

Canada - Alberta

STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Description:

Higher education in Canada is the constitutional responsibility of the provinces. There are several types of institutions providing post secondary education in Alberta.

Stages of studies:

University level first stage: Baccalaureate Degree/First Professional Degree

Bachelor degree programs are offered at institutions that have received approval from the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Institutions must meet specific quality requirements before they can offer degrees. Approved undergraduate degree programs are currently offered at the four Alberta universities, Grant MacEwan College, NAIT, Mount Royal College, Alberta College of Art & Design, and 7 private colleges. Most undergraduate study leads to a “General” Bachelor’s Degree or an “Honours” or specialized Degree (4 years and prescribed subject concentration). Degrees are normally titled in broad descriptive groups, e.g. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.). In addition, there are other professional degree programs that typically require specific high school prerequisites and four years of study, e.g. Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.Sc.N.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Comm.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). First and second year university transfer courses and programs are also offered by most provincially supported public colleges. As well, first professional degree programs require prerequisite university studies followed by additional years of professional training, e.g. three years for a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) and four years for Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) and Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.) degrees.

University level second stage: Masters Degree/First Professional Degree

The Master’s Degree normally requires at least two years of study after completion of a Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent. A Master’s degree is typically course and thesis based, with some professional programs consisting of non-thesis options. Examples of Masters’ degrees include the M.A., M.Sc., M.Ed., and M.B.A. Graduate level diplomas are considered an intermediate stage between the Bachelor’s or first professional degree and the Master’s Degree. There are also Master’s programs that are entirely course based; a major project or paper, as opposed to a thesis, is usually required for these programs.

University level third stage: Doctorate Degree

The Doctorate is the highest academic qualification awarded by Alberta; it comprises the third stage of university level studies. This degree normally requires at least 3 to 6 years of study after the Bachelor’s Degree. The submission and defence of a major thesis (dissertation) are the principal requirements, and supplemental course work is usually also required. The degree “Doctor of Philosophy” (Ph.D.) is the designation most commonly used to signify the Doctorate. It is a generic title applicable to degrees in most disciplines (the Doctorate should not be confused with certain first professional degrees in the health sciences, e.g. Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry).

Distance higher education:

Athabasca University, a “dedicated” open university specializing in distance education, emphasizes an open admission policy and a personalized learning system. Its students are scattered across the country and internationally and use special home study materials, often supplemented by “paced delivery”, Internet, audio-tapes, workshops, teleconference sessions, and may include television broadcasts. Anyone 16+ years of age can enrol, regardless of educational background.

E-campus Alberta is a consortium of fourteen colleges and technical institutes that facilitates increased access to high quality online learning opportunities, emphasizes community-based student support, and provides a collaborative online learning experience that spans the province.

Alberta-North is a partnership of seven post-secondary institutions who work together to make education accessible in northern communities throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The partners provide facilities, learning technologies, and support services to over 80 online learning sites called Community Access

Points (CAPS sites). At these sites, students can receive courses and programs offered by many different post-secondary institutions.

ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Admission to non university higher education studies:

Alternatives to credentials: Alberta High School Diploma; Alberta High School Equivalency Diploma (obtained through passing five General Educational Development tests). Alternatives: Post secondary institutions and private vocational schools determine specific program based admission requirements. Admission requirements for mature (adult) students may vary between institutions and by program. “Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition” (PLAR) may be offered by some institutions and used to determine credit or advanced standing for specific courses, via, for example, student portfolios and interviews.

Other requirements: Minimum requirements vary between institutions; however, most institutions and programs require specific 30-level courses from secondary school. If English is not the student’s first language, applicants will be required to demonstrate English language proficiency through achievement of a specified score on an English language proficiency test, or by providing proof of successful completion of a minimum number of years of study in the English language. Specific language requirements may vary from institution to institution.

Admission to university-level studies:

Alternatives to credentials: Post-secondary institutions and private vocational schools determine specific programme based admission requirements. Admission requirements for mature (adult) students may vary between institutions and by programme. “Prior learning assessment” (PLA) may be used to determine credit or advanced standing for specific courses.

Other requirements: Minimum score requirement between 65-80% in specific 30-level courses; actual admission thresholds may differ from stated entrance requirements. Entrance requirements for Bachelor degree programs usually include a minimum average in specified Grade 12 subjects, including English 30. Those faculties with enrolment limits may require marks that are higher than the specified minimum average. Some Universities will require an English Language Proficiency exam prior to admission. Certain professional faculties may also require completion of an entrance exam, e.g. LSAT, MCAT, or GMAT. Some universities provide remedial courses or a transitional year program.

Foreign students admission:

Definition of foreign student: Foreign (International) Students are students who are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents of Canada, and are enrolled full-time in a recognized academic, professional or vocational training course of study at a university, college or other educational institution in Canada.

