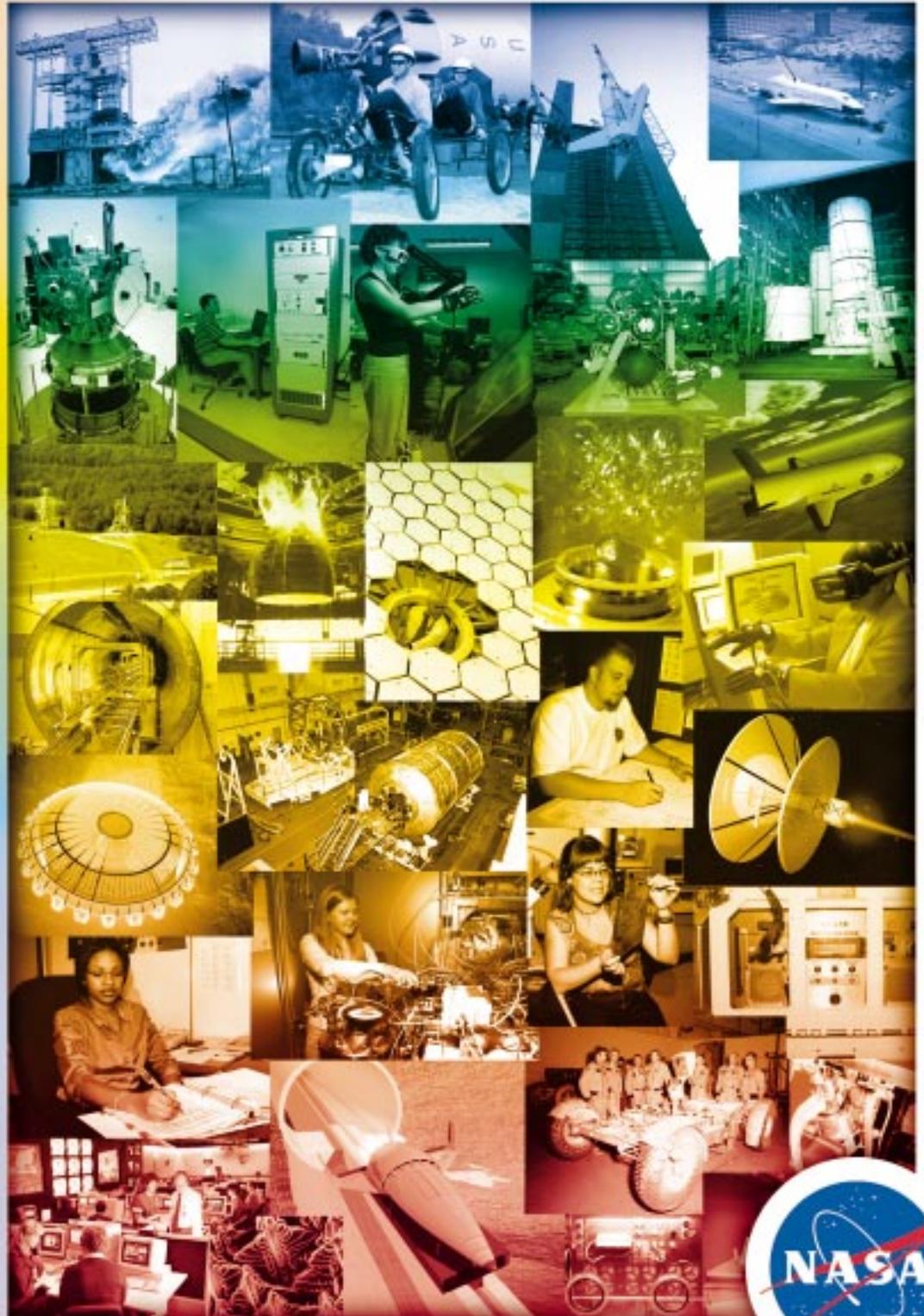




National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Marshall Space Flight Center

Cooperative Education Program



This booklet will provide a detailed description of the Cooperative (Co-op) Education Program at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC), Alabama, and its administrative details. This booklet outlines the Co-op Program's purpose and objectives as well as the requirements for participation.

Purpose 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 and the work experience is prerequisite for the degree.
- 2** The Co-op Program provides a resource for potential employment with NASA following successful completion of the program and graduation from college.

Objectives

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

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

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. The 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 and must be in actual attendance. 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 1 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 9 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 3.0 overall grade point 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 a Co-op assignment by an authorized staff official of the institution.

