

University of Technology, Jamaica

Co-operative Education at UTech

"Partnering with Industry to
produce work-ready graduates "

Co-ordinator's Pen



Wow! We are at another major placement period when many of our students will transition to the world of work, some for the very first time. This opportunity will be an invaluable one, as students will in a few short weeks overcome the initial learning curve and become productive contributors to their temporary place of employment.

And yes, our employers will have to do some adjustments. Participation in a Co-op Ed Programme amounts to an agreement to invest some time in the nurture of future full-time employees. Employers will not only supervise students and provide regular feedback, they will also mentor students. In the end, a mutually beneficial relationship would have been forged.

So let the journey begin! Bon voyage.

La-Cresha Gordon-Brydson
University's Co-op Ed Co-ordinator



Ceanta Nelson, Co-op Ed student pursuing a B.Ed in Business and Computer Studies on assignment

Stepping up to the Challenge- The MOD Office Story

Each year, a number of graduates leave the University, anxious to begin a career for which they had engaged in years of study. Unfortunately this transition is not as smooth for many of these graduates, who must come to terms with the fact that employers are generally hesitant to employ persons without relevant work experience.

UTech's Co-operative Education (Co-op Ed) programme provides that opportunity for soon-to-be graduates to gain relevant professional exposure at the workplace. The University raises its hat to its many partners who have stepped up to the challenge of facilitating this programme.

One such company is the **Modoffice by EHC Industries Ltd.** Established in April 1990, the company has three operational divisions, namely:

- ◆ *Modoffice Electronic Security Division* which specializes in the installation and maintenance of CCTV surveillance equipment and access control systems among other services. Students from the School of Engineering are generally assigned to this division of the company.
- ◆ *Modoffice Audio Visual Division* which markets large screen projection systems, multimedia or data/video projectors, electronic whiteboards and others.
- ◆ *Modoffice Furniture Division.*

Mr. Winston Brown is the Managing Director. His decision to partner with UTech through the Co-op Ed programme was based on his belief in the principle of apprenticeship and the idea of exposing undergraduates to the type of work that they may eventually be required to perform.

Stepping up to the Challenge continued

Expectations

The company's formal partnership with the University spans over three academic cycles. At the beginning, the managers had few expectations about the programme as it was experimental for them. In fact, the company had in previous years provided summer employment to UTech students. However this was not of the same structure as the Co-op Ed Programme. Nevertheless, Mr. Brown confidently stated that they were not disappointed as

whatever expectations they had of the programme were being met. They have seen that there is definite transferral of knowledge and further, students contribute a lot during their short tenure. For them, this programme works.

Integration

According to Mr. Brown, the students are fully integrated in the organization as they are assigned to teams involved in installing new projects and/or performing repair and maintenance tasks in the field. Secondly, students are involved in office meetings which entail analyzing and planning solutions to problems encountered in the field. They are sometimes given assignments to do on their own which are aimed at widening their knowledge of the work with which the company is involved.

Mr. Brown was quick to acknowledge that students that have entered into his business environment were technically prepared and possessed

commendable knowledge of the use of computers and local area networking (LAN).



Supervision

At EHC Industries, employees are also assigned as mentors for the students, a role that is taken quite seriously. Feedback is constant and explanation is given to students as to why it is important to take instructions from an installation supervisor at every stage of the work.

Mr. Brown stated that students are managed in similar fashion as regular employees with the proviso that they must have easy access to company executives in order to derive the explanations that they need. It is recognised that students' time in the company is limited and without that access some opportunities for learning and knowledge transfer may be lost. Further, maximum encouragement is given to students when they ask for time off for extra studies in preparation for exams and final year projects. They are also encouraged to discuss their projects with the company.



ModOffice Employee

Partnership Benefits

Students have indicated to the company, the many ways in which they have benefitted from the Co-op Ed assignment. Similarly, the company has engaged some interesting students and have observed the students progress during and after their tenure at the company. Based on their performance, upon graduating, EHC Industries have employed these students and they are very pleased with how they adjusted to full-time work.

