Co-op Timeline & Recruitment Report

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Introduction

In the winter 2025 term, 1,655 undergraduate students signed up to participate in the Representative Survey Platform (RSP). The Co-op survey was live from March 10 to 21 and received a total of 1,122 responses to the survey. After removing incomplete and invalid responses, 1,092 remained for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 65.98%. The goals for the survey were as follows:

- Understand student experience with the co-op timeline during the recruitment term and how it impacts student success
- Explore student experience and behaviour around securing co-op employment
- Understand student awareness of co-op fees and their preferences for allocation
- Understand student awareness and experience with the renege process

Demographic Overview

Survey participants provide demographics when they sign up to participate in the RSP program. To understand the nuances of their experiences, student responses were analyzed by different demographics throughout the report including faculty, disability status, and visa status. For a full breakdown of participant demographics and the process for recoding variables, please see **Appendix A**.

Analysis

The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed via SPSS to calculate statistical differences among variables. The purpose of statistical tests is to assess the probability that the differences observed in our data are due to random chance. A probability of 95%, often written as a 'p value' of .05, is the typical threshold to determine whether a difference is statistically significant. When reporting on statistical differences, we will use * to signify a p value of .05, ** of .01 and *** of a p value of .001 or less. The open-ended questions were analyzed via NVivo to categorizes the responses to see overarching patterns and themes.

At a Glance

Key Findings

Job Quality and Influential Factors

- The **top three indicators of a high-quality** job for students are **(1)** relevance to future career/ post-graduate goals (85%); **(2)** salary and pay (80%); and **(3)** opportunity to develop new skills (79%).
- The **logistical factors** that most influenced students' most recent co-op job decision were **(1)** geographic location (66% extremely or very influential) and **(2)** availability of jobs relevant to their program (58% extremely or very influential).
- The **value-based factors** that most influenced students' most recent co-op decision were **(1)** Opportunity to develop new skills (66% extremely or very influential); **(2)** alignment to program/ career aspirations (63% extremely or very influential); and **(3)** alignment to skills and experience (61% extremely or very influential).
- Overall, there is a connection between what students believe are indicators of a high-quality job and factors that influence them to accept a co-op job. For example, students who believe opportunity to develop new skills is an indicator of a high-quality job were more likely to be influenced by the opportunity to develop new skills when accepting their most recent co-op job.

Concerns and Challenges

- 97% of incoming co-op students **were concerned about being able to secure a job.**
- Similarly, most students (n=282) indicated that the **most challenging aspect of their co-op was finding a job**, specifically one that was relevant to their program and of high quality.
- Students also found the **stress around balancing job search with academic responsibilities** (n=41) to be challenging.
- **Student responsibilities that were most impacted by the demands of finding a co-op job** were academic work and extracurricular activities, with 59% and 50% of respondents indicating a severe or significant impact for each, respectively.

Method & Experience Securing a Co-op Job

- **Most students (47%) used WaterlooWorks to secure their jobs,** while 18% of students used only external sources, and 38% used a mix of both.
  - Arts students rely on external opportunities more (38%) which may be because they report difficulty finding jobs that are relevant to their program on WaterlooWorks.
- While **most students (87%) were able to secure a job in their most recent recruiting term**, this was lower (71%) for students with no previous co-op experience.
- **Most students (57%) indicated that they were either somewhat or completely prepared** for the process of securing employment.
  - The more co-op terms students completed, the more prepared they were.
- Most students (62%) tend to spend 10 hours or less per week on securing employment for their most recent recruiting term.
  - Those who spent the most time (40+ hours) were more likely to say that they spent more time than expected.
- **The top reasons students mentioned for not being able to secure employment** were **(1)** lack of job opportunities available to them; **(2)** competitiveness of the market and **(3)** lack of experience. All

of which are common challenges mentioned by students as well.

- The **support that co-op students were most aware of** was their **assigned co-op advisor (87%).**
    - This was also the most accessed support behind family, friends, and senior co-op students.

Co-op Cycles & Timelines

- **Most students either disagree or strongly disagree** that the quantity of co-op jobs (61%) and quality of jobs (53%) remain consistent across co-op cycles.
- Overall, student responses about the length of co-op cycles were mixed and contradictory; however, students did seem to agree that the i**nterview period associated with Cycle 2 often overlaps with midterms**. In fact, this idea of balancing their co-op applications with other responsibilities was a key reason that most students shared as the reason for why they wanted changes.

Co-op Satisfaction & Fee

- Co-op students were **most satisfied with their overall work term experience** (70% either satisfied or very satisfied) and **least satisfied with the quantity of jobs on WaterlooWorks** (36% either satisfied or very satisfied).
- **57% of students were unaware of the co-op fee increase.** This lack of awareness is consistent across all faculties.
- **The improvement students want to see most out of an increased co-op fee is more quality jobs on WaterlooWorks**, with a rating of 5.8 out of a possible 6.

Key Considerations

Given the above Key Findings, the following will be important to consider in the process of advocating for changes that will impact co-op students:

- Co-op student experiences vary depending on the number of co-op terms they have completed. Specifically, students in the beginning years the co-op program (e.g., none or one previous work term) of struggle to find jobs more than others. This is likely because they are competing with students with more experience than them.
    - As such, it is important to advocate for adequate support for these early career students and to ensure that awareness of existing supports and services is increased through intentional advertising.
    - It might also be necessary to advocate for more co-op positions that are specifically designed for early career co-op students.
    - There may also be opportunity to encourage incoming co-op students to build tangible experience prior to joining the University.
- Students, regardless of their status, consistently report concerns about being able to secure a co-op job. This ranges from students not in the co-op program making this choice due to a perceived lack of jobs, incoming co-op students identifying this as a concern, and current co-op students experiencing this difficulty first-hand.
    - It is important to consider how the pressure and competitiveness around finding a job may result in students settling for jobs that do not support their future career goals.
- Concerns around securing a co-op job are not just about quantity, however, as students report concerns and dissatisfaction with the quality and variety of jobs, specifically those available on WaterlooWorks.
    - Students found that it was particularly difficult to find a job that was relevant to their program. This varies by faculty where Arts students, for example, consistently report a lack of relevant jobs on WaterlooWorks for their program.
    - It is important to consider changes that can be made to ensure that the experience of co-op students is consistent across all faculties.
- For students, this idea of a high-quality job specifically includes the following factors, in order of most frequently selected: **(1)** relevance to future career, **(2)** salary and pay, **(3)** opportunity to develop new skills, and **(4)** jobs relevant to program.
    - Given that these indicators of a high-quality job are also connected to the factors that influence students to accept jobs, it is important that they be carefully considered when advocating for more job availability on WaterlooWorks.
- Given there is a lack of awareness amongst students about what a renege is and about the co-op fee increase, it is important to advocate to CEE about stronger communication with students.
    - This includes looking at how CEE communicates with students to ensure effectiveness, not just how frequently they communicate.
- Finally, students reported an overall feeling of stress when it comes securing a job, specifically as it relates to balancing applications with other responsibilities such as academics and extracurriculars.
    - As such, it is important to ensure that co-op cycles and timelines are designed in a way that mitigate overlap with important times for students, such as midterms.

Experience of Non-Co-op Students

Students who indicated they were not in the co-op program were first asked whether they had ever previously been in the co-op program, to which 21% indicated yes and 79% indicated no (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Have you ever been a co-op student at the University of Waterloo?

■ Yes ■ No
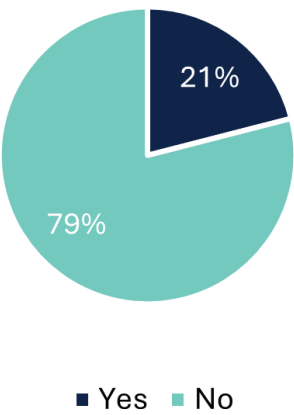
To further understand the reasoning for this, students were asked why they were not a co-op student. Of the 259 students who responded to this question, most (n=106) simply mentioned that there was no co-op option for their program. Other students (n=47) mentioned that their future plans did not align well with a co-op program. For example, students shared that they wanted to finish their degree in four years to avoid the accumulation of extra housing and tuition costs. Some also mentioned that they planned to go to professional or graduate school and felt like a co-op would not be beneficial to that path.

Some students (n=36) explained various personal situations that deterred them or prevented them from pursuing the co-op program, such as their status as an exchange student, a preference for in-class learning, not wanting to move, and issues with course credits and grades. Some students simply stated that they did not have an interest in the co-op program (n=11). Others mentioned a job outside of co-op (n=10) that provided them with the financial security needed. One student touched on many of these reasons when they explained,

> *I am from out of province and I value being able to have a pre-determined schedule of what terms I am in Waterloo and what terms I can be home without the hassle and potential barriers of moving. Additionally, I have been able to find internship employment on my own and plan to go to graduate school, so do not want to delay my graduation.*

In addition to students that seem to have chosen not to participate in the co-op program, there were some students who alluded to the fact that this was not necessarily a choice. For example, students (n=28) explained that they assumed there would be – or experienced – a lack of jobs, specifically those relevant to their program or career path. As one student explained,

> *I found that there were not options for good work experience for my major (psychology) and that I would have better luck finding a job on a general website like Indeed. I felt that co-op for Arts Psych students like myself was not worth the amount of extra money and time it would take. I have actually found good work and volunteer experience outside of co-op that was not offered through Waterloo Works, which has further justified me dropping co-op*

Other students (n=15) mentioned that they found the co-op program to be too competitive and stressful. This directly connects to issues of job availability as well as other factors students mentioned such as moving and the pressure to balance job searching with academic workload. One student summarized this experience when they explained,

> *I did not like having to do something different every 4 months, I needed more stability. The job market was also horrendous when I was looking for co-op and I spent so much time applying to jobs and writing cover letters that I wasn't focusing on school enough*

Overall, students often expressed multiple different reasons for not being in the co-op program, as demonstrated in the above quotes. Combinations of not being able to find a job, personal circumstances, co-op fees, and the stress of finding a job were commonly discussed. As such, students' reasons were not singular but indicated a combination of issues that drive students to drop out or pass on the co-op program.

Experience of Incoming Co-op Students

Students in the co-op program were first asked how many work terms they have completed, which allowed them to be directed to different survey questions based on their answer. Figure 2 demonstrates that most students (46%) had never completed a co-op term. Of these students, 51% had not completed a recruitment term (e.g., searched for a job). These students, given their lack of experience, were asked a few short questions before being re-directed to the end of the survey.

Figure 2: Number of co-op work terms completed

Number completed	Percentage
0	46%
1	11%
2	11%
3	11%
4	10%
5+	13%
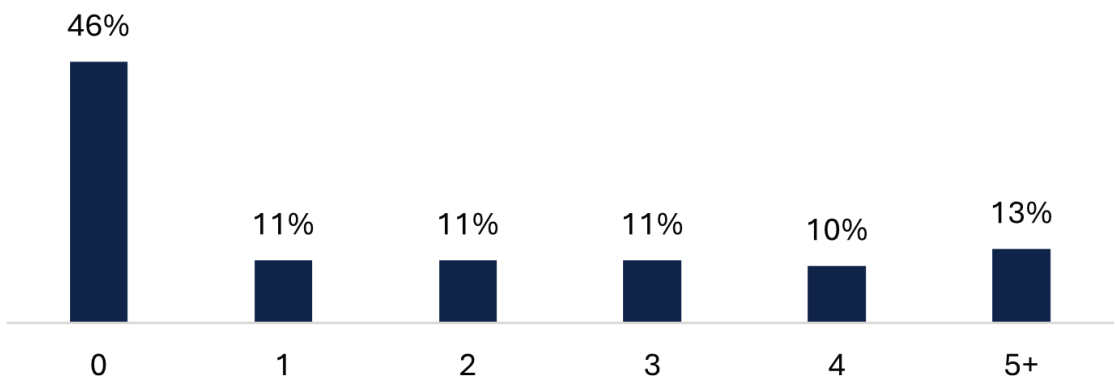
When asked to share if there were any aspects of the co-op program they were concerned about, most students (97%) selected "being able to secure a co-op job" (Figure 3). This was followed by preparing resume and interview skills (69%) and balancing academics and securing a co-op job (68%). The aspect students were concerned about the least was how they will be treated by their employer (28%). Only 1% of students reported not being concerned about any aspects of the co-op program.

Figure 3: What aspects of the co-op program, if any, are you concerned about?