Program Admission Requirements (continued)

- 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

- 1** **If you have not selected a university, be sure to investigate how schools are ranked and if NASA recruits from them.** For a ranking of undergraduate universities, go to <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/corank.htm>.
- 2** **Find out if your university has a formal Co-op Program and Co-op office.** Ask your department advisor or go to your university's Web site and look for Co-op or career information.
- 3** **If your university DOES have a Co-op Program:**
- **Contact the Co-op office during your freshman year to find out the specific requirements of your university.** Some questions to ask:
 - When, during your undergraduate career, are you eligible to participate in a Co-op Program?
 - When should you start contacting companies?
 - Should you contact companies directly, or only through the recruiters in the Co-op office?
 - Does the university have a Co-op Career Fair, and when is it?
 - Is there a database of companies that recruit Co-ops at your university?
- 4** **If your university DOES NOT have a Co-op Program:**
- Contact the head of your department (or college if you have not yet chosen a particular major) and ask if previous students have participated in Co-op Programs. Some universities do not have a formal Co-op Program, but have many Co-op students and therefore are familiar with the procedure. If your university has not had students who have participated in Co-op Programs in the past, make an appointment with the head of your department and discuss the possibilities of taking a few semesters off from school to participate in a Co-op Program. Having information about what is involved in participating in a Co-op Program (see the MSFC

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

How to Apply (continued)

Co-op Webpage at <http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>) can help this meeting run more smoothly. Try to work out a plan with your department head and possibly the dean of your college to leave for alternating semesters and still plan to graduate in a reasonable amount of time.

- **If you are on scholarship or financial aid, contact the financial aid office at your university and discuss the ramifications of participating in a Co-op Program.** Some financial aid and scholarships require you to maintain your full-time student status, so you need to discuss these issues with both your department head and the financial office at your school. Most students are able to maintain their full-time student status while participating in a Co-op Program, but this issue should be investigated before you accept a Co-op position. Even if you are not considered a full-time student by your university while participating in a Co-op Program, you will likely be able to work out some plan to where finances are not an issue.
- **If you are still a dependent of your parents, discuss with them and their insurance agent about insurance if you are not a full-time student while you are in a Co-op Program.** Many insurance plans require that you be a full-time student to be covered, so this is another issue that you should resolve before accepting a Co-op job.

5 Write a resumé after your first semester as a college freshman. Even though you will not have a great deal of experience or activities at this point, starting a resumé is the most important step to getting a job. When attending career fairs, you will need this resumé to hand to recruiters. Look on the Internet or your university's Career Center for examples of effective resúmes. Be sure to include personal contact information, your GPA, any activities you have participated in, and any honors and scholarships you have received. While college activities and accomplishments are given the highest consideration, high school activities should still be included if you are in your first year of college.

6 **Attend as many career fairs and Co-op fairs as possible to meet recruiters and find out about employment opportunities.** Even as a freshman, attending career fairs will help you gain experience speaking with recruiters and asking intelligent questions. Making your interest in a particular company known early is to your benefit.

How to Apply (continued)

7 At the end of your freshman year or the beginning of your sophomore year, commence sending resumés to companies that you are interested in applying to for a Co-op position.

After you have been formally accepted into the Co-op Education Program at your school, please work closely with your school's Co-op Coordinator to prepare and submit a resumé to NASA/MSFC. You will find NASA/MSFC job opportunities for Co-op students at **NASAJOBS Web site**, <http://www.nasajobs.nasa.gov>.

The new system will allow interested students to view current Co-op vacancy announcements within NASA/MSFC, prepare or edit a resumé, and apply for vacancies online. Should you find a vacancy that meets your interest and is related to your field of study, you will need to follow instructions to submit your application package to NASA/MSFC by way of the new **NASA Automated Staffing and Recruitment System (NASA STARS)**. You will also be required and instructed by your school's Co-op Office to have an official transcript and letter of recommendation submitted to the NASA/MSFC's Co-op Office immediately following the submittal of your resumé. Your resumé, official transcript, and letter of recommendation will be required in order for you to be considered for a vacancy announcement through our Co-op Program. Please request that an official

transcript and letter of recommendation be mailed ASAP to the following address:

NASA/MSFC
Attn.: CD20/Co-op Education Office
MSFC, AL 35812

Most people start a Co-op Program in the spring of their sophomore year or fall/spring or their junior year. Getting an early start is beneficial when applying to competitive Co-op Programs.

8 Be persistent, but not annoying, with the recruiter. If you are truly interested in participating in a Co-op Program at a particular place, you must take a proactive role in getting hired. After applying or interviewing, it is crucial that you follow up with the recruiter. A phone call or e-mail will demonstrate that you are very serious about this Co-op position. If a position is not offered to you, don't take rejection as failure. Apply to many different companies so you have options. Sometimes you will not be a good fit with a particular company, but you might end up enjoying your job somewhere else. Do not go into the recruiting and interview process narrow minded.

Note: After November 1, 2001, hardcopies of resumés and e-mailed resumés will not be accepted by the MSFC Co-op Education Office. All applicants must comply with the new online application process in order to be considered for a Co-op position at NASA/MSFC. Those students applying online that have not been recommended by their Co-op office at their school will not be considered until they are registered properly through their Co-op office.

