

CO-OP JAPAN PROGRAM

The Co-op Japan Program was established in May 1991 under the auspices of the Federal Government's Pacific 2000 Japan Science and Technology Fund. The program provides senior science and engineering students with the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in Japan.

The main thrust of the program is to develop a pool of young Canadian engineers and scientists with hands-on experience in Japanese industrial engineering and research practices. By enabling university students to develop an understanding and appreciation of Japanese industry, and by providing Japanese companies with the opportunity to take advantage of highly skilled and motivated students, the Co-op Japan Program encourages long term opportunities for scientific and industrial exchange between Canada and Japan.

A consortium of four Canadian universities was initially formed to implement the Co-op Japan Program: the University of Waterloo, Simon Fraser University, Universite de Sherbrooke, and the University of Victoria. Commencing in 1994, the Co-op Japan Program is expanding its mandate to include participation from other interested universities across Canada. To date, McMaster, Queen's, UBC, Toronto, Ecole Polytechnique, Saskatchewan and Dalhousie, have all expressed a strong interest in joining the Co-op Japan Program.

The Co-op Japan Program is open to senior level science and engineering students. In order to qualify for participation, students must have at least a year of Japanese language study, as well as a minimum of 8 months work experience related to their discipline, prior to their placement with a Japanese company. Once selected for placement, students are required to take a one month immersion Japanese language and culture program, which is taken directly prior to going to Japan. Work terms in Japan are seven months to one year in duration. Students live in company dormitories and commute to work each day, living and working along side their fellow Japanese researchers.

There are a wide range of co-op work term placements available, from hardware and software development using advanced technology, to new materials development, biotechnology, and chemical engineering. Since the program's inception, 82 placements have been developed for students in Japanese Industry, and over 40 companies in Japan have received students.

The majority of work placements are with large internationally-oriented companies in the Tokyo and Osaka areas of Japan. For example, some of the companies currently receiving students are: Toshiba, Mitsubishi Kasei, Nippon Steel, Kirin Breweries, Mitsubishi Electric, Fuji-Xerox, Chiyoda, NTT, NKK, Honda, Kubota and Asahi Chemical Corp. Many of these companies have visited the Co-op Japan Program in Canada in order to meet with students and faculty and to gain a first hand look at university based research and education as practiced in Canada.