Aspect	Percentage
Being able to secure a co-op job	97%
Preparing my resume and interview skills	69%
Balancing academics and securing a co-op job	68%
Arranging housing for co-op jobs outside of Waterloo	49%
How I will be treated by my employer	28%
I'm not concerned about any aspect of the co-op program	1%
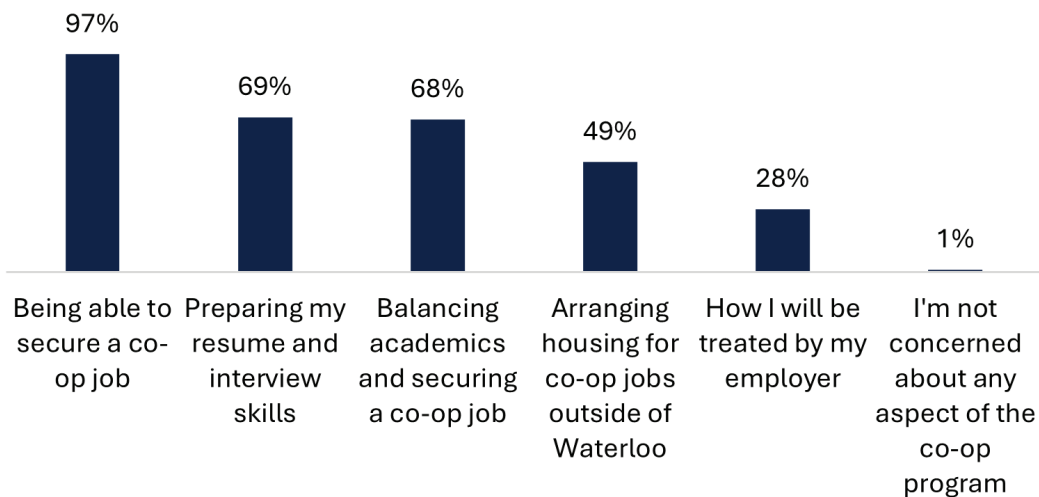
Finally, these students were asked what they were looking forward to about their co-op program. Of the 152 students who responded to this question, nearly all (n=121) mentioned a desire to learn and experience new opportunities through their co-op placements. This also included specific reference to figuring out what they would enjoy most for a future job.

Some students (n=40) were also looking forward to the ability to earn money, while others mentioned meeting new people and networking (n=18) and applying skills they have learned through their courses to the workplace (n=13). One student summarized all of this when they explained:

> *I'm looking forward to gaining relevant experience, seeing how the work life feels. I'm also looking forward to networking and deciding what path I want to take after graduation, after trying out different roles through co-op.*

Experience of Co-op Students

The survey then transitioned into asking about various aspects of the co-op program. These questions were only asked to students who were in the co-op program and had experienced at least one recruitment term.

Job Quality and Influential Factors

An important factor for students is what they consider to be a high-quality job, and how this, among other factors, influences their job decisions. Figure 4 demonstrates that the top three indicators of a high-quality job for students are relevance to future career/post-graduate goals (85%), salary and pay (80%), and opportunity to develop new skills (79%). The factors that students think least indicate a high-quality job are networking and mentorship opportunities (50%) and alignment with values (42%). However, many of the factors still had a high level of agreement.

Figure 4: In your opinion, which of the following factors indicate a high-quality job

Factor	Percentage
Alignment with my values	42%
Networking and mentoring opportunities	50%
Reputation of the company	62%
Opportunity to engage in meaningful work	67%
Relevance to my program	74%
Opportunity to develop new skills	79%
Salary and pay	80%
Relevance to my future career/post-graduate...	85%

When we examined high-quality job indicators by various factors, we found that:

- Science students (95%) are more likely to consider relevance to future as an indicator of a high-quality job**
- Health students (39%) and Science students (45%) are less likely to consider company reputation as an indicator of a high-quality job***
- The more co-op terms students have completed, the less likely they are to consider program relevance as an indicator of a high-quality job***
- Students who have completed 2 (52%) or 3 (46%) co-op terms are more likely to consider alignment with values as an indicator of a high-quality job*

In addition to the quality of the job, there are various other factors that may impact students' process of securing a job. In terms of logistical factors, geographic location, and availability of jobs relevant to their program (Figure 5) received the highest percentage of extremely influential and very influential responses with 66% and 58%, respectively.

Figure 5: Logistical factors influencing most recent co-op decision

Factor	Not at all influential	Slightly influencial	Somewhat influential	Very influential	Extremely influential
Navigating pathways to remove yourself from consideration	39%	17%	26%	13%	4%
Consideration related to expected graduation date	33%	14%	25%	17%	10%
Familial or social circumstance	21%	18%	31%	20%	10%
Balancing external timelines and applications with WaterlooWorks Cycles	18%	14%	32%	26%	10%
Hybrid/remote/in-person arrangement	16%	16%	28%	25%	14%
Availability of information at the time of decision making	8%	15%	33%	31%	13%
Housing during your work term	12%	13%	30%	28%	17%
Transportation during your work term	11%	15%	28%	30%	17%
Compensation or salary	9%	13%	31%	30%	17%
Availability of jobs relevant to my program	7%	10%	25%	33%	25%
Geographic job location	5%	8%	21%	35%	31%

To further compare these factors, we recoded the variables numerically such that the higher the mean, the more influential the factor (Table 1). The top factor for students when accepting their most recent co-op position was geographical location, with a mean of 3.81. This is followed by the availability of jobs relevant to their program, with a mean of 3.58. The factor that least influenced students' decisions was "navigating pathways to remove yourself from consideration", with a mean of 2.27.

Table 1: Influence of logistical factors on most recent co-op decision

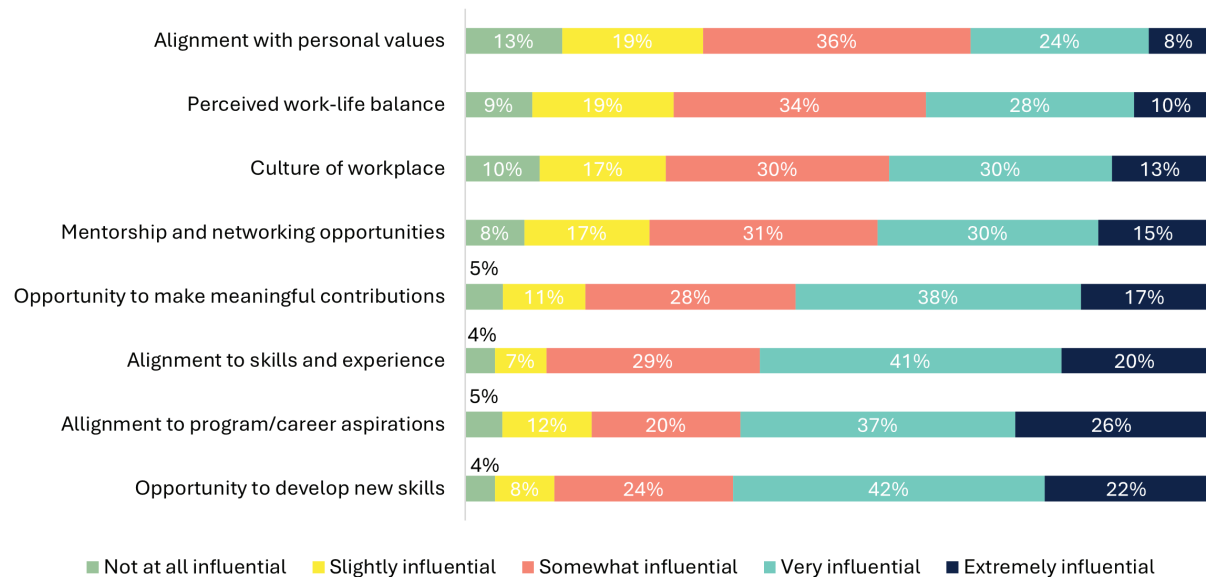| Logistical Factors	Means
Geographic job location	3.81
Availability of jobs relevant to my program	3.58
Compensation or salary	3.32
Transportation during your work term	3.27
Housing during your work term	3.25
Availability of information at the time of decision making	3.25
Hybrid/remote/in-person arrangement	3.05
Balancing external timelines and applications with WaterlooWorks Cycles	2.96
Familial or social circumstance	2.8
Consideration related to expected graduation date	2.57
Navigating pathways to remove yourself from consideration	2.27

When we examined logistical factors by demographics, we found that:

- International students are less influenced by geographic job location (mean of 3.49) than domestic students (mean of 3.84)*.
- International students are more influenced by consideration related to expected graduation date (mean of 3.06) than domestic students (mean of 2.52)**.
- Science (mean of 3.82), Environment (mean of 3.82), and Health (mean of 3.78) students are more influenced by the availability of co-op jobs relevant to their program than other faculties*.
- Health (mean of 3.55), Science (mean of 3.47), and Arts (Mean of 3.44) students are more influenced by transportation during their work term than other faculties**.
- Arts (mean of 3.5) and Science (mean of 3.47) students are more influenced by housing during their work term than other faculties**.
- Arts students (mean of 2.86) are more influenced by consideration related to expected graduation date than other faculties**.

In addition to the logistical factors mentioned thus far, there are also various value-based factors that influence students' co-op decisions (Figure 6). Opportunity to develop new skills (66%), alignment to program/career aspirations (63%) and alignment to skills and experience (61%) were value-based factors that had the highest percentage of extremely influential or very influential responses from students.

Figure 6: Value-based factors influencing most recent co-op decision

Factor	Not at all influential	Slightly influential	Somewhat influential	Very influential	Extremely influential
Alignment with personal values	13%	19%	36%	24%	8%
Perceived work-life balance	9%	19%	34%	28%	10%
Culture of workplace	10%	17%	30%	30%	13%
Mentorship and networking opportunities	8%	17%	31%	30%	15%
Opportunity to make meaningful contributions	5%	11%	28%	38%	17%
Alignment to skills and experience	4%	7%	29%	41%	20%
Allignment to program/career aspirations	5%	12%	20%	37%	26%
Opportunity to develop new skills	4%	8%	24%	42%	22%

To further compare these factors, we recoded the variables numerically such that the higher the mean, the more influential the factor (Table 2). The factor that influenced students' decisions the most was the opportunity to develop new skills (mean of 3.7). This is followed by alignment to program/career aspirations (mean of 3.68) and alignment to skills and experience (mean of 3.67). The factor that least influenced students' decisions was alignment with personal values (mean of 2.95).

Table 2: Influence of value-based factors on most recent co-op decision

Value-Based Factors	Means
Opportunity to develop new skills	3.7
Alignment to Program/Career Aspirations	3.68
Alignment to Skills and Experience	3.67
Opportunity to make Meaningful Contributions	3.52
Mentorship and Networking Opportunities	3.27
Culture of Workplace	3.18
Perceived Work-Life Balance	3.1
Alignment with Personal Values	2.95

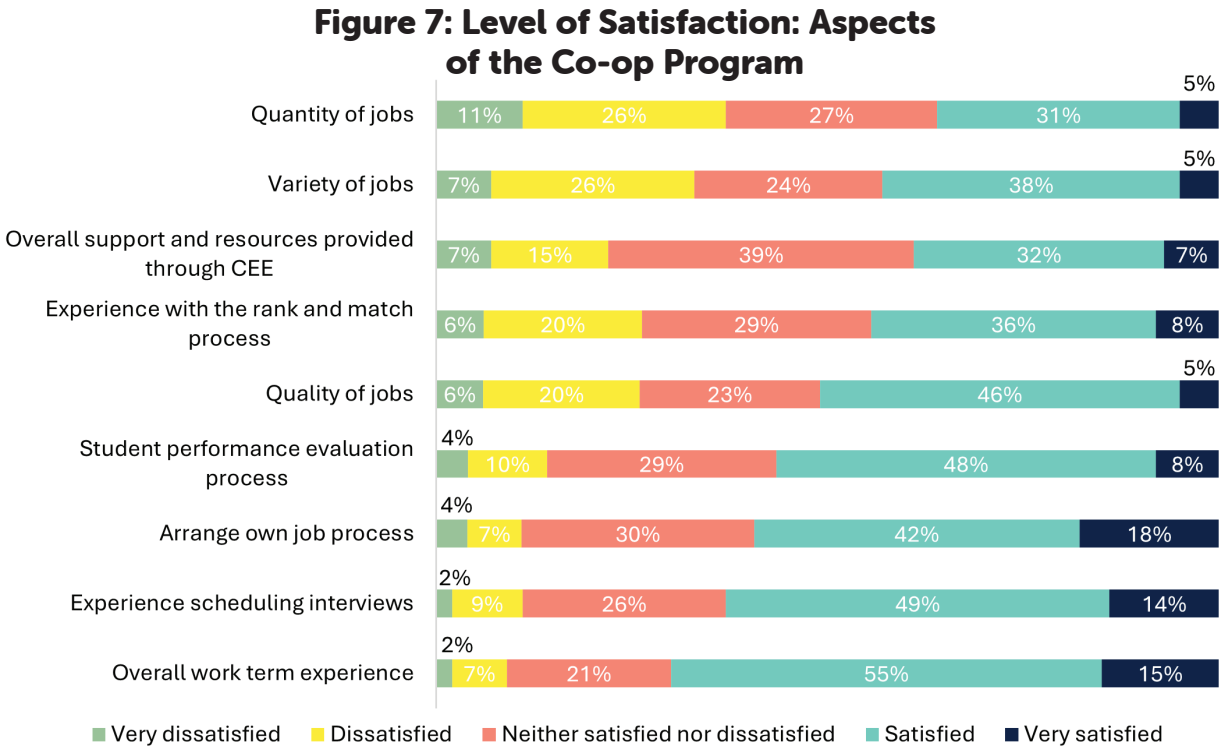When we examined value-based factors by demographics, we found that:

- International students are more influenced by the opportunity to make meaningful contributions (mean of 3.82) than domestic students (mean of 3.49)*.
- Arts (mean of 3.43), Health (mean of 3.39) and Math (mean of 3.35) students are more likely to be influenced by workplace culture than other faculties**.
- Health students are more likely to be influenced by perceived work-life balance (mean of 3.44) than other faculties*.

