

## **GRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION**

### **SUMMARY OF POLICY**

#### **A. POLICY INTENT AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION**

##### 1. Policy Intent

Graduate cooperative education at NJIT is intended to complement formal classroom study and research activity. Cooperative education experience should provide students with an opportunity to strengthen and develop their problem solving, decision making, teamwork, and communications skills. All policies are intended to be consistent with this philosophy.

##### 2. Initial Participation

Except for NJIT undergraduates in the BS/MS program, other NJIT undergraduates proceeding directly to graduate study within a major relevant to their undergraduate major, and on a conditional basis – as noted below – for NJIT undergraduate alumni who have been away from NJIT less than two years, participants are expected to have completed at least one semester of matriculated full-time or part-time study in a graduate program and have completed all specific bridge and ESL courses prior to participation.

NJIT undergraduate alumni who did not proceed directly into graduate study (and have been away from NJIT for less than two years) may participate in graduate co-operative education in their first semester of graduate study under the following conditions:

- (1) The first semester must include registration in no less than two graduate courses appropriate to the program in addition to the 3 credit co-op course.
- (2) Any undergraduate bridge courses for the program should already have been taken or are being taken with the two graduate courses. Certification as a full-time student in the first semester will be given only if the two graduate courses and co-op registration are maintained throughout the first semester. Requests for withdrawal and continued full-time certification must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies and, where necessary, the Office of Graduate Initiatives.

NJIT undergraduate alumni who have been away from NJIT for two years or more will not be permitted to participate in cooperative education until their second semester. Any exceptions will be at the discretion of the Office of Graduate Studies, Career Development Services, and where necessary, the Office of Global Initiatives.

Students with an unresolved “U” grade on their record from a previous undergraduate or graduate cooperative education course at NJIT will be ineligible for any further participation.

Any student, regardless of degree program or level, must be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward the degree in order to be eligible for participation.

Career Development Services will review each student application to assure that these conditions are met. Grades will be checked at the end of each semester for both cumulative grade point average and last semester grade point average by Career Development Services. A 3.0 or better for both is required for initial or continued participation.

### 3. Participation and Renewal

Students who have not satisfied their financial obligations to NJIT in a timely manner during or after an initial co-op placement will be ineligible for future placements or continuance until their financial obligations are satisfied. There is no requirement or guarantee that an application for initial or continued participation in cooperative education be accepted or approved. Academic performance, professional performance during previous cooperative education periods, international student eligibility, impact on progress toward a degree, adherence to the code of professional conduct at NJIT, financial responsibility, U.S. employment authorization and other factors may be considered in reviewing applications.

### 4. Participation and Assignment Approval

The approval process for initial participation will be determined by Career Development Services based upon university-wide criteria established by the faculty. Students seeking or continuing cooperative education assignments must also secure the permission of their academic advisor for the assignment.

## **B. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

### 1. Doctoral Students

Doctoral students may participate in cooperative education after passing the qualifying exams and attaining an advanced state of progress toward completion of the doctoral degree. Earlier participation may be allowed for those students who demonstrate **insufficient financial resources**. Earlier participation may also be allowed for approved research arrangements developed by NJIT faculty that are directly relevant to dissertation research.

In all circumstances, doctoral students must be making satisfactory progress toward the degree and not have a conflict between current research activities and participation in cooperative education as determined by the dissertation advisor.

Doctoral students may not receive support for research or on-campus employment during the same semester of cooperative education enrollment. Career Development Services staff and the student's advisor must review and approve the proposed cooperative education employment site prior to participation. It is expected that a doctoral student's cooperative education employment will complement their doctoral program progress and completion.

## 2. Master's Students

### a. Students Pursuing Second Master's Degree

Students who have already completed one Master's degree at NJIT and are pursuing a second Master's degree at NJIT may participate in cooperative education in their first semester in the new program subject to the following conditions:

(1) The first semester must include registration in no less than two graduate courses appropriate to the new program in addition to the 3-credit co-op course.

