



National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

George C. Marshall Space Flight Center  
Marshall Space Flight Center, Alabama 35812



## **Cooperative Education Program Working Agreement**

This agreement constitutes a basis of understanding between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC), Alabama, and the academic community concerning their mutual responsibilities in a Cooperative (Co-op) Education Program and its administrative details. This agreement provides a direct relationship with the appropriate educational institution and eliminates direct involvement of students in establishing the framework of the relationship. In addition, this agreement sets forth the program's purpose and objectives and states requirements for their attainment.

### **Program Purposes and Objectives**

#### **Purpose**

1. To provide study-related work experience for students pursuing associate, baccalaureate, and graduate curricula in subject matter fields useful to NASA where work experience being a prerequisite for the degree.
2. The Co-op Program provides a resource for potential employment with NASA following the successful completion of the program and graduation from college.

#### **Objectives**

1. To provide qualified college students with supervised, on-the-job learning experience in subject matter fields related to their academic majors.
2. To provide a variety of occupational experiences to assist students in determining the professional fields for which they may be suited.
3. To acquaint students with NASA's mission, program, and major projects in space and aeronautical research, development, and professional administration.
4. To provide learning and employment opportunities for qualified students without regard to age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
5. To establish and/or strengthen relationships between MSFC and the academic community to ensure mutual reinforcement between college curricula and the world of work.

### **The Cooperative Education Program**

The MSFC Co-op Education Program consists of a series of planned work assignments performed in laboratories, offices, and other related work areas, alternating with periods of related academic study. It is designed for qualified students in the fields of science, engineering, professional administration, and other occupational fields. Work assignments are designed to prepare students for entry into career positions after

successful completion of the program and graduation. While on the job, Co-op students perform duties in or related to their field of study and will work under the guidance of qualified MSFC personnel. Difficulty and responsibility of the work will vary with the grade level of the position. While successful completion of the program and graduation from college are prerequisites for appointment to permanent positions, such appointments are not guaranteed. MSFC's manpower needs, the availability of position vacancies, and a recommendation by the employing organization are determining factors for conversion not later than 120 calendar days after completion of the Co-op Program.

## Program Admission Requirements

1. Associate students must be full-time enrollees pursuing an associate's degree. The student must maintain the minimum grade point average established by their school's Co-op Program guidelines.

Baccalaureate students must be full-time enrollees pursuing a bachelor's degree. Completion of one full year of academic study is strongly recommended. Students must maintain the minimum grade point average established by their school's Co-op Program guidelines.

Graduate students must be enrolled in a curriculum leading to a master's or a doctorate degree on a substantially full-time basis (usually at least nine semester credit hours or the equivalent) and must be pursuing a major field of study related to the job for which he or she is being considered. The candidate must maintain at least a 2.9 overall grade average on a 4.0 scale, or the equivalent.

2. Candidates must have an academic record predictive of graduation.
3. Candidates must be enrolled in the educational institution's Co-op Education Program and must be recommended for the Co-op assignment by an authorized staff official of the institution.
4. Candidates must be U.S. citizens. The restrictions on employment of relatives described in 5 CFR Part 310 must be applied when appointing Co-op students. That guidance states that a student may only work in the same agency with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and/or the relative is not in a position to influence or control a student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement to a position within the agency.
5. Candidates must be at least 16 years of age upon entry into the program and pass a security investigation.

## How to Apply

Students who express interest in applying for Co-op vacancies within NASA MSFC are required to apply in accordance with the new NASA-wide online application procedures found at <http://www.nasajobs.nasa.gov>. *Please note: MSFC will continue to fax or e-mail Co-op vacancy announcements to the schools in lieu of posting the announcements to the NASA Jobs Web site.* The students should be referred to the online resume builder tool (see step 3) found under the NASA Automated Staffing and Recruiting System (NASA STARS) when applying for a vacancy announcement or go directly to <https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/ResumeBuilder/>. Once a Co-op vacancy announcement has been sent to the school's Co-op Office, students will need to follow instructions on the announcement to submit an application package to NASA MSFC. The announcement will give reference to the new online resume builder which will give instructions on how to build the student's resume or how the student can build his or her own resume. The student will click on quick apply for the vacancy announcement number that is posted to the announcement received by the College Co-op Office, when submitting his or her resume.

The Co-op Office at each school will continue to be responsible for making sure the student has met all requirements of the MSFC Co-op Program and that the student has registered through the school's Co-op Office prior to submitting a resume online. The student will still be required and instructed to have an official transcript and letter of recommendation submitted to MSFC's Co-op Office immediately following submittal of his or her resume. The student's online resume, official transcript (hardcopy), and letter of recommendation (hardcopy) will be required in order to be considered for a vacancy announcement through the MSFC Co-op Program. The official transcript and letter of recommendation should be sent to the following address:

NASA MSFC  
Attn: CD20/Cooperative Education Office  
Marshall Space Flight Center, AL 35812.