Overall, there is a connection between what students believe are indicators of a high-quality job and factors that influence them to accept a co-op job. For example, students who think salary and pay are indicative of a high-quality job were more likely to be influenced by compensation or salary for their most recent co-op decision, with a mean of 3.48, compared to a mean of 2.72 for students who do not. Similarly, students who think the opportunity to develop new skills is indicative of a high-quality job were more likely to be influenced by the opportunity to develop new skills for their most recent co-op decision, with a mean of 3.84, compared to a mean of 3.17 for students who do not.

This demonstrates that students have a consistent set of considerations that impact their co-op decisions. The indicators of high-quality jobs for students are also what influence them when making their co-op decisions. Ensuring co-op positions on WaterlooWorks are relevant to students' program and career aspirations, provide relevant skills, and provide proper compensation will help ensure that co-op positions are meeting student needs.

Challenges & Satisfaction with the Co-op Program

The factors that contribute to a students' co-op decision is just one aspect of their co-op experience. To better understand their overall experience, we asked students to indicate their satisfaction with various aspects of the co-op program (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Level of Satisfaction: Aspects of the Co-op Program

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Quantity of jobs	11%	26%	27%	31%	5%
Variety of jobs	7%	26%	24%	38%	5%
Overall support and resources provided through CEE	7%	15%	39%	32%	7%
Experience with the rank and match process	6%	20%	29%	36%	8%
Quality of jobs	6%	20%	23%	46%	5%
Student performance evaluation process	4%	10%	29%	48%	8%
Arrange own job process	4%	7%	30%	42%	18%
Experience scheduling interviews	2%	9%	26%	49%	14%
Overall work term experience	2%	7%	21%	55%	15%

To further compare these factors, we recoded the variables numerically such that the higher the mean, the higher the level of satisfaction (Table 3). On average, students were most satisfied with their overall work term experience and least satisfied about the variety and quantity of jobs on WaterlooWorks.

Table 3: Student satisfaction with various aspects of the co-op program

Co-op Aspects	Means
Overall work term experience	3.73
Experience scheduling interviews on Waterloo Works	3.62
Arrange own job process	3.62
Student performance evaluation process	3.46
Quality of jobs on WaterlooWorks	3.21
Experience with the rank and match process	3.19
Overall support and resources provided through CEE	3.17
Variety of jobs on WaterlooWorks	3.07
Quantity of jobs on WaterlooWorks	2.92

When further comparing by faculty, we found that:

- Science (mean of 2.99), Arts (mean of 2.95), and Health (mean of 2.89) students are the least satisfied with the quality of jobs on WaterlooWorks compared to other faculties***.
- Arts (mean of 2.8), Health (mean of 2.72), and Science (mean of 2.59) students are the least satisfied with the variety of jobs on WaterlooWorks compared to other faculties***.
- Science (mean of 2.6) and Health (mean of 2.44) students are the least satisfied with the quantity of jobs on WaterlooWorks compared to other faculties**.

Students were also asked directly what they have found to be the most challenging aspect of co-op so far. Of the 485 students who responded to this question, most students (n=282) found the most challenging aspect of their co-op to be finding a job. 162 of these students mentioned this generally, while the remaining (n=120) specifically mentioned finding a quality or relevant job. This demonstrates the difficulties students faced finding jobs that were specifically suited to them. One student summarized this experience when they explained:

> *Getting interviews was quite difficult. Although I managed to get a co-op through the one interview I had, I applied for many other opportunities and none got back to me. I believe this has to do with the fact that there also were not many job postings on Waterloo Works that were applicable for me.*

As this student implies, it is difficult for students to be successful in their job search if the jobs they are applying to are not relevant to their skills and experience. As noted above, Science, Health, and Arts students are particularly dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of jobs available on WaterlooWorks, demonstrating the difficulties students in these faculties specifically face when it comes to finding jobs relevant to them.

This was also exacerbated by lack of experience, with some students (n=35) also identifying that their struggle finding a job was often related to their lack of job experience, especially in their earlier student years. They mentioned that it was difficult to compete with upper year students, especially when job opportunities seem to be limited. However, students also mentioned difficulties finding jobs later in their co-op careers when they wanted to diversify into a new field, but felt that were pigeonholed into a certain area based on their previous co-op experiences.

Some students (n=58) also elaborated on difficulties they faced with the application process itself such as interviews, writing resumes, and job descriptions. This included minor issues such as the large volume of applications they felt necessary to submit, lack of feedback after rejections, and unclear job descriptions, but also more complex situations such as those described by the following students:

> *Rankings, this past recruitment term I faced the challenge of accepting a job offer that was not related to my program or future career path or rejecting it and then trying for an interview the next week which could've turned out with me getting a co-op job or not cause it was at the end of the term. The rankings/recruitment near the end of the term feels like gambling because you don't know if there will be more postings or not, if you get interviews, how to rank, and just overall risk-taking - quite stress inducing.*

> *It is overwhelming to balance securing a job with school work, especially when most of my classes have participation which I am expected to miss due to interviews. Also the timelines can be really tight which adds more pressure. I would also say that for my program at least there is an extremely competitive environment where it constantly feels like we are pitted against each other, and people are always comparing their jobs and networking.*

These students demonstrate how multiple issues can accumulate to create a complex situation for many co-op students. Both students emphasize the stress and competitiveness of this process, something that was also mentioned by students as a reason to not be in the co-op program altogether. Students (n=31) also explicitly mentioned the stress of the process, often connecting it to various aspects of the process such as finding a job, finding a place to live, constantly moving and balancing with other responsibilities. Specifically, students (n=41) mentioned the stress around balancing job searching with academic responsibilities. As one student described:

> *Being able to schedule interviews in and around class time. The extra work of applying to jobs and interviewing is almost the load of a full-time course. It is a lot of work and I feel like no one talks about that.... The university only talks about how great the program is. Yeah, it is great, but it is also exhausting.*
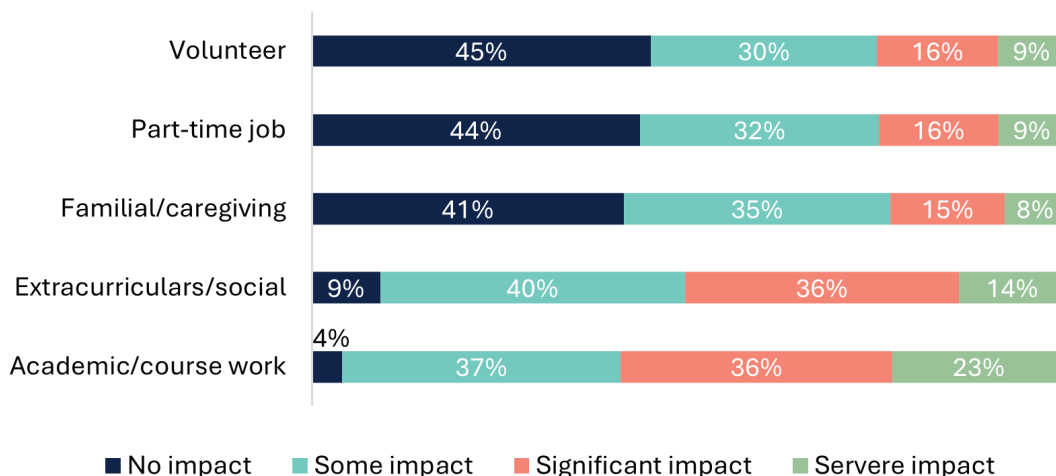
Overall, the most challenging aspect of the co-op program is finding a job, specifically one that students deem to be relevant and of high quality, and the stress this process creates for them.

Stress and Responsibilities

It is clear from the challenges identified by co-op students that the process of securing employment is a deeply time-consuming and often stressful process. To measure this further, we asked students to identify the impact securing a co-op job has on their additional responsibilities (Figure 8).

The responsibilities that were most impacted for students were academic/course work and extracurriculars/social activities, with 59% and 50% indicating a severe or significant impact for each, respectively. The impact on academic responsibilities aligns with the challenges students identified above, where they mention that working on applications and scheduling interviews impact their ability to meet assignment deadlines and participation requirements for their courses. Many students view securing co-op employment as another full course load, making it much more difficult to balance their academic responsibilities.

Figure 8: Impact of securing co-op employment on other responsibilities

Category	No impact	Some impact	Significant impact	Severe impact
Volunteer	45%	30%	16%	9%
Part-time job	44%	32%	16%	9%
Familial/caregiving	41%	35%	15%	8%
Extracurriculars/social	9%	40%	36%	14%
Academic/course work	4%	37%	36%	23%

Legend: ■ No impact ■ Some impact ■ Significant impact ■ Servere impact

Method for Securing a Co-op Job

Securing employment is by far the most demanding process for co-op students, and a major area of concern for almost all incoming co-op students. There are two main methods that students can use to secure co-op employment; one of which is WaterlooWorks, which has multiple job boards advertising co-op job opportunities and allows students to search, apply and interview for co-op positions that interest them. The second method that students can use to secure co-op employment is through the arrange your own job (AOJ) process. This allows students to search and apply for co-op opportunities externally, outside of WaterlooWorks. External opportunities must meet the requirements set by the standard or flexible work terms to be eligible for a co-op credit. Moreover, students are still required to pay the co-op fee even if they obtain a co-op position externally. As will be demonstrated throughout this section, the ability to secure employment through both these methods provides students with diverse opportunities but also complicates their experience in some ways as well.

When we asked students which methods they had used to find a co-op job in the past, most (47%) used WaterlooWorks, while 18% of students used only external sources, and 38% used WaterlooWorks for some and external sources for others (Figure 9).

Figure 9: In the past, through which method have you secured your co-op employment?

16%

47%

38%

■ WaterlooWorks only   ■ Some WaterlooWorks, some external   ■ External Only
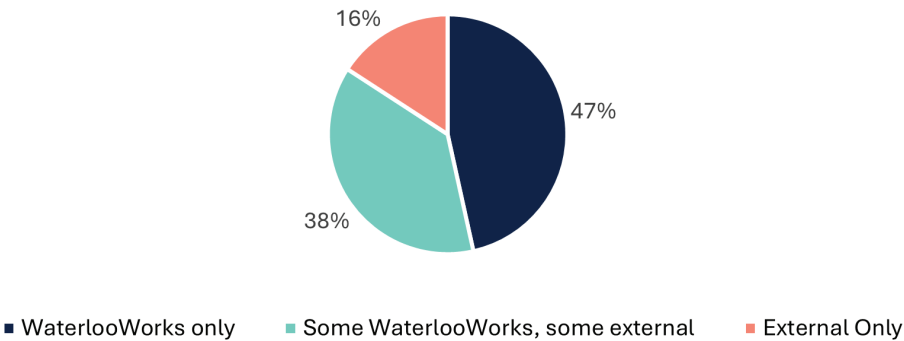
When we further compared by faculty, we found that Arts students (33%) are more likely to have used external sources only compared to other faculties***. Arts students may rely on external opportunities more because, as identified in previous sections, Arts students often experience difficulty finding jobs that are relevant to their program on WaterlooWorks.

This aligns with the reasonings for securing an external job that students provided themselves, where most students (n=11) of the 28 who responded to the question indicated that they did not have success on WaterlooWorks and wanted to increase their chances of securing a job by looking elsewhere. Others (n=2) noted that utilizing their existing network was helpful for looking for a job outside of WaterlooWorks. One student described their experience when they explained,

> *There were very few jobs related to my field available in Waterloo Works, so looking elsewhere was necessary. The AOJ process (submitting forms, communicating with my advisor, etc.) was very easy, but it was tricky to find any employers who were able to work within the Co-op conditions. 4 months is too short for most employers to consider, and there wasn't a lot of time to arrange and coordinate with the university.*

This student notes that the AOJ process was relatively easy, a sentiment expressed by five other students as well. However, they also identify the difficulties they faced coordinating details between the University and the employer. This aligns with a sentiment expressed by a few other students (n=4) who noted that the process was bad in general and specifically that it was time consuming.

## Experience Securing a Co-op Job

Overall, while most students (87%) were able to secure a job in their last recruiting term, some (13%) were not (Figure 10). When looking at this further, we found that the more co-op terms students had completed, the more likely they were to have found a co-op job during the last recruiting term***. For example, 95% of students with 3, 4, or 5 terms of experience were able to secure a job in their last recruitment term, while only 71% of students with 0 terms of experience were. This may be because students who are entering the co-op program lack experience and are therefore less likely to secure a co-op position as a result. This is particularly relevant given the competitiveness of the co-op program mentioned earlier and suggests that students with less experience have difficulty competing for the same jobs as their more experienced peers.

Figure 10: Were you able to secure a job in your last recruiting term?

