



Five generations of U of G turf students & alumni at Mississauga G&CC, circa 2018. Photo provided by Cam Shaw.



DTM summer work-term students volunteering at the 2022 Canadian Open at St George's G&CC in Toronto. Photo provided by Cam Shaw.

## CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

# U of G DTM Program Transitions from Internship to Co-op

Written by Cam Shaw, DTM Manager and Sara Stricker, GTI Communications Coordinator.

Each year the Diploma in Turfgrass Management (DTM) program at the University of Guelph attracts Canada's best and brightest students looking to forge a career in the turfgrass industry. Our students are passionate, knowledgeable, committed, and many come with a great deal of industry experience which provides tremendous value to their future employers.

If you have heard of the DTM program, you may already know that our students are required to complete a work placement during the summer semester between first and second year. Combined with their commitment to the diploma, this valuable work experience brings a heightened sense of responsibility, ownership, and belonging to the students. For many, this work placement will be their first-time being exposed to responsibilities such as training & supervising staff. It is also an exciting chance to build advanced technical skills and be welcomed into the management circle.

Previously, the DTM program referred to this summer work term as an internship. However, to avoid the negative connotations associated with the term "internship" (i.e., unpaid, low-impact work placements), we are trialing a formalized co-op program to explore its potential value. The term 'co-op' is a much more recognizable

term in the high school sphere and could help to put turfgrass education and career paths on the radars of more students, parents, teachers, and guidance councillors – something our industry desperately needs right now!

Much like the former internship program, the co-op work placement will remain an invaluable right-of-passage for our young and aspiring turfgrass managers. It will continue to expose students to complex

agronomic strategies, best management practices (BMPs), various day-to-day decision-making and problem-solving situations, staff management issues, and the countless abstract nuances of this industry which cannot be taught in a classroom. It will also continue to provide employers with dedicated, skilled, and committed summer employees who make meaningful contributions to your organizations –

hopefully for more than just one season. Most of the changes involved with the transition to co-op are administrative in nature. Employers who have engaged with the DTM internship program in the past can expect changes in how to become registered, how to post jobs and the addition of some criteria to ensure the work term experience meets the minimum standards of a formal Ontario post-secondary co-op program (mandated by the government of Ontario). As a result of these changes, administration of the co-op will be centralized out of a separate office called the Experiential Learning Hub or ELH ([cecs.uoguelph.ca](http://cecs.uoguelph.ca)).

One of the advantages of the ELH is that it boasts a wide range

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*Cam Shaw (M), U of G, presents plaque to Andrew Hardy (L), BrettYoung, and Courtney White (R), OGSA, in appreciation of the Future Leader's Program in partnership with BrettYoung.*



*OGSA members & U of G DTM students attending a recent meet & greet event hosted at the GTI. Photo provided by Sara Stricker, GTI.*

of employer resources that our previous internship program did not. Registered employers now have access to recruitment experts who can provide guidance on creating attractive and competitive job postings, provide insight into building enticing compensation packages as well as constructing meaningful learning packages that catch students' attention. In the future, we look forward to including more events and opportunities where employers and alumni can come to campus and connect with students face-to-face in a meet & greet and/or job fair-style format. This fall, the OGSA hosted a trial meet and greet event at the GTI which was quite successful, and we look forward to continuing this in future years.

If you would like to learn more about hiring a University of Guelph Turfgrass Diploma student and how to best engage with the new co-op program, the best place to start is by connecting with us ASAP. Please see contact details below for Hope Long, our new Co-op Coordinator or Cam Shaw the DTM program Manager. Both Cam and Hope would be happy to speak with you and provide the direction needed to increase your visibility as a potential DTM summer work-term employer. One thing is for certain – the sooner you connect with us, the sooner you can have our co-op program working for you!

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Cordova Bay Golf Course,  
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