You may include any other related information that would be beneficial in the evaluation process. An OF612 is no longer required.

**Note:** Hardcopies of resumes and e-mailed resumes will not be accepted by the MSFC Co-op Office. All applicants must comply with the new online application process in order to be considered for a Co-op position at NASA MSFC. Students applying online that have not been recommended by the Co-op Office at their school will not be considered until they are properly registered through their Co-op Office.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Marshall Space Flight Center will—**

1. Maintain a liaison with the educational institution through its Co-op Education Coordinator.
2. Keep the educational institution informed of work experience opportunities in a timely manner.
3. Select appointees from among those recommended and referred by the educational institution. Such selection shall disregard age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
4. Process all personnel actions relative to the employment of Co-op students.
5. Ensure that students are supervised and counseled during their work periods by competent professional personnel.
6. Ensure that work assignments are related to the academic majors being pursued by students and collaborate with the institution in setting up work schedules to accommodate assignments.
7. Furnish supervisory evaluations of student work performance to the educational institution at reasonable intervals, or upon request.
8. Notify the educational institution of any proposed action to terminate a student's appointment because of failure to perform at an acceptable level, an unauthorized change of major, or misconduct.
9. Maintain records on student performance and other matters, including promotions, change in student status, and grade reports (course titles, number of credit hours, and grades) after the conclusion of each school term.

## The educational institution will—

1. Designate an official to act as the Co-op Education Liaison with MSFC.
2. Inform prospective candidates of MSFC's Co-op education opportunities.
3. Recommend only students who are enrolled in the institution's Co-op Education Program, including all honorably discharged veterans, and who have shown strong ability and potential in the fields of MSFC's interests and needs, and who plan to complete academic work leading to a degree. Students shall be recommended without regard to age, race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
4. Coordinate on-the-job training and academic education to ensure that the student obtains maximum benefit from their Co-op education experience, and inform the MSFC coordinator of any proposed change in the student's major field of study.
5. Keep the MSFC coordinator informed of any change in student status and furnish copies of all grade reports (including course titles, number of credit hours, and grades) after the conclusion of each school term.
6. In collaboration with the MSFC coordinator, set up an annual schedule of alternating work-study periods tailored to the needs and availability of each student and endeavor to ensure that each student adheres to the schedule. Inform the MSFC coordinator, in a timely manner, of any impending changes.
7. As needed, furnish the MSFC coordinator any releasable data and information about the appointee(s).

## Appointment

1. Students are appointed under the following authorities provided in the Code of Federal Regulations:

<b>Baccalaureate</b>	<b>Section 213.3202 (B)—BA/BS</b>
<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Section 213.3202 (B)—GRAD/PROF</b>
<b>Associate</b>	<b>Section 213.3202 (B)—ASSOC.</b>

2. All appointments are for the full period beginning with the date of initial appointment to a date not to exceed 120 days after completion of degree requirements as required by Executive Order 13024. There are no provisions for exceptions. The 120-day period commences upon the student's satisfactory completion of the school's educational requirements needed for graduation and completion of the minimum MSFC work hour requirements.
3. Initial appointments will be made as follows:

**Associate Program (Secretarial)**—Initial appointments will be made at the GS-2 or GS-3 level depending on each candidate's academic progress. The maximum grade level for the program is GS-4.

**Baccalaureate Program**—Initial appointments will be made at the GS-3 through GS-6 level depending on candidate qualifications. The maximum grade level for the program is GS-6.

**Graduate Program**—For master’s degree candidates, initial appointment of professional administrative graduate Co-op students will be at the GS–7 or GS–9 level depending on an individual’s qualifications. Doctoral degree professional administrative candidates, who have completed requirements for a master’s degree, may be appointed at the GS–9 level.

Initial appointment of all master’s degree engineering candidates will be at the GS–7 level. Doctoral degree engineering candidates, who have completed requirements for a master’s degree and who otherwise meet Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Position Qualification Standards or qualification requirements for NASA’s Aerospace Technology positions, will be appointed at the GS–9 level.

4. A student’s appointment may be terminated at any time for any of the following reasons:
  - Resignation
  - Unauthorized change to a curriculum that will not qualify the student for the position
  - Suspension, expulsion, or withdrawal from the educational institution
  - Unsatisfactory work performance or misconduct
  - Failure to maintain academic standards
  - Failure to maintain physical fitness for duty
  - Failure to report to duty for a scheduled work period
  - MSFC determines it is not in the interest of the Government to retain the student in the program
  - Lack of available work, manpower, or budget reasons to retain the Co-op on the job.