■ Yes   ■ No
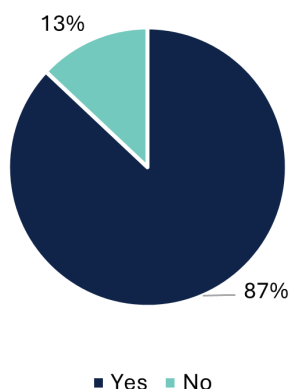
The ability of students to secure a job may also be influenced by how prepared they felt going into the process. Most students (41%) indicated they felt somewhat prepared for the process of securing employment, followed by somewhat unprepared (24%), completely prepared (16%), neither prepared nor unprepared (13%) and completely unprepared (6%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: How prepared did you feel for the process of securing employment during your most recent recruiting term?
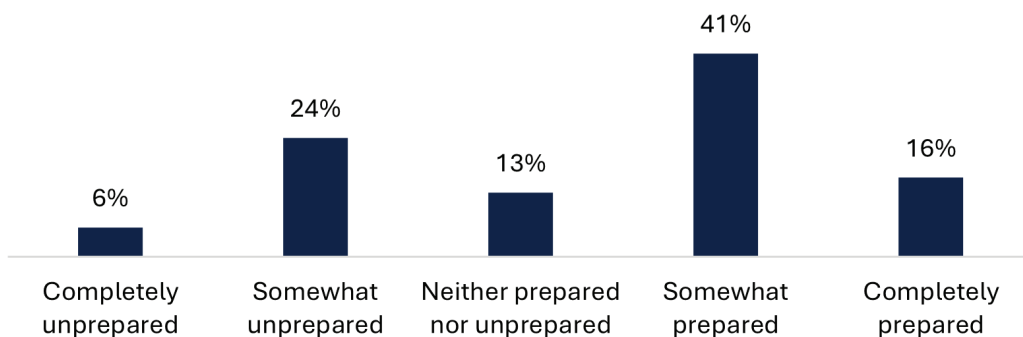
When examined further, we found that the more co-op terms students have completed, the more pre-pared they felt during the process of securing employment***. For example, 79% of students who have completed 5+ co-op terms felt either somewhat or completely prepared for the process of securing employment during their most recent recruiting term compared to only 38% of students with 0 terms of experience. Interestingly, though, we also found that students who did not access any services, resources or supports stated that they felt more prepared with securing employment than those who did access resources***. For example, 67% of students who did not access any services, resources, or supports felt either somewhat or completely prepared for the process of securing employment during their most recent recruiting term. This may be because those who did not access resources were already well-prepared and did not need any additional resources or supports. Students use of various services, supports and resources is explored further below.

The time students spent on securing their co-op is also an important consideration. We found that most students (62%) tended to spend 10 hours or less per week on securing employment for the most recent recruiting term (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Time spent weekly on securing co-op employment in the most recent recruiting term
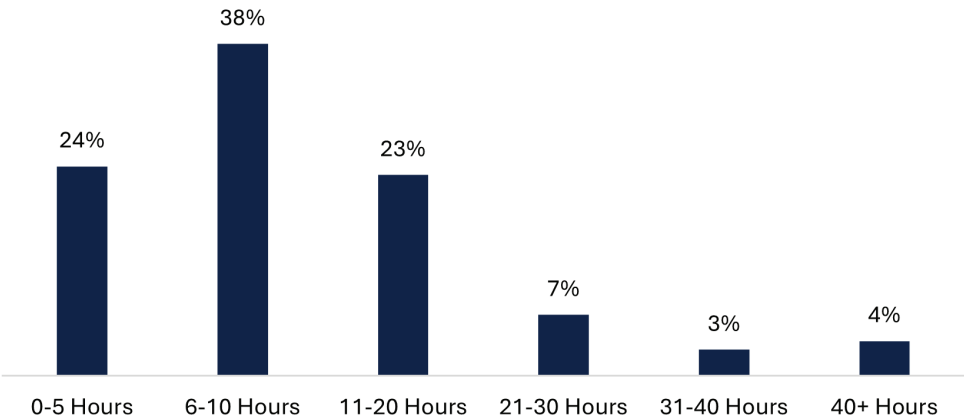
We also asked how the time they spent compared to what they initially expected. Most students (42%) indicated that they spent as much time as they expected, while 24% spent somewhat more time than they expected (Figure 13). In particular, students that spent 31-40 or 40+ hours a week on securing employment were more likely to report spending more time than they initially expected on securing employment, with 60% and 64% reporting this, respectively.***

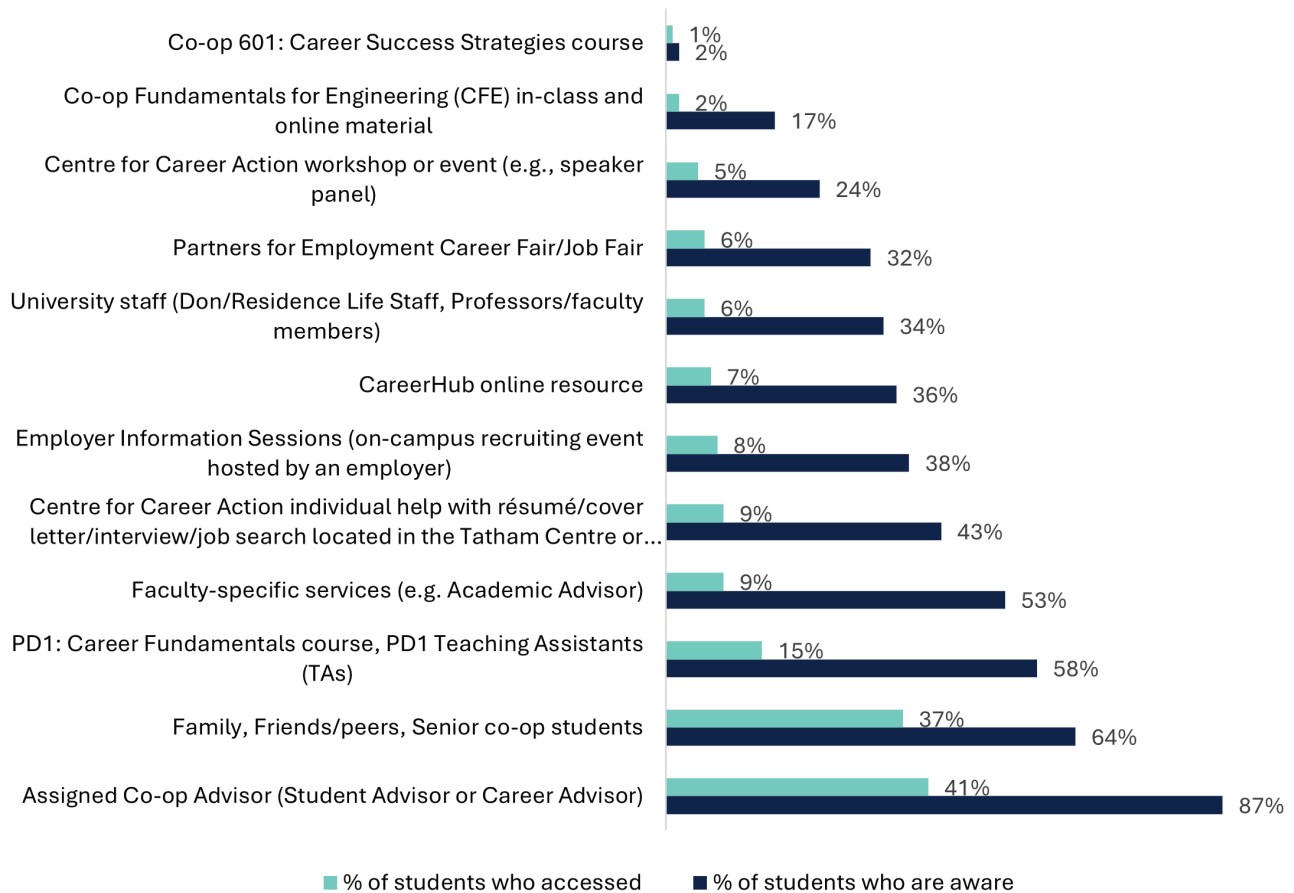**Figure 13: Time spent compared to expectations**
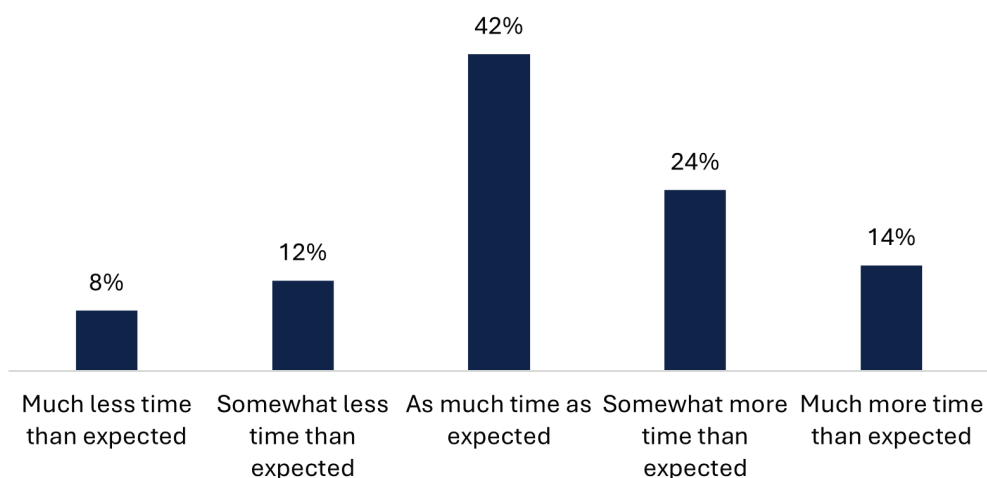
Finally, students were directly asked what they believe prevented them from securing employment. The most common response (n=16) from the 57 students who responded was the lack of job opportunities available to them, while some students (n=13) mentioned the competitiveness of the co-op job market. Others (n=12) identified their lack of experience as being a barrier. Again, this emphasizes the connection identified previously between the lack of job opportunities and the resulting competitive job market this creates, and the way in which students lacking experience struggle in this context.

Supports and Resources for Students

The resources that students access is another important factor to consider when understanding their overall co-op experience, and specifically their success securing a job. Figure 14 displays the various supports and resources available to co-op students. In terms of awareness, most students (87%) were aware of their assigned co-op advisor, family, friends/peers, and senior co-op students (64%), PD1: Career Fundamentals course (58%), faculty-specific advisors (53%), and the Centre for Career Action resume and interview help (43%). The resource with the least awareness is the Co-op 601: Career Success Strategies course (2%). Similarly, the supports that students most frequently accessed were their assigned co-op advisor (41%), followed by family, friends/peers, and senior co-op students (37%).
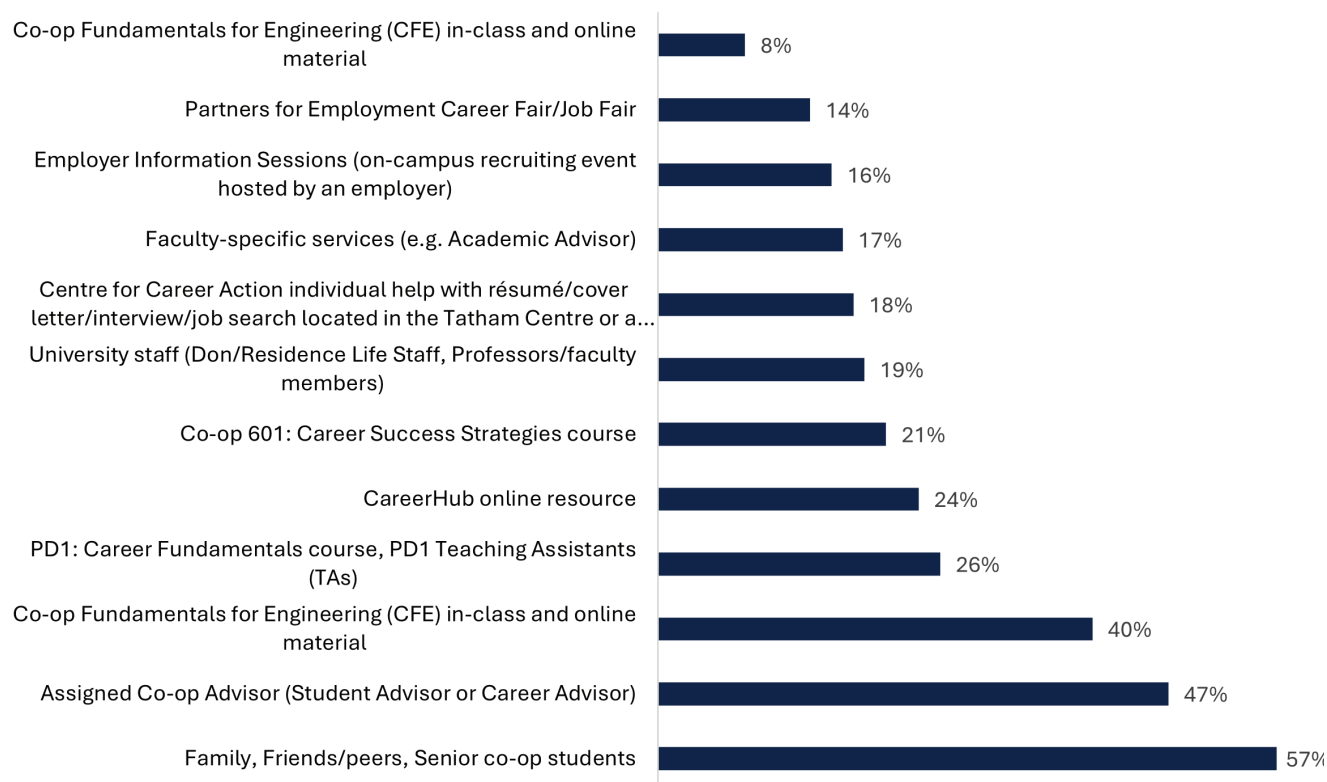
Figure 14: % of students who are aware of and access services

