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Every week, education expert Sanjeev Verma will answer your queries on studying abroad. E-mail queries to features@gulf-times.com

What are University 'Co-Op' or 'Sandwich' programmes?

Sometimes referred to as "professional practice programmes," Co-Op curriculums are designed to give students real-world experience while earning money to pay for college and earn credits toward their degrees. Students who graduate with work experience under their belt seem to have an advantage. That may be why more schools are adopting co-op programmes – to give students an extra edge academically and professionally.

A great number of colleges and universities, as high as 500, are now involved in these programmes. It actually does mean an extra year of school, but for a lot of students that is not a limiting factor.

Here is what you need to know to determine if a Co-Op programme is right for you.

1. College Co-Op programmes differ from internships in that the work experience is integrated into the academic curriculum.
 2. Co-Ops are always paid positions, and they're set up as sequential, ongoing experiences. Much like in college coursework, the level of learning increases as you progress.
 3. You graduate with an excellent experience that college graduates can only dream of.
 4. You get to earn money that comes from a job that contributes to your professional development.
 5. Your earnings go a long way to cover your college education and expenses. These are just a few of the things to ponder and reflect on when considering Co-Op programmes.
- For a lot of international as well as local students in the US, they have proven to be excellent alternatives of the education people aspire for.

(Sanjeev Verma began with Ernst & Young and progressed to set up the Gulf operations of IDP Education Pty. He now leads Intelligent Partners, developing a wide range of solutions in areas of international education.)