## Probationary Period

The student’s first work period is considered a probationary period during which strengths and weaknesses are observed and assessed and assistance is given to improve the student’s performance. Students who fail to meet MSFC performance standards and who show no promise for successful career service will be terminated.

## Work Schedules

1. Schedules will involve alternating periods of full-time study and full-time work (except in rare situations when MSFC authorizes part-time work because of the nature of the assignments) while on the program and will continue until the student graduates from college. Certain exceptions may apply if a student has completed a minimum of three semesters in work status and is at the senior level, since senior level classes may only be offered at certain times of the year. Each work period will be at least 60 days in length and will correspond to a regular semester and quarter.
2. Work periods may include summers but must not be restricted to summers.
3. Schedules must ensure that students will have the required hours and periods of employment necessary for noncompetitive conversion upon graduation.
4. Intermittent employment on an indefinite schedule is not creditable as Co-op education experience and will not be permitted.
5. Schedules must ensure that associate students will not be in an employee status for more than 2.5 years.

## Pay and Benefits

1. **Pay Schedules**—Students will be paid in accordance with the regular pay schedules established for their grades and will receive payment for any authorized overtime. The following table describes the academic requirements needed to qualify for initial appointment.

### ASSOCIATE AND BACCALAUREATE STUDENT TRAINEES Academic Qualifications for Initial Appointments

#### Clerical and Technician Student-Trainee Positions

Grade	Level of Education
GS-1	High school student
GS-2	High school graduate/equivalent
GS-3	Complete 1 year of study post high school
GS-4	Complete 2 years of study post high school

#### Scientific, Engineering, and Professional Administrative Student-Trainee Positions

Grade	Level of Education
GS-4	College sophomore
GS-5	College junior
GS-6	College senior
GS-7	Master's program or college graduate
GS-9	Doctorate program or completion of 1 year of master's-level study
GS-11	Doctorate program (research) or completion of 1 year of doctorate-level study

2. **Leave Without Pay (LWOP)**—Students will be placed in an LWOP status when not in a pay status.
3. **Tuition Assistance**—Payment in the amount of \$2,500 per academic year per student for all tuition, book costs, and other appropriate fees is sponsored by MSFC for students pursuing associate degrees. Payment in the amount of \$1,000 per academic year per student for tuition and lab fee's is sponsored by MSFC for students pursuing baccalaureate and graduate degrees.
4. **Travel Costs**—MSFC will not pay for travel to and from the job.
5. **Medical Insurance**—The Government sponsors a voluntary health insurance program offering a choice of insurance plans including basic coverage and major medical protection. The Government contributes part of the premium cost and the student pays the balance through payroll deductions when in a work status. During a nonpay status, payment should be made by check payable to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
6. **Life Insurance**—Regular term life insurance is automatic, unless waived. Two kinds of insurance are provided—life insurance and accidental-death and dismemberment insurance—in an amount that is usually at least \$2,000 more than annual base pay. The Government pays one third of the premium cost and the student pays the remainder through payroll deductions. In addition, the student may purchase extra optional insurance for which full premium must be paid through payroll deductions.

7. **Medicare Insurance**—Students are subject to the Medicare hospital insurance portion of the social security (FICA) tax. This coverage was extended to Federal employees as a result of the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982. The hospital insurance portion of the law requires payment by the employee of 1.3 percent of the gross biweekly salary and requires an equal contribution by the Government. Eligibility for Medicare hospital insurance occurs at age 65 or upon disability and meeting the eligibility requirements of the Social Security Disability Insurance Program.
8. **Retirement**—Co-op students are subject to the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). Co-op students hired since December 3, 1983 will be covered under FERS. FERS is a three-tiered plan that includes a retirement annuity, Social Security, and a thrift savings plan (TSP). Covered employees contribute to Social security and also contribute an amount to FERS that will bring the two contributions to 7 percent of basic salary (subject to the Social Security ceiling). If Social Security contributions increase, FERS contributions will decrease. Contributions to the TSP may be as much as 11 percent (increasing to 15 percent by 2005) of base pay, with the Agency matching the first 5 percent. Contributions to the TSP are tax-deferred savings. (The amount of the contributions and the amount of matching funds are subject to additional conditions.)
9. **Annual Leave**—Annual leave is earned according to the number of years in Federal service (civilian plus creditable military service). The maximum accrual rates are 13 days a year for the first 3 years and 20 days a year for the next 12 years. After 15 years, employees earn 26 days of annual leave each year. Unused annual leave can be accumulated (up to 30 days) and carried forward from one year to the next.
10. **Sick Leave**—Sick leave is earned at the rate of 13 days a year. This leave can be used for illness and for appointments with a doctor, dentist, or optician. There is no limit on the amount of sick leave that can be accumulated for use in succeeding years.
11. **Holiday Provision**—Students are paid for holidays that fall within their work periods.