(2) Any undergraduate bridge courses for the new program should already have been completed or are being taken in addition to the two graduate courses. Certification as a full-time student in the first semester will be given only if the two graduate courses and the co-op course registration are maintained throughout the first semester. Requests for withdrawal and continued full-time certification must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies and, where necessary, by the Office of Global Initiatives.

Students who are taking advantage of the MS/MS program and similar opportunities must have completed the first degree, all specified bridge courses for the new degree program, and at least one semester in the new program before becoming eligible to participate. The semester in which one program is being completed and courses applicable to the new program are being taken at the same time do not count as semesters within the new program in establishing eligibility for participation.

### b. United States Citizens and Permanent Residents

United States citizens and permanent residents in Master's programs may participate in cooperative education at any time except as noted above for initial participation and for students pursuing second Master's degrees. The cooperative education experience is intended to be complementary to prior study and not to complicate enrollment requirements for students in federal or state loan programs and in financial aid programs.

### c. International Students

International students in Master's programs may participate in cooperative education upon acceptance to the program in conjunction with their ability to produce US employment authorization. Currently, employment authorization typically occurs only after the student has completed a full academic year (spring and fall) in the United States in a valid non-immigrant student status.

### 3. Students Receiving Financial Support

Students receiving merit-based financial support (Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, Fellowships and other similarly titled awards) will generally not be permitted to participate in cooperative education after the end of the regular registration add/drop period for a semester. Students who forfeit an award by accepting a cooperative education assignment after the beginning of a semester will lose their eligibility for future merit-based awards during their current degree program and level.

### 4. Students Supported to do Research

Students who are financially supported at NJIT to complete a Master's Project, Master's Thesis, Doctoral Dissertation or other research activity will not be approved for participation in cooperative education unless there has been prior approval by the academic advisor and the supervising faculty member for the research activity and there is assurance that research activity completion will not be delayed by participation in cooperative education. It is permissible under these prior-approval circumstances to register for Project, Thesis, Dissertation, or other research course in combination with registration in the co-op course and other approved courses.

## **C. REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

### 1. Career Development Services and Graduate Studies Office Review

Career Development Services will review the applications of students prior to acceptance in the program. The academic advisor reviews applications to ensure that students are making satisfactory progress toward degree completion and that the minimum grade point average of 3.0 is attained. Students should be checked in advance of placement or continuation each semester for both cumulative and most recent semester GPA.

If an approval is given for participation prior to the availability of final grades for a semester, the eligibility must be re-checked as soon as grades are available by Career Development Services. Both cumulative and semester GPA must be 3.0 or better. Students and employers must be notified by Career Development Services if grades have fallen below this level and informed if the original approval must be rescinded. Situations that are unclear, such as records that show a grade of "I" or no grades, should be referred to the Office of Graduate Studies for review.

### 2. Cooperative Education and Project, Thesis, or Dissertation Completion, Continuous Registration Policy

The cooperative education experience is not intended to delay completion or interrupt progress toward completion of a Master's Project, Master's Thesis, or Doctoral Dissertation. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the cooperative education experience in identifying research opportunities and potential projects in association with a particular employer.

The university policy for continuous registration in Project, Thesis, and Dissertation applies to cooperative education semesters. Exceptions will be granted only with the written approval of the supervising faculty member, the academic advisor, and the Office of Graduate Studies.

a. Employment Authorization Review

All cooperative education students must possess or be eligible to obtain United States employment authorization. Employment authorization eligibility review will be conducted for all students as part of the cooperative education application process. Only students demonstrating eligibility for U.S. work authorization will be accepted to the cooperative education program.

