



POLICY 9.21

POSITION POLICY

Career Services, Co-ops, and Job Placements

POLICY INTENT

To outline AUSU's position on the career services that Athabasca University (AU) provides to students and how AU can expand on these services to better serve their students.

POLICY RESEARCH

Athabasca University (AU) is an online institution that offers distance programs to students across Canada and the world. Unlike traditional brick-and-mortar universities, AU does not have a significant physical campus presence and does not offer traditional career services or opportunities based on a physical campus. As a result, the career services offerings at AU are minimal.¹

There are several ways to offer career services to students.² These include, but are not limited to, resume writing assistance, co-op opportunities, internships, job-search assistance, research opportunities, and post-graduation employment assistance services. In addition, it remains crucial that these opportunities are accessible and inclusive to reflect the diverse demographics of AU students.

Opportunities like co-ops and internships provide valuable hands-on experience to students in their chosen field of study or area of interest.³ Students can become immersed in their work and apply what they are learning at their institution to real-world scenarios. This type of exposure is considered valuable to future potential employers, and the student can use this experience to their advantage when seeking permanent employment. Work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities are increasingly becoming available within virtual environments, and other technologies such as augmented and virtual reality software make access to these platforms even more accessible for AU learners.

Services like resume writing and job-search assistance (such as career fairs) offer students the chance to hone their skills and network among those in the industry while they are seeking employment. These valuable skills help students apply the knowledge acquired along their learning journeys with AU when entering the workforce.

These opportunities may be integrated into the overall learner experience. Career services can be integrated into each program with a faculty-based approach; this approach would lead to faculty-based career services rather than a one-size-fits-all model. If this model could be efficiently constructed under the implementation of AU's Imagine Strategic Plan⁴, then this could help to enhance the career offerings each faculty can uniquely and individually offer their program students.

In order to help students acquire career services, the Government of Canada provides many programs⁵. AU currently participates in the Post-secondary Co-op/Internship Program through the Faculty of Health Disciplines⁶, but AU should extend this into more faculties and programs. This can be taken on individually through each faculty, as mentioned previously.

The Government of Canada also offers a Student Work Placement program that offers work-integrated learning for students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics programs (STEM).⁷ Although limited to the STEM fields, this avenue should be explored as a possible source of career services to AU students.

Along with the federal government, there are other organizations that serve post-secondary institutions in developing work-integrated learning opportunities.⁸ For example, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada works to help provide such WIL opportunities to students from institutions like Brock University and the University of Calgary⁹. AU should explore these types of resources to see if this could fit our environment and help provide more career services to students.

Expanding upon career services is not only helpful for current students, since students also consider the institution's ability to offer these resources when deciding where to apply.

Be it resolved that Athabasca University Students' Union will advocate to Athabasca University to seek out and expand on additional career services, including resume writing services, career fairs and job placement services, internships, co-ops, and work-integrating learning, with an integrated faculty-based approach.

¹ Education and Career Planning. (September 14, 2017). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from http://counselling.athabascau.ca/education_planning.php.

² Career Services Offices: A Look at Universities and Colleges Across Canada. (August 2014). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://higherstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Intelligence-Brief-9-Career-Services-Offices-3.pdf>.

³ Benefits of Co-Operative Education for Students, Employers, and Institutions. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www.cewilcanada.ca/about-us-benefits.html>.

⁴ Imagine: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from http://imagine.athabascau.ca/files/StrategyPlan_2018.pdf.

⁵ Student Employment Programs in The Federal Government. (September 19, 2017). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/pay/rates-pay/student-employment-programs-federal-government.html>.

⁶ Approved Program Search Result(s). (March 12, 2014). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www5.psc-cfp.gc.ca/coop/noitcatlusermargorphraeswohs.do>.

⁷ Student Work Placement program. (August 8, 2018). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/work-integrated-learning.html>.

⁸ About Us. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www.cewilcanada.ca/about-us.html>.

⁹ Member Directory. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2019 from <https://www.cewilcanada.ca/cgi/page.cgi/institutions.html>.