## Employment and Graduation

Within 120 days after graduation, MSFC may convert, noncompetitively, any Co-op education student, who receives an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree and who satisfies the eligibility requirements cited below, to a career, career-conditional, or term appointment.

1. Conversion must be effected within 120 days after graduation or the student will be terminated.
2. Although the prime purpose of Federal employment of Co-op education students is to prepare students for the Agency's permanent work force, the Agency sometimes cannot, for administrative reasons, noncompetitively convert all Co-op graduates it has trained as students or cannot convert at the grade for which a person is eligible. Students who are not converted may seek eligibility through the competitive process in the same or another area of work. The MSFC coordinator will refer the credentials of student trainees, who are not offered permanent positions by MSFC, to other NASA installations for consideration. Student trainees who do not meet the requirements for noncompetitive conversion may also seek eligibility at that level through the competitive system.

# Conversion Grade-Level Requirements

## Associate Secretarial Program

A secretarial student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion at the GS-4 level if he or she—

- Meets the qualification standards for the position at the GS-4 level, except for any written test.
- Has a minimum GPA of at least 2.9.
- Still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Has completed two or more work periods totaling at least **26 weeks (1,040 hours)** of full-time, Co-op work experience in a pay status at MSFC.

## Baccalaureate Program

A baccalaureate student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion at the GS-7 level if he or she—

- Meets the qualification standards for the position at the GS-7 level.
- Has a minimum GPA of at least 2.9.
- Still meets the citizenship requirements and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Served in a work status (excluding LWOP time) for a total of **52 weeks (2,080 hours)** between appointment and graduation; must have included two work periods at least 60 days in length, one of which fell within the 18 months immediately prior to graduation; at least one of the two periods counted for the purpose of conversion did not fall wholly within the established summer employment period; and both work periods were in the same Agency and the same field of work in which the student is seeking conversion.

## Graduate Program

A graduate student is eligible for noncompetitive conversion if he or she—

- Receives the graduate degree and still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Completes at least **16 weeks (640 hours)** of employment. All work counted must be in the same field of work as the appointment and in the Agency making the conversion.
- Satisfies the qualification requirements for conversion at grades GS-9 for completion of a master's degree and GS-11 for a doctorate degree.

## Superior Academic Achievement Provision

Students must satisfy the GS-5 requirements cited earlier and one of the following:

1. Be ranked in the upper third of their class based on completed college work at the time of graduation. This means the upper third of the class in the college or university major subdivision (e.g., school or engineering, school of business administration, etc.).
2. Have a college grade average of B (2.95 of a possible 4.0) or better (or equivalent) in either of the following:
  - a. The average of all completed college courses at the time of graduation
  - b. The average of all college courses completed during the last two years of the undergraduate curriculum.
3. Have a college grade average B+ (3.5) or better (or equivalent) in a major field where such field is fully qualifying and directly applicable to the specialty field of the position to be filled. Either of the following is applicable:
  - a. The average of all completed college courses at the time of graduation
  - b. The average of all college courses completed in the major field during the last two years of the under-graduate curriculum.
4. Election to membership in one of the national honorary societies (other than freshman societies) that meet the requirements of the Association of College Honor Societies.

## Helpful Web Sites

NASA Headquarters Web site: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/>

NASA Jobs Web site: <http://www.nasajobs.nasa.gov>

NASA Jobs Online Resume Builder Web site: <https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/ResumeBuilder/>

MSFC Web site: <http://www.msfc.nasa.gov/>

MSFC Co-op Web site: <http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

MSFC Education Web site: <http://education.msfc.nasa.gov/>

Alabama Web site: <http://www.alabamainfo.com/>

Huntsville, Alabama Web site: <http://www.huntsville.org/>

## Conditions of Agreement

1. The conditions of this agreement are in conformity with existing Federal regulations. However, it is understood that they, at no time, supersede, alter, or take the place of such regulations. Any change required by new or revised laws or regulations shall be automatically effective. Changes that are not required by new laws or regulations will be made only by mutual consent of this Agency and the institution.
2. This agreement becomes void if there have been no students from the educational institution employed by this Agency within the preceding 12 months.
3. This agreement will remain in effect until such time that the Agency and/or the institution wish to terminate it.

## Signed

---

Institution's Representative

Date Signed

---

Title

---

Name of University/College

---

Address Street

City

State

Zip Code

---

Area Code/Telephone Number

---

E-mail address

---

MSFC Representative  
NASA Marshall Space Flight Center  
Employee and Organizational Department/CD20  
E-mail Chrissa.Hall@msfc.nasa.gov

Title

Date Signed