Service	% of students who accessed	% of students who are aware
Co-op 601: Career Success Strategies course	1%	2%
Co-op Fundamentals for Engineering (CFE) in-class and online material	2%	17%
Centre for Career Action workshop or event (e.g., speaker panel)	5%	24%
Partners for Employment Career Fair/Job Fair	6%	32%
University staff (Don/Residence Life Staff, Professors/faculty members)	6%	34%
CareerHub online resource	7%	36%
Employer Information Sessions (on-campus recruiting event hosted by an employer)	8%	38%
Centre for Career Action individual help with résumé/cover letter/interview/job search located in the Tatham Centre or...	9%	43%
Faculty-specific services (e.g. Academic Advisor)	9%	53%
PD1: Career Fundamentals course, PD1 Teaching Assistants (TAs)	15%	58%
Family, Friends/peers, Senior co-op students	37%	64%
Assigned Co-op Advisor (Student Advisor or Career Advisor)	41%	87%

We also calculated the rates of access for all the resources by dividing the number of students who accessed a service by the number of students who were aware of the service (Figure 15). For example, 536 students are aware of their co-op advisor and 251 students accessed their co-op advisor, resulting in an access rate of 47%. When looking at the access rate, family, friends/peers, senior co-op students is the resource with the highest access rate (57%) while the Centre for Career Action Workshop is the resource with the lowest access rate (8%). It is also worth noting that while some services have a low percentage of students who accessed the service, the overall access rate is quite high. For example, only 1% of students accessed the Co-op 601: Career Strategies Course, yet it has an access rate of 21%. This shows that of the 2% of students who are aware of the Co-op 601: Career Strategies Course, 21% of those students accessed the service.

Figure 15: Service Access Rate

Service	Access Rate
Co-op Fundamentals for Engineering (CFE) in-class and online material	8%
Partners for Employment Career Fair/Job Fair	14%
Employer Information Sessions (on-campus recruiting event hosted by an employer)	16%
Faculty-specific services (e.g. Academic Advisor)	17%
Centre for Career Action individual help with résumé/cover letter/interview/job search located in the Tatham Centre or a...	18%
University staff (Don/Residence Life Staff, Professors/faculty members)	19%
Co-op 601: Career Success Strategies course	21%
CareerHub online resource	24%
PD1: Career Fundamentals course, PD1 Teaching Assistants (TAs)	26%
Co-op Fundamentals for Engineering (CFE) in-class and online material	40%
Assigned Co-op Advisor (Student Advisor or Career Advisor)	47%
Family, Friends/peers, Senior co-op students	57%

It's important to understand the full picture of the supports that students rely on to secure employment, this means looking at the number of resources they accessed. Of those who accessed services, 88% accessed between 1-3 services, 11% accessed between 4-6 services, and less than 1% accessed between 7-12 services, resources, or supports. This shows that students accessed very few total services with most accessing between 1-3 services.

Of the 327 students who elaborated on their experience with the various services, supports and resources they accessed, many students (n=144) indicated an overall positive experience, explaining that the people they spoke with were kind, the supports were helpful and that they had an overall positive satisfaction with the services provided. Although to a lesser degree, there were some students (n=19) that shared a negative experience, elaborating on the fact that their concerns were dismissed and the supports were not helpful.

In addition to general feedback, the support that most students (n=45) mentioned was their co-op advisor which is also consistent with having the highest proportion of students who used the service. There was a mix of positive and negative sentiments associated with these comments, with some students simply reflecting on the positive interactions they had with their assigned advisor, and others mentioning more negative experiences. As two students explained,

> *I had a difficult time communicating with my co-op advisors this most recent term in that there was a shift in staffing and it appeared that I was speaking to a new person every time I would email. They were usually punctual with responses but would occasionally fail to answer my specific questions.*

> *It was fine. Again, it feels like the support provided is given from a script, and this makes it really difficult to make connections with your advisor and feel like they care about your individual case.*

Both students allude to different situations where they did not feel a personal connection to their advisor.

Additional supports that students mentioned (n=20) included relying on advice from friends, family and upper year students mainly because, as students explained, they often had more specific and relevant advice. For example, one student explained,

> *I feel like I gained the most help from asking upper year co-op students for advice or resume critiques. Official assistance from the university was sometimes helpful, but often was very generic advice that I already knew.*

The explanation from this student points to a lack of relevance in the support provided by the University of Waterloo. While students are mostly satisfied with the available supports, there is opportunity for support tailored to the realities of finding a job that is relevant to their program in the current job market. This is especially important given the fact relevance to program is an important and influential factor in students' process of securing employment.

Co-op Cycle and Timelines

Concerns with meeting co-op application deadlines while also balancing other commitments is mentioned consistently by students. As such, we asked students to share their experience with co-op cycles and timelines by first asking students which cycle they secured their last co-op job. 35% of students secured their co-op job during cycle 1 followed by 33% of students who secured their co-op job independent of Co-op and Experiential Education (CEE) cycles. Of the remaining 32%, 16% secured their co-op job in cycle 2 and 16% in cycle 3 or later (Figure 16).

Figure 16: During which cycle were you able to secure your job in your last recruitment term?

33%   35%

16%   16%

■ Cycle 1   ■ Cycle 2   ■ Cycle 3 or later   ■ I arranged my own job independent of CEE Cycles
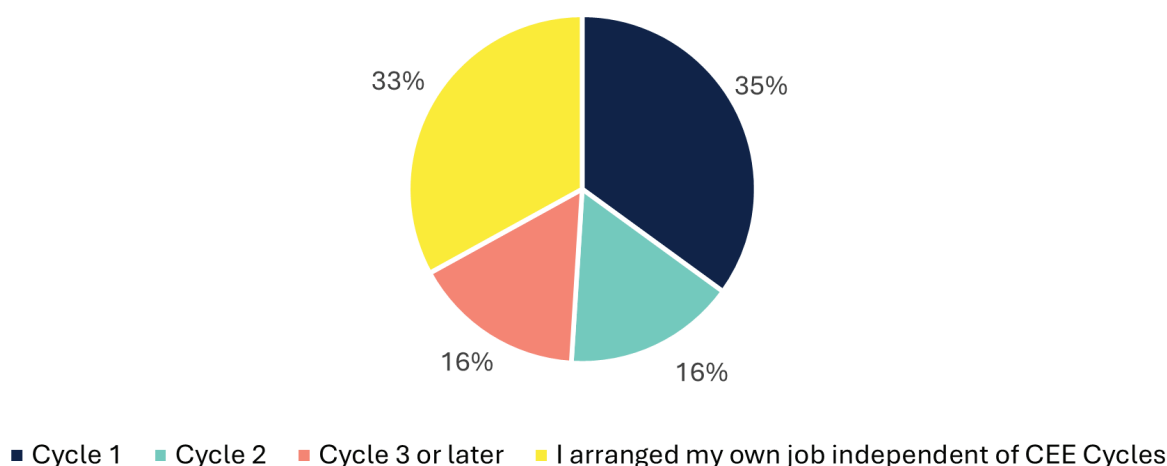
When we further compared by demographics, we found that:

- Arts (43%) and Engineering (41%) students are more likely to secure employment independent of CEE cycles when compared to other faculties***
- International students (44%) are more likely to secure employment independent of CEE cycles when compared to domestic students (32%)*

Cycles 1 and 2

We then asked students what their experience was with the length of time provided for each round of Cycle 1 and 2 (Figure 17). To help them answer the question more accurately, students were provided with examples of the date ranges for these rounds for the Winter 2025 term. For each round of the co-op cycle, most report having just the right amount of time. However, the rounds that most students report having not enough time for were the length job postings are open (36%) and length of time between employer rankings and student rankings (33%). On the other hand, 29% felt the length of the interview period was too much time. As such, it might be worth considering how to reduce the length of this round in an effort to add more time to the other two.

Figure 17: Experience with the length of time provided for different rounds of hiring cycle 1 and 2

	Not enough time	The right amount of time	Too much time
Length job postings are open	36%	57%	7%
Length of the interview period	10%	61%	29%
Length of time between employer rankings due and student rankings due	33%	63%	4%
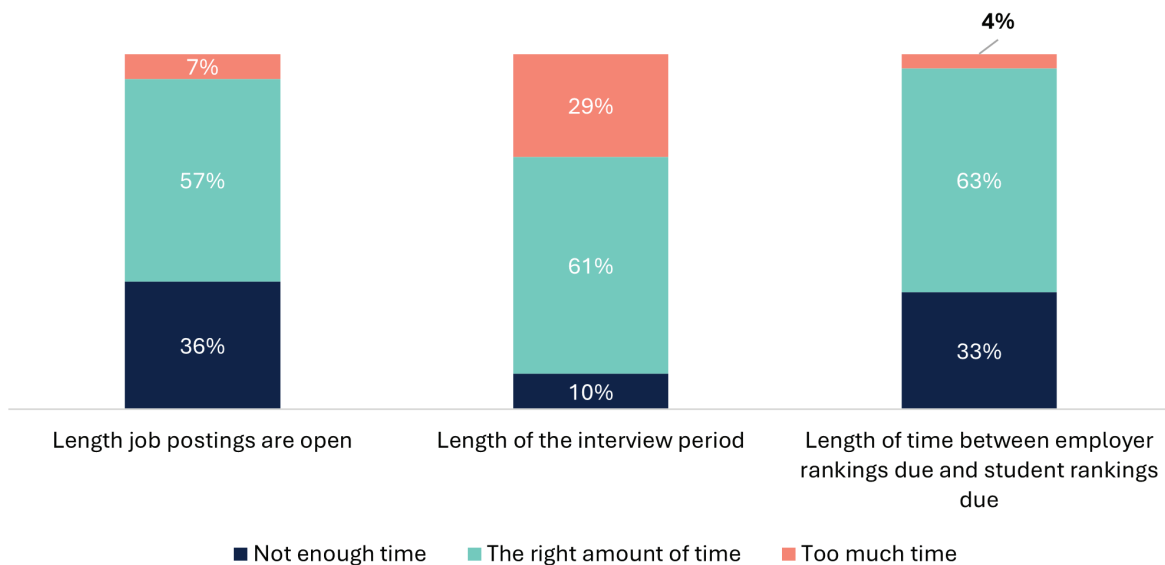
When further comparing by demographics, we found that:

- Arts (56%) and Science (50%) students were more likely to report not having enough time for the length job postings are open compared to other faculties***
- Students who completed 2 (38%) or 3 (46%) co-op terms were more likely to report having too much time for the interview period***
- Science (38%) and Environment (36%) students were more likely to report having too much time for the interview period compared to other faculties*
- International students (21%) were more likely to report having not enough time for the interview period compared to Domestic students (9%)*

Cycles 3, 4 and 5

We then asked students what their experience was with the length of time provided for each co-op round (Figure 18). Again, to help them answer the question more accurately, students were provided with examples of the date ranges for these rounds for the Winter 2025 term. For both the interview period and the time between employer and student rankings, most students (61%) report having just the right amount of time; however, 37% also indicate that they did not have enough time, with only 2% indicating they had too much time. When it comes to the length of time that job postings were open, most students (59%) report having not enough time. When comparing with cycles 1 and 2, students from cycles 3, 4, and 5 indicate needing more time for each co-op round. For example, 36% of students from cycles 1 and 2 indicate there not being enough time for the length job postings are open while this jumps to 59% for students from cycles 3, 4, and 5.