International students (F-1 or other status) may begin employment only after securing employment authorization for a specific period by the Office of Global Initiatives. International students should consult the website of the Office of Global Initiatives for detailed information about co-op participation.

a. Full-Time Status, Cooperative Education Semesters

The cooperative education work experience is not intended to encourage extension of Master's degree study beyond any semester in which degree completion is possible. However, students participating in cooperative education often take longer than other students to complete their degree requirements. Students participating in the full-time co-op work experience (over 20 working hours per week if an international student with F-1 status) and appropriately registered for the co-op course are certified as full-time students during that semester. Students who are capable of completing degree requirements during this semester will not be entitled to additional full-time certification if they purposefully delay degree completion.

Students who are unable to complete degree requirements during their first co-op period may receive full-time certification for a following semester. Students gaining permission to enroll in a second co-op work experience may receive a second full-time certification, on the basis of co-op participation or on being in their last semester or both simultaneously. International students who are undertaking a part-time co-op assignment (less than 20 hours per week) during the academic semester must register for and maintain a full-time credit load unless it is their final semester.

3. Limits on Full-Time Status and Time to Completion

The co-op experience is not intended to encourage extension of Master's degree study beyond four semesters by international students. Students who have already received certification on the basis of being in their fourth and last semester may not accept a co-op assignment the following semester.

4. Co-op Course Registration

All students securing a co-op position are required to register each semester for the appropriate departmental co-op course (numbered 590, 591, or 592). International students will not receive authorization for co-op employment if they are not registered for the appropriate co-op course.

International students securing a co-op placement that spans a summer and the following fall semester are required to register for the summer co-op course as well as the fall co-op course. If the co-op placement spans the spring semester and the following summer, international students must register for both the spring semester co-op and the summer co-op. (reworded for policy change). Graduate students should register for 590 in the first placement; then 591 and 592 in that order for subsequent placements. Students securing only summer placement must register for the appropriate departmental co-op course for the summer term. BS/MS students are undergraduate students until completion of the undergraduate degree, and should, if involved with co-op, register for the appropriate 300 or 400 level course.

Registration for all co-op courses must be completed within the regular academic deadlines for add/drop for a semester except that the addition of the co-op course may occur up to but not later than two weeks beyond the start of the semester. Any withdrawals that occur in conjunction with the addition of a co-op course will follow the regular refund schedule established by the Registrar. Students who fail to report the securing of a co-op placement prior to the co-op registration deadline must register for the appropriate co-op course to be in compliance with university guidelines, billed for the late registration fees, and lose any applicable tuition waivers or reductions.

#### 5. Tuition Charges

Students are responsible for paying all incurred tuition and fees for the co-op course and any other courses taken during the co-op employment period. The tuition rate for co-op courses and other courses will follow the regular NJIT tuition and fee schedule.

#### 6. Limits on Participation During a Semester; Course Registration with Co-op

As cooperative education is to be considered in equivalent manner as other academic programs, participation in cooperative education is therefore subject to academic policies regarding change in courses or programs after a semester has begun and the co-op course registration period has been completed. Regular academic approval processes apply for course registrations, changes, additions, and withdrawals while a student is on a co-op assignment.

International graduate students undertaking a part-time co-op assignment should contact the Office of Graduate Studies in advance if they wish to withdraw from a course listed on their Learning Agreement as the withdrawal may affect the required full-time credit load. Unapproved withdrawals may result in a requirement to register in a 3-credit accompanying course.

#### 7. Grades for Co-op Courses

Grades in co-op courses are either “S” “U” or “I”. The Unsatisfactory “U” grade can be changed to “S” in accordance with the Registrar’s policy on time limits for grade changes. Students receiving a “U” or an inappropriate grade, as defined below for co-op courses, are ineligible for

an extension of the current employment placement or a new employment placement until the grade is resolved.

Unresolved grades of “U” in co-op may remain on the transcript of a student completing a degree but cannot be changed once the degree is certified. Letter grades (A, B+, B, C+, C, F) are not appropriate grades. The “I” grade may be assigned while a final report is pending but can only be changed to either an “S” or a “U”.