



THE CANADIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

A GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS IN 2025

Presented by



UNDERSTANDING THE CANADIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education is managed by the Provincial and Territorial Governments. While public education is free up to the secondary school level, post-secondary education is either publicly funded or privately funded. Education standards are regulated by the provinces. As per the QS Rankings for Best Student Cities, Montreal ranks at #10, Toronto at #11 and Vancouver at #19.



The post-secondary education in Canada is offered in a mix of universities, university colleges, community colleges, technical institutes, career colleges and language schools. Universities offer academic degrees in a wide variety of subjects and are similar to the US structure. Degrees are offered in Bachelors, Masters and PhD

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Before a student can start researching which University or College to apply for admission to, they need to understand the different types of institutions that are available in Canada.



1. ***Public Institutions:*** Public Institutions are government-funded institutions where the balance funds are received through tuition fees and research grants. Some examples of Public Institutions are University of Toronto, McGill University, University of British Columbia and University of Alberta. Many of the top universities in Canada are ranked amongst the top universities on the QS World Rankings as well as the Times Higher Education Rankings. A majority of international students generally apply for admissions to these institutions which are also Designated Learning Institutions and eligible for the Post-Graduation Work Permit programs.

International Students can choose from a variety of Universities depending on their requirement. Whether you want a large, research-oriented university in a big city or a small, intimate campus with a strong sense of community, Canada has all the options across the country.

2 *Private Institutions:* Private Institutions do not receive any funds from the provincial government and are dependent on funds from Alumni, Research Grants and Tuition Fees. Private Institutions are able to attract some of the best staff. Examples of private institutions include Trinity Western University, Yorkville University, Ambrose University, Kingswood University and Crandall University. There are a limited number of private universities in Canada that offer admission to international students. Very few private institutions are also ranked in the QS World Rankings which is why they struggle to get international students.

Private University tuition fees are generally higher than publicly-funded institutions. However, they still offer certain benefits. Private Universities offer exchange programs, co-operative education and internship opportunities and offer a comprehensive academic environment.



3. Community Colleges: Community Colleges are government funded post-secondary institutions that offer 1 to 2 year academic and pre-professional certificates, diplomas, 2-year associate degrees as well as 3-4 year specialized bachelor degrees. These colleges are also popular with international students with over 6000 students enrolling in community colleges every year. Students interested in practical training that leads directly to a job would find this option more beneficial than a university. These community colleges are also known as technical colleges, polytechnics, college of applied arts and technology, regional colleges or institutes of technology.



Community Colleges combine high quality, comprehensive academics with employer-centered programs, industry connections and internship opportunities. Some examples of community colleges include Humber College, George Brown College, Seneca College, SAIT and Nova Scotia Community College. These Colleges and Vocational schools work closely with business and industry to design programs that offer hands-on training and teach skills that employers require. There are opportunities for internships, co-operative programs and work placements that will provide real-world experience while studying.

Many community colleges also have university transfer programs where credits can be transferred by students towards a university degree program. In selecting a community college or vocational school, one is choosing a career-oriented experience that is in line with the changing global markets. Gain a world-class experience with endless opportunities to advance your knowledge and skills.

4. *Liberal Arts Colleges:* These colleges place an emphasis on undergraduate courses in the liberal arts which are usually interdisciplinary i.e. humanities as well as social, natural and formal sciences.

5. *Vocational Colleges:* Vocational colleges allow students to learn about a specific trade that they are interested in to gain real life experience under a professional and qualified supervisor.



6. *Religious Schools:* Canada also offers a number of religious schools other than Catholic schools. These schools teach the regular curriculum alongside religious teaching associated with the specific religion school.

THE DEGREE STRUCTURE

The Canadian Education System offers a number of educational qualifications based on duration, specialization and institution.

1. Certificate: The Certificate is mainly offered by Community Colleges and are short-term programs ranging from 3 months to 8 months. The Certificate programs are very specialized programs in vocational subjects like Business, IT and Healthcare. These programs are open to International Students as well as do not require a study permit if the duration of the program is less than one year. These programs are career-oriented and prepare you for employment. Admission to these programs is less restrictive and they are eligible for a one year post-graduation work permit. Certificate programs are offered by Public Institutions like University of British Columbia, University of Alberta as well as Community Colleges like Seneca College and Algonquin College.

Some of the popular programs to choose from are:

Broadcasting & Journalism	Business Management-Marketing	Dental Hygiene	Design
Environment	Health	Hospitality Management	Artificial Intelligence and Data Science

2. Diploma

College Diplomas offer a two-year specialized study. These diploma programs are designed to meet the specific demands of vocational or trade careers. Depending on the job required, this program can also be completed in three-four years as they may include co-op internship or apprenticeship components. Diplomas can also be upgraded or transferred to a bachelor's degree program. Like a Certificate Program, the Diploma program requires the completion of a secondary school diploma for admission.

3. Bachelor's Degree:

An undergraduate program is generally at least for 4 years. This degree is awarded by a university or college. The name of the degree indicates either Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc).

4. Master's Degree:

Master's programs are called Graduate Programs and normally take 2 years to complete but some programs are also available for one year or three years depending on the specialization. For admission, a bachelor's degree is required and some programs may require work experience.

5. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

PhD programs are conducted by Graduate Schools of Universities. These programs involve at least one year of classes, extensive oral and written examination. On the basis of this, students are given permission to undertake research and write a dissertation. This program can take between 3-6 years to complete. For admission, a master's degree is required.

Over the years, Canada has built a reputation for offering international students a quality education at an affordable price. While the majority of the institutions are found in provinces like Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, other provinces also offer institutions that attract international students and can be more cost effective due to lower cost of living cities. As students start preparing for university admissions in the coming year, it is important to understand what Canada has to offer international students in light of the recent restrictions that have been placed on students studying in Canada.