Figure 18: Experience with the length of time provided for different rounds of hiring in cycle 3,4 and 5
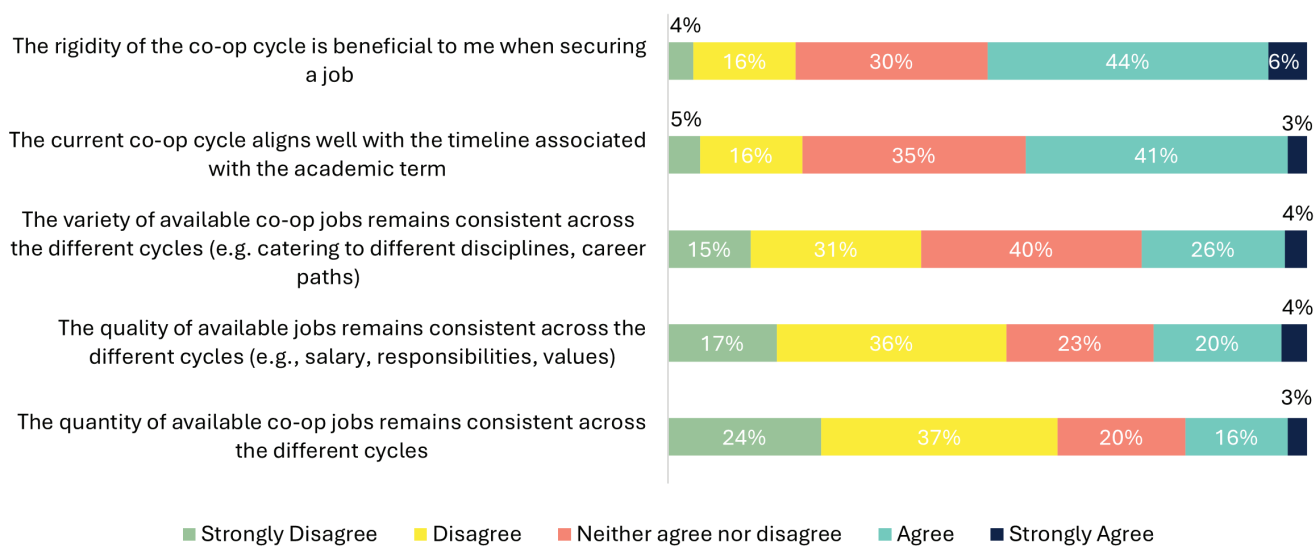
1%

40%

59%

Length job postings are open

2%

61%

37%

Length of the interview period

2%

61%

37%

Length of time between employer rankings due and student rankings due

■ Not enough time ■ The right amount of time ■ Too much time
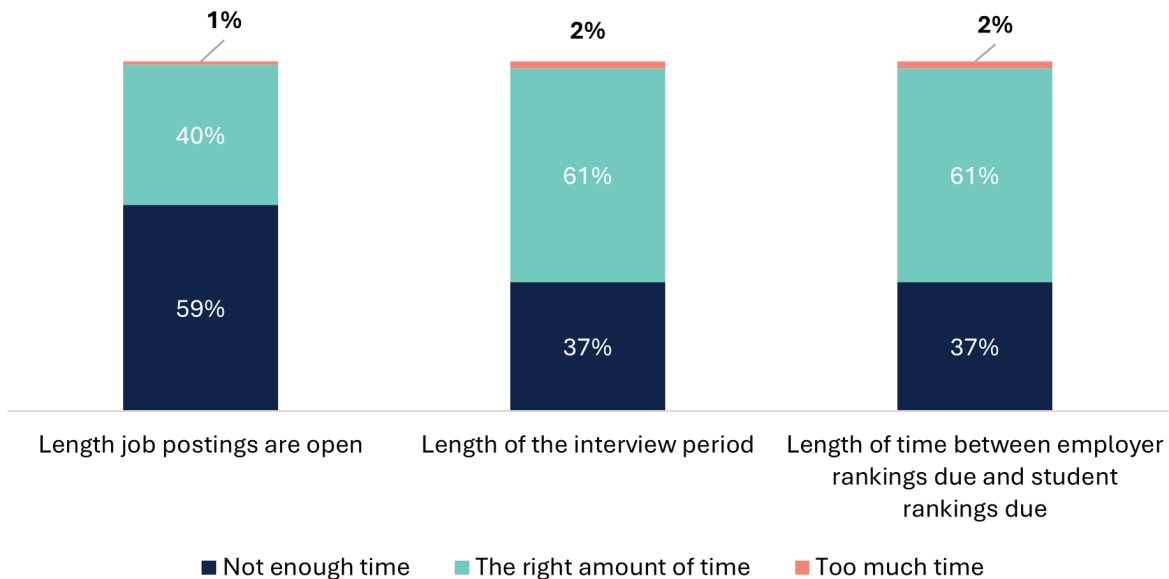
Overall Experience with Co-op Cycles

To better understand the nuances of students' experience with the co-op cycles, such as job quality and variety, and overall alignment with the academic term, we asked students to indicate their level of agreement with a variety of statements (Figure 19).

The statements with the most agreement from students were "the rigidity of the co-op cycle is beneficial to me when securing a job" (50% either agree or strongly agree) and "the current co-op cycle aligns well with the timeline associated with the academic term" (44% either agree or strongly agree).

The statements with the least agreement were the consistency amongst the variety, quantity, and quality of jobs across co-op cycles. For example, 61% of students either disagree or strongly disagree that the quantity of co-op jobs remains consistent across co-op cycles. This further supports earlier findings where students report issues around finding quality jobs on WaterlooWorks that are relevant to their program. Combining this with issues around consistency amongst co-op cycles, it further adds to the problem that students are facing when searching for quality co-op positions. As such, it is important to ensure that there are enough quality jobs for students on WaterlooWorks and that these jobs remain consistent across co-op cycles.

Figure 19: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The rigidity of the co-op cycle is beneficial to me when securing a job	4%	16%	30%	44%	6%
The current co-op cycle aligns well with the timeline associated with the academic term	5%	16%	35%	41%	3%
The variety of available co-op jobs remains consistent across the different cycles (e.g. catering to different disciplines, career paths)	15%	31%	40%	26%	4%
The quality of available jobs remains consistent across the different cycles (e.g., salary, responsibilities, values)	17%	36%	23%	20%	4%
The quantity of available co-op jobs remains consistent across the different cycles	24%	37%	20%	16%	3%

■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

When we further compared by demographics, we found that:

- Science students are more likely to either disagree or strongly disagree that the quantity (72%) and variety (60%) of jobs remain consistent amongst co-op cycles compared to other faculties*
- International students are more likely to either disagree or strongly disagree (31%) that the current co-op cycles align well with the academic term compared to domestic students (20%)*
- Students with disabilities are more likely to either disagree or strongly disagree (33%) that the current co-op cycles align well with the academic term compared to students without disabilities (18%)*

105 students shared further about their experience with the timelines associated with co-op job cycles. Many students (n=45) commented on the lengths and timelines of various cycles of co-op, with some suggestions for how this could be changed. Overall, student responses about length of the cycles were mixed and contradictory, with some asking for cycles 1 and 2 to be shorter to allow for the later cycles to be longer, while others stressed the importance of having the initial cycles be longer as they are the most important time to find a job. What students did seem to agree with, however, was the fact that the interview period associated with cycle 2 often overlaps with midterms. In fact, this idea of balancing their co-op applications with other responsibilities was a key reason that most students shared as the reason for why they wanted changes. As one student explained,

> *The rapidness of the cycles following cycle 2 is quite difficult to manage especially because of its alignment with the school term. In my experience, I've found that workload ramps up as the term progresses, and so it is fairly hard to manage assignments, tests, and other deadlines, along with extracurricular and family commitments, personal things like exercise and spending time with friends, along with the really rapid successive cycles...*

Students (n=22) also specifically mentioned the amount of job postings available, specifically comparing the different cycles as well as postings within each cycle. Overall, students described that there were often not enough jobs in later postings and cycles. Students (n=8) also specifically mentioned the timeline associated with ranking, explaining that they needed more time in between employer rankings in order to negotiate with employer, talk to their advisor and overall have time to think strategically about how they want to rank their options.

Renege Experience

Another important aspect of the co-op program at the University of Waterloo is what is known as a renege. A renege involves a student who has agreed upon an offer of employment yet chooses not to honour the employment. Throughout the survey, we asked students about their awareness of the consequences of reneging a co-op as well as whether they have ever reneged on a co-op. Overall, 48% of students who responded to the survey were aware of what a renege is and 52% were not. Students who were aware of what a renege is were asked about their awareness of the consequences as well.

There are various consequences for reneging on a co-op, such as being assigned a WaterlooWorks status of unemployed (UL), not being able to register subsequent co-op employment for the work term, and being unable to register a full-time course load. Figure 20 shows that 54% of students (n=164) are aware of these consequences. 40% (n=120) are somewhat aware and the remaining 6% (n=17) are not aware.

Figure 20: Are you aware of the consequences of a renege?
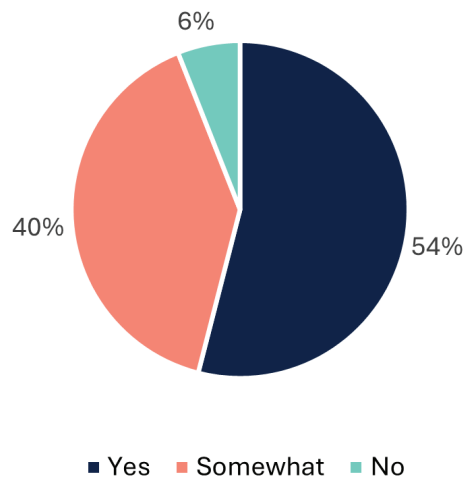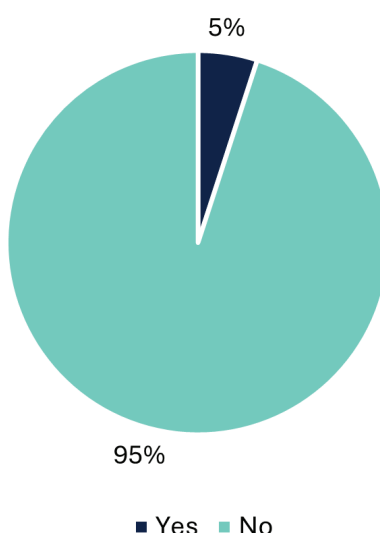

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Figure 21 also shows that only 5% of students (n=16) have ever reneged on an offer while 95% have not (n=285).

Figure 21: Have you ever reneged an offer?

5%

95%

■ Yes ■ No

Of the 16 students who elaborated on why they had reneged an offer, students (n=7) explained a situation that led them to renege such as finding a better position either because of pay, location or overall type of work. To these students, the renege was worth the benefits that these positions included. Other students mentioned course related issues, personal circumstances and issues with the ranking processes as reasons for reneging.

Students who indicated they had not reneged an offer were asked if they had ever considered it, with 23% responding yes. 53 students elaborated on why they considered but did not end up following through with the renege. Most students (n=31) mentioned that the consequences, such as losing access to WaterlooWorks and not receiving a co-op credit, were the reason they did not follow through with a renege. These students simply felt that it was too risky, especially when another option was not guaranteed.

Other students (n=11) described situations where it was necessary to keep their job for various reasons, such as settling with a low salary for the experience, wanting to make the most of the situation despite having doubts, wanting to gain the experience for the future, and worries about not securing another job.

Students (n=11) also mentioned being able to negotiate with employers (i.e., an offer with a raise before the rank deadline) while others felt important to go through with the commitment.

Co-op Fee

With the context of the recently approved co-op fee for the 2025-2026 academic year ($817 fee, $31 increase from 2024-2025), we asked students about their awareness of the increased co-op fee and where students would like to see the 4% increase go towards. Figure 22 shows that 43% of students are aware of the co-op fee increase, compared to 57% who were not. When comparing among demographics, there were no statistically significant differences, showing that the lack of awareness is consistent among all demographics including year of study and faculty.

Figure 22: Are you aware of the 4% co-op fee that was recently approved for the 2025-2026 year?

43%

57%

■ Yes ■ No
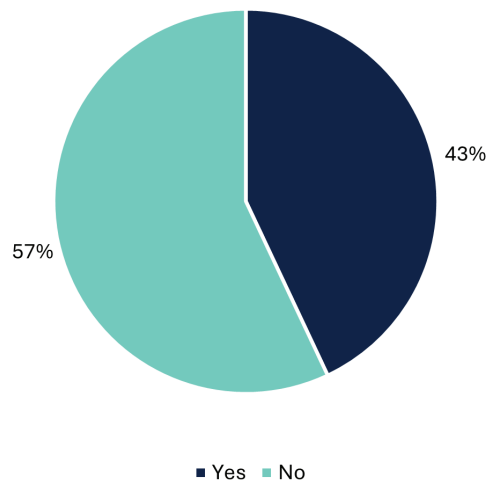
We then further asked students, on a scale of 1-5, where 1 equals no awareness and 5 equals full awareness, how aware they are about where their co-op fee goes (Figure 23). Overall, most students rate their awareness at either a 1 (41%) or a 2 (36%) showing little to no awareness of where their co-op fee goes. Furthermore, there were also no statistical differences across faculties, showing that this lack of awareness was consistent across all faculties.

Figure 23: On a Scale of 1-5, how aware are you where your co-op fee goes towards?

