep in mind that although most co-op jobs are scheduled for 11 to 12 weeks to meet employer obligations, a minimum of 10 weeks of full-time work (at least 30 hours per week) is required. Students may have more than one employer but must provide verification from all.
- **Performance evaluation** – How will the success of the experience be judged? Are expected levels of performance adequately communicated?