Mr. Brown encourages other businesses to partner with the University through the Co-op Ed Programme. He sees every company's participation as relevant. Students, he reiterated, only take up little extra space for short periods. Additionally, the more the students learn, the more functional they will be when they take up full time employment. "This has to be in the best interest of every employer and most certainly for every student" he says. For them the programme is well constructed and well managed. There have been no drawbacks.

So what are you waiting for? ***Step up to the Challenge!***

View of Modoffice by the EHC Industries Ltd, 16 Retirement Road , Kingston 5

Did you know?

The Co-op Ed experience improves students' marketability, improves academic motivation, and facilitates a better understanding of career choices and goals.....

Co-op Ed does not apply to courses of study with a practicum component which is in keeping with the requirements for professional certification; for example, Teaching practice, Nursing and Pharmacy externships.

Co-op Ed is a value-added component of some courses of study introduced to enrich the student experience and increase their work-readiness.

10 Qualities of an Effective Manager(Supervisor)

An Effective Manager (Supervisor).....

1. has integrity. People trust an effective manager because they know he/she has personal integrity. Trust in turn builds loyalty. A manager with a loyal staff has the capability to be very effective. He/she has staff who can be relied on and, in turn staff are confident in their abilities to deliver, knowing they have the support of their manager.

2. empowers his/her staff to perform at their best. This means creating an environment for success: setting boundaries so that people can take responsibility, creating opportunities that allow people to challenge their abilities, motivating people to find new and innovative ways, while also ensuring support structures are in place.

3. is able to motivate. People perform at their best when they are happy and motivated. There is more to motivation than salary or bonuses. A manager that understands his/her employees can set challenging yet achievable goals and rewards in a variety of ways. People can be motivated by interesting work, by being part of an effective team, by the prospect of learning new skills, or by the knowledge that their hard work will be recognised and appreciated.

4. knows how to delegate. An effective manager understands the skills and abilities of his/her staff, and knows how to delegate. Effective delegation is selecting the right person to do the work, given the constraints of skill requirements and time. Delegation is entrusting the person with the responsibility to complete the work. It includes setting clear guidelines and expectations as well as boundaries for decision-making responsibilities.

5. is adaptable. All managers must be able to quickly adjust to new business environment, understanding the implications of the changes and adjusting goals and strategies accordingly. An adaptable manager sets an example to his/her employees and leads the way in demonstrating new ways of working and/or behaving.

6. takes action. If he/she sees a problem he/she will address it. This may seem obvious, but all too often there are decisions that many managers find too difficult to take, so they put it off until a later date, or perhaps they move the problem for someone else to solve.

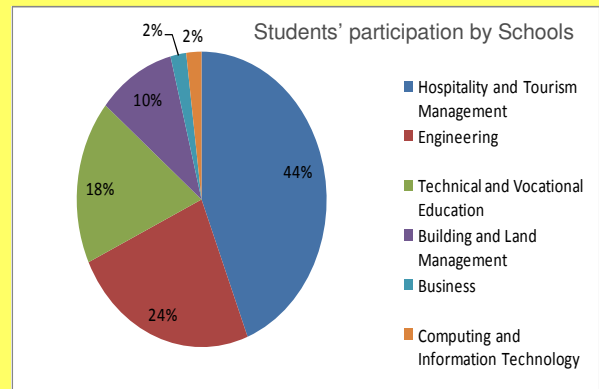
7. is a networker. It is useful for a manager to understand the real network within the business. Who are the key people that can make things happen? It's about understanding who affect the decisions you make today and in the future, and ensuring you have a good relationship with them.

8. understands the business culture. For any manager to be successful in a business he/she needs to understand its culture. This means he/she understands the goals and strategic drivers, appreciates the future vision for the business, and knows how things happen. Understanding how the 'wheels turn' within a business helps a manager work more effectively and equally helps him/her to contribute to the overall strategy and goals.

SNAPSHOT OF FACTS

On Co-op Ed AY 2010-2011

- ◆ Approximately **750** students participated in the programme.