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

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 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 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 Program opportunities.
- 3** Recommend only students who are enrolled in the institution's Co-op Education Program, including all honorably discharged veterans, 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 race, sex, religion, or ethnic origin.
- 4** Coordinate on-the-job training and academic education to ensure that the student obtains maximum benefit from the 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 courses titles, number of credit hours, and grades) after the conclusion of each school term.

Responsibilities (continued)

- 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 the students adhere 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:
- 3** Initial appointments will be made as follows:

Baccalaureate	Section 213.3202 (B) —BA/BS
Graduate	Section 213.3202 (B) —GRAD/PROF
Associate	Section 213.3202 (B) —ASSOC

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 study-related work hour requirements.

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 either 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.

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

Appointment (continued)

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 the 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 Appointment may be terminated at any time for 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
- The 2.5-year employee status limitation for associate students is exceeded.

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 the student has completed a minimum of 3 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 confined to summers.

Cooperative Education Program

Work Schedules (continued)

- 3** Schedules must ensure that the student will have the required work 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** Students will be paid in accordance with the regular pay table 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.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENTS Associate and Baccalaureate Student Trainees

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	Masters 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

Note: An academic year of undergraduate education is defined as 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours. An academic year of graduate education is generally the number of credit hours that the school attended has determined to represent 1 academic year of full-time study. If that information cannot be obtained, 18 semester hours or 27 quarter hours will be considered as satisfying 1 academic year of full-time study.

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

Pay and Benefits (continued)

Note: Generally, graduate student trainees are not promoted while in the program; however, students completing the master's degree requirements and who continue in the program as Ph.D. student trainees are promoted to the GS-11 level. Although promotion is at the discretion of MSFC, students are usually moved through grades so that secretarial students will qualify for at least a GS-4 upon graduation. Baccalaureate students will qualify for at least a GS-7 and graduate students will qualify for at least a GS-9 upon completion of the Co-op Program and graduation.

2 Promotion is contingent upon the student meeting not only the qualification standards, but also the performance requirements of the Agency. Student trainees will be eligible for promotion upon reaching each level of education. One-year time in grade requirements do not apply. The college or university will determine, in writing, the level of education that the student trainee has attained. A copy of the student's transcript is required to support the student's promotion should he/she qualify.

Reminder: A student should maintain a GPA of at least a 3.0 or higher to be eligible for a promotion to the GS-6 level and possible conversion to the GS-7 level upon graduation.

3 Leave Without Pay (LWOP)

When not in a pay status, students will be placed in an LWOP status.

4 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.

5 Travel Costs

Payment of travel to and from the job is **not** paid by MSFC.

6 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 NASA.

7 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.

Pay and Benefits (continued)

8 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 1.45 percent of their 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.

9 Retirement

Co-op students hired since December 3, 1983 are subject to and will be covered under the Federal Employee Retirement System (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 base 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 other conditions.)

10 Annual Leave

Students earn annual leave according to the number of years in the 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, 26 days of annual leave is earned each year. Unused annual leave can be accumulated (up to 30 days) and carried forward from one year to the next.

11 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.

12 Holiday Provision

Students are paid for holidays that fall within their work periods.

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

Employment and Graduation

Within 120 days after graduation, MSFC may convert, noncompetitively, any Co-op student, who receives an associate, 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.

2 Although the prime purpose of Federal employment of Co-op education students is to prepare students for the Agency's permanent workforce, the

Agency sometimes cannot, for administrative reasons, 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 the student trainees 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/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 3.0.
- 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.

Baccalaureate Program

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

- Meets the qualification standards for the position at the GS-7 level.
- Has a minimum GPA of at least 3.0.
- Still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relatives restriction.
- Meets one of the following two requirements:

1 Has 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

Conversion Grade Level Requirements (continued)

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.

2 Has completed a minimum of 26 weeks (1,040 hours) in a work status as required for noncompetitive conversion at the GS-5 level and has met the conditions of the OPM's Superior Academic Achievement Provisions (see description in the following section). (All students majoring in an engineering or scientific discipline must satisfy the GS-7 level conversion requirements.)

Graduate Program

A graduate student is eligible for non-competitive conversion if he/she—

- Receives the graduate degree and still meets the citizenship requirement and employment-of-relative 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 grade GS-9 for completion of master's degree and GS-11 for the 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 is the upper third of the class in the college, university, major subdivision (e.g., school or engineering, school of business administration).

2 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 2 years of the undergraduate curriculum.

<http://mi.msfc.nasa.gov/coop/index.html>

Superior Academic Achievement Provision (continued)

- 3** College grade average B+ (3.5) or better (or equivalent) in 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 2 years of the undergraduate 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/>

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

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/>