1	2	3	4	5
41%	36%	17%	4%	2%
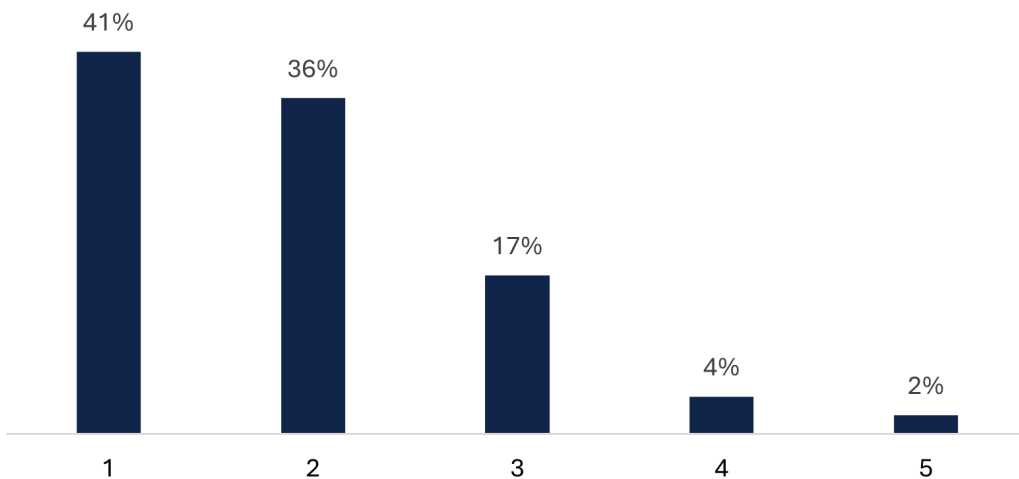
When asked specifically how the fee increase will impact them directly, 344 students shared a response. While some students (n=90) stated that this will have no impact on them, more than half of students (n=174) mentioned that it will have a financial and budgetary impact on them. Many students drew a direct connection to their living costs, noting that the more fees they are required to pay the University, the less disposable income they have for things like groceries. Two students elaborated on this when they explained:

> *It's taking money from students who might have a hard time making a living when efficiency measures can be done to reduce expenses. Sure it's 4% but that's a $30 increase which accumulates over time. Also $780 is a lot of money, that's basically my rent.*

> *Because co-op fees are charged during the study term before the work term, they significantly impact my ability to afford tuition. As a first-generation college student, I am responsible for covering these costs on my own, making the increase particularly challenging.*

Students (n=69) also mentioned concerns related to transparency, awareness and lack of impactful changes. In particular, students stated they thought the money went towards useless programs that do not benefit them or that they do not see any changes at all. Students explained the following:

> *It will definitely impact me as I feel the current services provide through co-op had little benefit to securing a placement. I don't understand why there was an increase if there were no actionable steps taken to provide a good support.*

> *Personally, I have not found the co-op services at UW to be helpful to me in securing employment, so it upsets me that I will be paying more money for services that have not been helpful for me in the past.*

Both these statements demonstrate that students expect to see a certain level of improvement and change in services as a direct result of a fee increase. Both students also emphasize a common theme throughout this question and the entire report around securing employment. Students are not happy about a fee increase when they do not see tangible improvements being made to support securing a job. This finding aligns with the fact that "recruiting more quality jobs on WaterlooWorks" (average rating of 5.8) was the top ranked improvement students would like to see their co-op fee go towards (Table 4).

This once again is supported by student concerns over the quantity, quality, and variety of jobs on WaterlooWorks. As such, it is important to prioritize recruiting more quality jobs on WaterlooWorks to better address these concerns that students have.

Table 4: Ranking of co-op fee improvements. Ratings range from 1-6. The higher the rating, the more important.

Co-op Improvement	Rating
Recruiting more quality jobs on WaterlooWorks	5.8
Better Program-Specific Advising	4.29
More Access to Resume Review	3.24
Upper-Year Mentorship Program	3.1
Opportunity for Drop-In Hours with Advisors	2.54
Better PD Courses	2.02

There was an array of responses to the question asking them to share anything else about their experience with co-op, many of which have been pointed to throughout the report already. The most common response from students (n=19) was their overall positive experience with co-op, explaining that it was beneficial and a great experience for them. Others (n=18) lamented about the mandatory PD courses, and how they felt they were useless and unnecessary.

Unsurprisingly, some students (n=14) took this opportunity to once again mention the difficulty they faced finding quality or relevant jobs while others (n=13) chose to elaborate on how stressful the process was, specifically in terms of finding a job and balancing with academic responsibilities. These are all themes that were present throughout the report.

Conclusion

Throughout this report, students highlighted their experiences with the co-op program at the University of Waterloo, including a wide variety of both positive and negative experiences. The largest concern students have with the co-op program is finding a job. This is a concern amongst all students but is particularly for students with limited co-op experience since many positions require previous experience and students feel like they cannot compete against more experienced students.

Students also report concerns with the variety, quantity, and quality of jobs on WaterlooWorks, specifically that there are not enough high-quality jobs available for them to apply for. The top indicators of a high-quality job for students are relevance to career goals, salary and pay, opportunity to develop new skills, and program relevance. It is important to ensure that not just the quantity of jobs on WaterlooWorks increases, but that they embody what students are looking for when it comes to high-quality jobs.

This issue of quality jobs varies by faculty as well, where Arts students, for example, are less likely to find relevant jobs related to their program on WaterlooWorks. As such, Arts students are more likely to resort to external sources for finding co-op employment. Considering that more quality jobs on WaterlooWorks is the top priority that students would like to see with their increased co-op fee, it is important to ensure that job quality across faculties is consistent.

Another concern mentioned by students is the difficulty of securing employment while balancing other responsibilities. Students mention that securing co-op employment is like the addition of a full-course load. As such, many students report issues balancing things like academics, including meeting academic deadlines and meeting participation requirements. These concerns also vary based on co-op cycles, where students from cycles 3, 4, and 5 note more concerns regarding co-op timelines than those from cycles 1 and 2.

While students highlight various concerns, students also highlight many positives of the co-op program. These include the experience students have gained and how co-op was very beneficial for them, while others mentioned how helpful a lot of the University services were with getting a co-op job.

Appendix A: Survey Participant Demographics

Table 5: Survey Participant Demographics

	N	%
Overall	1092	100
Year		
First	367	33.6%
Second	219	20.05%
Third	227	20.79%
Fourth	262	24%
Fifth+	12	1.1%
NL	4	0.37%
Faculty		
Health	85	7.78%
Arts	224	20.51%
Engineering	248	22.71%
Environment	91	8.33%
Math	218	19.96%
Science	226	20.7%
Co-op Program		
No	281	25.73%
Yes	811	74.27%
Disability		
Disabled	107	9.8%
Non-disabled	923	84.52%
I prefer not to answer	62	5.68%
International Student		
International	80	7.34%
Domestic	1012	92.67%

As demonstrated in Table 5, most students (84.52%) indicated that they did not have a disability, compared to 9.8% who did.

First year students (33.6%) make up the largest portion of respondents to the survey. This is followed by fourth year students (24%), third year students (20.79%), second year students (20.05%), students in fifth year or above (1.1%) and students categorized as NL (0.37%). Compared to the actual student population for the winter 2025 term, we over selected first years and under selected third and fourth years (Figure 24).
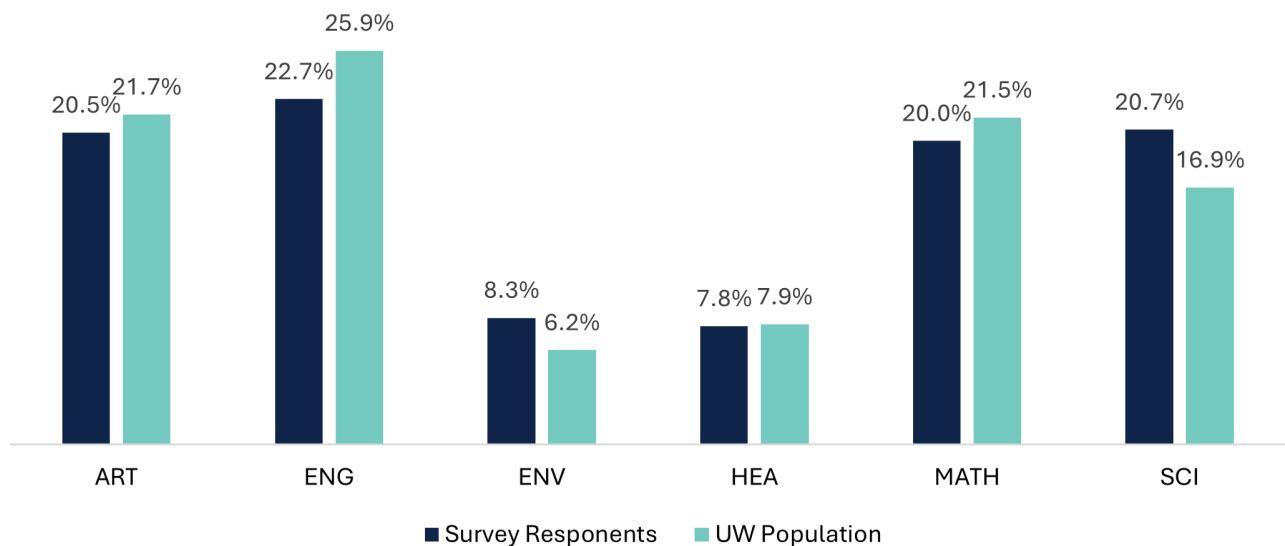
Figure 24: Year of Study
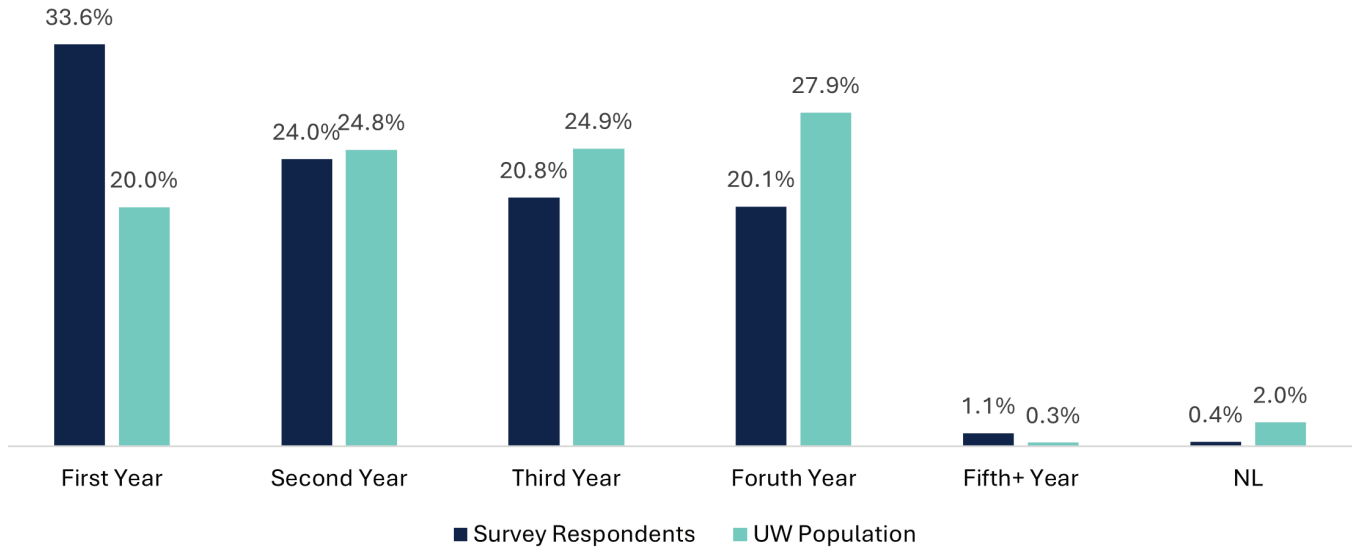
When it comes to faculty, 22.71% of survey respondents were in engineering, followed by Arts (20.51%), Science (20.7%), Math (19.96%), Health (7.78%) and Environment (8.33%). Compared to the actual student population, we under selected Art, Engineering and Math students and over selected Environment and Science students (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Faculty

When it comes to co-op, most students indicated that they were in the co-op program (74.27%) compared to 25.73% of students who were not. Compared to the actual student population, we were pretty accurate with our sample (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Co-op Status

74.3% **74.4%**

25.7% **25.6%**

Yes

No

■ Survey Respondents ■ UW Population
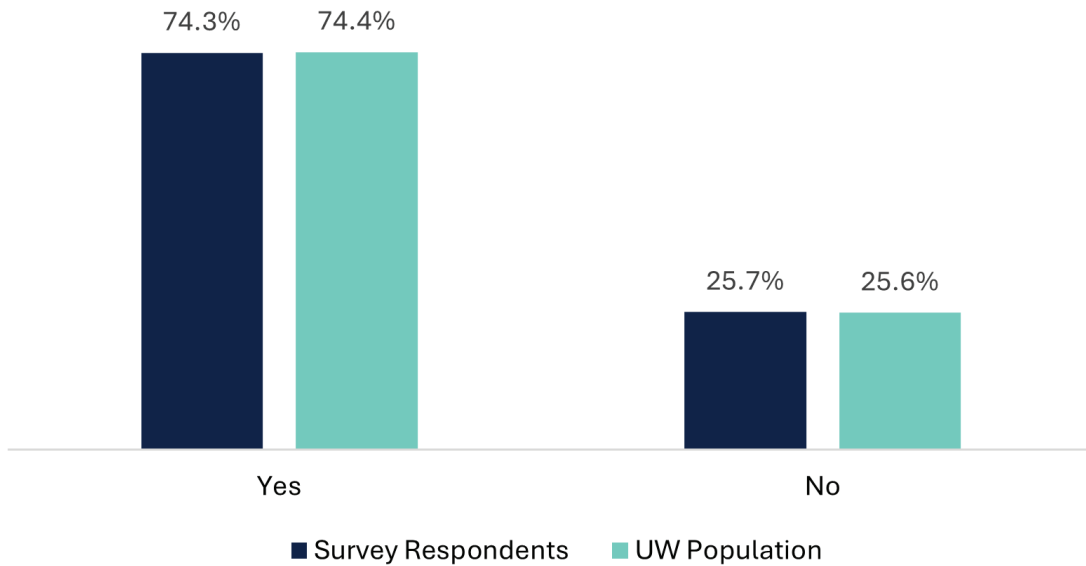
Most students indicated they were not international students (92.67%) compared to 7.34% who were. Compared to the actual student population, we under selected international students (Figure 27).