- ◆ Over **400** employers participated in the programme.
- ◆ There were **24** courses of study with a Co-op Ed. component.
- ◆ Programme duration: A minimum of **4 weeks** (160 hours) and a maximum of **30 weeks** (1200 hours).

9. is a role model. An effective manager sets an example, to all staff, of appropriate behaviour and performance standards. It may seem clear, but it is extremely difficult to expect others to behave in a particular way, if you yourself do not set such an example.

10. values people above all else. A job well done is not about systems or processes or figures; it's about people. An effective manager recognises the importance of people in business, and shows everyone respect regardless of the role that they play. An effective manager listens to people; is fair and understanding. This doesn't mean managers can always keep everyone happy; however if a decision is reached through a fair process and people understand how the outcome was reached even if they don't necessarily agree with the result, they will respect the decision.

Adapted from <http://www.managementtrainee.co.uk/top-10-qualities-effective-manager.html>



Top 10 Employability skill sets (A must have for all UTech student employees)

1. Professionalism and Strong Work Ethic

Employers value student employees who exhibit behaviour that is professional at all times, understand the goals of the organization and possess a willingness to work hard.

2. Dependable & Responsible

Employers value student employees who are punctual and have an excellent attendance report; who are responsible for their actions and behaviour.

3. Possess a Positive Attitude

Employers value student employees who have initiative and the motivation to get the job done. It is the enthusiastic student who creates an environment of good will and therefore becomes a positive role model for employees.

4. Adaptable

Employers value student employees who are great team players; they ought to be able to adapt and maintain flexibility in completing tasks in an ever changing workplace.

5. Honest

Employers value student employees who maintain a sense of honesty and integrity above all else.

6. Self - Motivated

Employers value student employees who require very little supervision and direction to get the work done in a timely and professional manner.

7. Motivated to Grow & Learn

Employers value student employees who are interested in keeping up with new developments and knowledge in the field.

8. Possess Leadership Skills

Employers value student employees who recognize their skills and strengths and are able to utilize these in ways to motivate others to get the job done.

9. Proper Communication skills

Employers value student employees who are able to communicate effectively verbally and in writing.

10. Loyal

Employers value student employees they can trust and value their loyalty to the company.

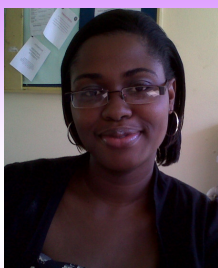
Adapted from <http://internships.about.com/od/internships101/tp/EmployeeValues.htm> by Penny Loretto.



Bulletin Board

1. Tax Administration Jamaica, in its correspondence to the University dated April 2, 2012 (Ref. No. TS 2:BS), stated that approval has been granted to employers participating under the Co-operative Education Programme to pay full-time students a stipend without the deduction of income tax. This applies if a student's stipend does not exceed the annual threshold of four hundred and forty-one thousand, one hundred and sixty eight dollars (\$441,168). Part-time students will not benefit from the threshold, since the majority of them are believed to be otherwise employed.
2. **Three (3)** courses of studies will for the first time offer the Co-op Ed module during this academic year. These are BA. Communication Arts and Technology, B.Eng. Construction Engineering and BSc. Applied Science with the following options: Environmental Science, Industrial and Analytic Chemistry and Forensic Chemistry.
3. UTech's summer placement period officially commences May 14 through to August 17. During this period students may be engaged for full 40 hour work weeks.

Acknowledgement



Special acknowledgement to Miss Sherdene DaCosta, Co-op Ed intern assigned to the University's Co-op Ed Unit.

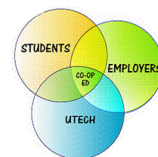
Miss DaCosta is responsible for the compilation of this issue of **Co-operative Education at UTech**. She is presently a 2nd year student in the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies pursuing a B.Ed in Business and Computer Studies.

Reflecting on the Co-op Ed experience, Miss DaCosta has this personal advice for students, "Grasp the opportunity to engage in this programme as you will be able to identify your weaknesses and work on them before you enter the actual world of work. Your skill-sets will also be enhanced".

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Visit the Co-operative Education Webpage at:

http://www.utech.edu.jm/services/OCE/index_new.htm