

Stakeholder Summary

Waterloo Students Benefit Academically and Professionally from Co-op Involvement

The University of Waterloo operates the largest postsecondary co-op program of its kind in the world, and a new report from Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) finds that Waterloo co-op graduates feel they benefit academically and professionally and are more satisfied than co-op students at other examined universities. Previous HEQCO research has shown that involvement in work-integrated learning (WIL) programs like co-ops, internships and field placements help develop skills valued by employers.

Project Description

The report uses findings from three surveys, undertaken in spring 2011 and spring 2012, to gather perspectives from graduating college and university [students](#), [faculty](#), and [Ontario employers](#) on WIL. The results presented in this report provide insights into the attitudes and opinions of students and faculty from the University of Waterloo and the Ontario employers most likely to hire University of Waterloo graduates. The surveys were funded by HEQCO and conducted by Academica Group Inc., in partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, as well as 14 Ontario postsecondary institutions and a variety of student associations and other stakeholders.

Findings

A significantly larger proportion of graduating students participated in co-op at the University of Waterloo than at other examined universities, but other institutions had a significantly larger proportion of other types of WIL programs. While Waterloo co-op students reported benefiting both academically and professionally from their involvement, the school's WIL students as a whole were more likely to report having boring work assignments and not being paid enough. The study also found that Waterloo co-op students expected to graduate with lower levels of median debt than those at other participating institutions.

Given the commitment of the University Waterloo to WIL programs, its faculty were more likely to have taught in a program with a WIL component and, on average, reported fewer challenges when implementing these types of programs. Waterloo faculty were more likely to agree that WIL helps students develop contacts and networks for future employment, better understand work realities and expectations, and make them more employable than other students. Faculty at Waterloo were also less likely to support an increase in the overall amount of WIL in PSE.

The University of Waterloo and Work-Integrated Learning: Three Perspectives was prepared by Lindsay DeClou from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) and Julie Peters and Peggy Sattler from Academica Group Inc.