Admission requirements: Generally, as for domestic students, the equivalent of several 30-level courses will be required; for example, English 30 is required almost universally. Each institution may vary in its international admission requirements. Institutions may require the following documentation: official academic transcripts translated into English (some institutions may require official transcripts be notarized, proof of your country’s equivalent of a Canadian secondary school or high school education, and completion of English Language requirements as requested by the institution.

Entry regulations: Before you come to study in Canada, you will need: a “Study Permit” if the program of study you will be admitted to is longer than six months in duration, regardless of the length of your stay in Canada; a letter of acceptance from the school of your choice; proof that you have enough money to pay for school fees, living expenses and return transportation for yourself and any family members who come with you to Canada; to establish that you will return home at the end of your studies; to pass a medical exam if required; to be a law-abiding citizen with no criminal record and not be a risk to the security of Canada and to qualify as a temporary resident in Canada, including holding a temporary resident visa (required for citizens of many countries). A small number of students do not require a Study Permit by virtue of their status in Canada (e.g. diplomats and their children); students should contact their home country embassy in Canada to confirm this.

Health requirements: Most education institutions require international students to buy health insurance in addition to their tuition fees; those that do not will require proof of independent health insurance coverage.

Medical examinations are not required by institutions but may be required by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for students from a number of countries.

Language requirements: Each institution's language requirements will vary but most institutions will require students to demonstrate English language proficiency (by presenting specific test results); otherwise students will be required to enrol in English as a second language course if they have not met specific requirements.

RECOGNITION OF STUDIES

Quality assurance system:

Approval of degree programs under the Post-secondary Learning Act and the Approval of Programs of Study Regulation follows a two-stage review process once the Minister receives a proposal.

Stage 1 is a system coordination review of the proposed program by the Ministry to make a determination of the need for the program and how it fits with other programs currently offered within Alberta's post-secondary system.

Stage 2 is a quality review enacted if the Minister forwards the proposal to the Campus Alberta Quality Council. The Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) is an arms-length quality assurance agency that reviews all proposals for new degrees to be offered in Alberta. It also monitors all new degree programs. Further information about the review processes and standards are available at: <http://www.caqc.gov.ab.ca>.

Bodies dealing with recognition:

International Qualifications Assessment Service - IQAS

Director: Kathleen Morrow
208 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 415 4800
Fax: +1(780) 422 9556
WWW: <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/iqas/iqas.asp>

Services provided and students dealt with: IQAS evaluates international credentials and issues certificates that indicate how international credentials compare to educational standards in Alberta. IQAS assessment certificates may be used to facilitate entry into employment, professional licensing and educational institutions.

Campus Alberta Quality Council - CAQC

11th Floor, Commerce Place 10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 427 8921
Fax: +1(780) 427 0423
WWW: <http://www.caqc.gov.ab.ca/>

Special provisions for recognition:

Recognition for non-university level studies: The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is responsible for developing policies, guidelines, and procedures designed to facilitate transfer agreements among post-secondary institutions so that learners can move from one institution to another and receive credit for courses for which they have already demonstrated competence. An important activity of ACAT is to maintain a database of negotiated and approved transfer agreements between post-secondary institutions. This information is accessible either by using the Online Alberta Transfer Guide or the annual printed Alberta Transfer Guide. More information is available at: www.transferalberta.ca

PROVINCIAL BODIES

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

Minister: Doug Horner

Secretary to the Minister: Lisa Gentles
7th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 422 5400
Fax: +1(780) 422 0821
EMail: AET.INFO@gov.ab.ca
WWW: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca>

Role of national body: To provide the leadership, services & coordination necessary for the efficient development and functioning of an effective and responsive post-secondary learning system.

Alberta Education

Minister: Dave Handcock
Administrative Assistant: Carole Inda
7th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 427 7219
WWW: <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca>

Role of national body: To provide the leadership, services & coordination necessary for the efficient development and functioning of an effective and responsive elementary-secondary learning system.

Campus Alberta Quality Council - CAQC

Chairperson: Ronald Bond
Director: Marilyn Patton
11th Floor, Commerce Place 10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 427 8921
Fax: +1(780) 427 0423
WWW: <http://www.caqc.gov.ab.ca/>

Role of national body: To promote system development and integrity, review the quality and recommend degree programmes for approval, and monitor the quality of degree programmes within the post-secondary system.

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer - ACAT

Chairperson: Ron Woodward
Manager, Post-Secondary Transitions: Anne Ryton
11th Floor, Commerce Place 10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5
Canada
Tel: +1(780) 422 9021
Fax: +1(780) 422 3688
EMail: acat@gov.ab.ca
WWW: <http://www.transferralberta.ca>

Role of national body: To provide leadership and direction in the improvement of educational opportunities for Alberta students through inter-institutional transfer and coordination.

Data for academic year: 2008-2009

Source: IAU from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), on behalf of the Province of Alberta, 2008