Figure 27: International Students

92.7% **85.5%**

7.3% **14.5%**

Yes

No

■ Survey Respondents ■ UW Population
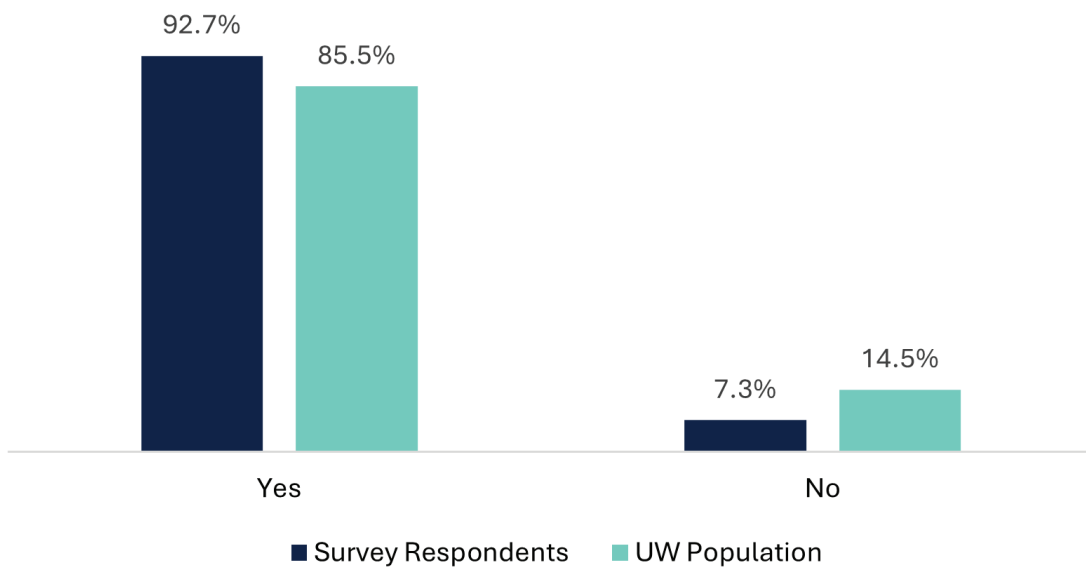
Appendix B: Survey Questions

BLOCK 1: Non-Co-op Students [Display logic using embedded data]
1. Have you ever been a co-op student at the University of Waterloo? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. Why are you not in the co-op program? *[Text box]*

[Then direct to end of survey]

BLOCK 2: Co-op Students – Introduction *[Display logic using embedded data]*
3. How many co-op work terms have you completed? [MC – Select One]
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3
    e. 4
    f. 5+

4. Have you completed a recruitment term (e.g., searched for a co-op job)? *[MC – Select One – Display if 3a is selected]*
    a. Yes
    b. No

BLOCK 3: Co-op Students General Questions – No Recruitment or Work Term Yet *[Display if 4b is selected]*
5. What aspects of the co-op program, if any, are you concerned about? *[MC – Select all that apply]*
    a. Being able to secure a co-op job
    b. Preparing my resume and interview skills
    c. Balancing academics and securing a co-op job
    d. How I will be treated by my employer
    e. Arranging housing for co-op jobs outside of Waterloo
    f. Other *[Text box]*
    g. I'm not concerned about any aspect of the co-op program *[Make exclusive]*

6. What are you looking forward to about your co-op program? *[Text box]*

[Then direct to end of survey]

BLOCK 4: Co-op Students General Questions – At Least One Recruitment or Work Term Completed *[Display if 3b-f OR 4a is selected]*
7. In your opinion, which of the following factors indicate a high quality job? *[MC - select all that apply]*

a. Relevance to my program
b. Relevance to my future career/post-graduate goals
c. Salary and pay
d. Reputation of the company
e. Opportunity to develop new skills
f. Alignment with my values
g. Opportunity to engage in meaningful work
h. Networking and mentoring opportunities
i. Other *[Text box]*

8. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the co-op program at the University of Waterloo: *[Matrix with options for very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, NA]*
   a. Quality of jobs available in WaterlooWorks (e.g., salary, responsibilities, values)
   b. Variety of job postings available in WaterlooWorks (e.g., catering to different disciplines, career paths)
   c. Quantity of job postings available in WaterlooWorks
   d. Experience scheduling interviews on WaterlooWorks
   e. Experience with the rank and match process
   f. Overall support and resources provided through Co-operative and Experiential Education (CEE)
   g. Overall work term experience
   h. Student performance evaluation process
   i. Arrange Own Job Process

9. Overall, what have you found to be the most challenging aspect of your co-op experience so far? *[Text box]*

BLOCK 5: Recruiting Term Experience

10. Were you able to secure a job in your last recruiting term? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Yes
    b. No *[Skip to Q12]*

11. During which cycle were you able to secure your job in your last recruitment term? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Cycle 1
    b. Cycle 2
    c. Cycle 3 or later
    d. I arranged my own job independent of CEE Cycles

12. What barriers do you think prevented you from securing employment in your last recruiting term? *[Text box – Display only if 10b is selected]*

13. How prepared did you feel for the process of securing employment during your most recent recruiting term? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Completely unprepared
    b. Somewhat unprepared
    c. Neither prepared nor unprepared
    d. Somewhat prepared
    e. Completely prepared

14. Which of the following services, resources, or supports for co-op students are you aware of? *[MC – Select all that apply]*
    a. Assigned Co-op Advisor (Student Advisor or Career Advisor)
    b. CareerHub online resource
    c. Partners for Employment Career Fair/Job Fair
    d. Centre for Career Action individual help with résumé/cover letter/interview/job search located in the Tatham Centre or a library
    e. Centre for Career Action workshop or event (e.g., speaker panel)
    f. Co-op 601: Career Success Strategies course
    g. Co-op Fundamentals for Engineering (CFE) in-class and online material
    h. Employer Information Sessions (on-campus recruiting event hosted by an employer)
    i. Faculty-specific services (e.g. Academic Advisor)
    j. Family, Friends/peers, Senior co-op students
    k. PD1: Career Fundamentals course, PD1 Teaching Assistants (TAs)
    l. University staff (Don/Residence Life Staff, Professors/faculty members)
    m. I am not aware of any services, resources or supports for co-op students [Make exclusive]

15. Which services, resources, or supports did you access during your most recent term securing employment? *[MC – Select all that apply]*
    a. Carry forward responses from Q14
    b. I did not access any services, resources or supports *[Make exclusive]*

16. Overall, how was your experience with the services, resources or supports you accessed? *[Text box]*

17. To what extent did the following logistical factors influence your decision to accept your most recent co-op job? *[Matrix with options for not at all influential, slightly influential, somewhat influential, very influential, extremely influential]*
    a. Availability of information at the time of decision-making
    b. Balancing external timelines and applications with WaterlooWorks Cycles
    c. Navigating pathways to remove yourself from consideration (e.g., removing your application, interview relief, Not Interested rankings)
    d. Compensation or salary
    e. Geographic job location
    f. Familial or social circumstance
    g. Housing during your work term
    h. Transportation during your work term
    i. Hybrid/remote/in-person arrangement
    j. Consideration related to expected graduation date (e.g., needing the credit)
    k. Availability of co-op jobs relevant to my program

18. To what extent did the following value-based factors influence your decision to accept your most recent co-op job? *[Matrix with options for not at all influential, slightly influential, somewhat influential, very influential, extremely influential]*
    a. Alignment to program/career aspirations
    b. Alignment to your skills and experiences
    c. Perceived work-life balance
    d. Alignment with your personal values
    e. Opportunity to develop new skills
    f. Opportunity to make meaningful contributions
    g. Mentorship and networking opportunities
    h. Culture of workplace

19. In the past, through which method have you secured your co-op employment? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. WaterlooWorks only
    b. External only
    c. Some WaterlooWorks, some external

20. What led you to secure co-op employment externally and what was your experience like with the Arrange Own Job (AOJ) process? *[Text box – display only if 19b or c is selected]*

BLOCK 6: Co-op Timeline
21. How much time do you estimate you spent weekly on securing co-op employment in your most recent recruiting term? Time spent could include preparing your cover letters and résumés, searching for and screening jobs, applying to jobs, interviewing for jobs, etc. *[MC – Select One]*
    a. 0-5 hours
    b. 6-10 hours
    c. 11-20 hours
    d. 21-30 hours
    e. 31-40 hours
    f. 40+ hours

22. How did the time spent to secure co-op employment in your most recent recruiting term compare to your expectations? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Much less time than expected
    b. Somewhat less time than expected
    c. As much time as expected
    d. Somewhat more time than expected
    e. Much more time that expected

23. For each of the different rounds associated with Co-op Cycle 1 and 2, please indicate your experience with the length of time provided. Note: Winter 2025 dates have been included as examples for additional context. *[Matrix with options for too much time, the right amount of time, not enough time, not applicable]*
    a. Length job postings are open *[January 4-14; 11 days]*
    b. Length of the interview period *[January 20-February 5; 17 days]*
    c. Length of time between employer rankings due and student rankings due *[February 6 at 2pm and February 7 at 2pm; 24 hours]*

24. For each of the different rounds associated with Co-op Cycle 3, 4 and 5 please indicate your experience with the length of time provided. Note: Winter 2025 dates have been included as examples for additional context. *[Matrix with options for too much time, the right amount of time, not enough time, not applicable]*
    a. Length job postings are open *[live for two business days]*
    b. Length of the interview period *[March 18-20; 3 days]*
    c. Length of time between employer rankings due and student rankings due *[March 20 at 8pm and March 21 at 11am; 15 hours]*

25. Overall, how was your experience with the length of time provided between receiving employer rankings and submitting your student rankings? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Too much time
    b. The right amount of time
    c. Not enough time

26. To what extent has the process of securing co-op employment impacted your ability to fulfill your additional responsibilities? *[Matrix with options for no impact, some impact, significant impact, severe impact, not applicable]*
    a. Academic/course work
    b. Volunteer
    c. Part-time job
    d. Familial/caregiving
    e. Extracurriculars/social

27. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: *[Matrix with options for strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]*
    a. The current co-op cycle aligns well with the timeline associated with the academic term
    b. The rigidity of the co-op cycle is beneficial to me when securing a job
    c. The variety of available co-op jobs remains consistent across the different cycles (e.g., catering to different disciplines, career paths)
    d. The quality of available co-op jobs remains consistent across the different cycles (e.g., salary,
    e. responsibilities, values)
    f. The quantity of available co-op jobs remains consistent across the different cycles

28. Do you have anything else to share about your experience with the timeline associated with co-op job cycles? *[Text box]*

BLOCK 7: Renege

29. Are you aware of what a renege is? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Yes
    b. No *[Skip to Q35]*

30. Are you aware of the consequences of a renege? *[MC – Select One]*
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Somewhat

31. Have you ever reneged an offer? *[MC – Select One]*
   a. Yes *[skip to Q34]*
   b. No

32. Have you ever considered reneging an offer? *[MC – Select One – display if 31b selected]*
   a. Yes
   b. No

33. Why did you end up not following through with a renege? *[Text box – display only if 32a is selected]*

34. Why did you end up following through with a renege? How did the consequences impact you? *[Text box – display only if 31a is selected]*

BLOCK 8: Co-op Fee

35. Are you aware of the 4% co-op fee increase that was recently approved for the 2025-2026 year? *[MC – Select One]*
   a. Yes
   b. No

36. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your understanding of where your co-op fee goes? (With 1 being no understanding and 5 being excellent understanding) *[MC – Select One]*

37. How, if at all, will the fee increase impact you directly? *[Text box]*

38. Please rank which improvements you would like to see your increased fee go towards? (With 1 being most important and 6 being least important) *[Rank order]*
   a. Recruiting more quality job opportunities on WaterlooWorks
   b. Better program-specific advising
   c. More access to resume review
   d. Better PD courses
   e. Upper year mentorship program
   f. Opportunity for drop-in hours with advisors

BLOCK 9: Conclusion

39. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a co-op student? *[Text box]*