

Canada - Ontario

STRUCTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Description:

Higher education in Canada is constitutionally the responsibility of the provinces. There are 19 provincially assisted universities and the Ontario College of Arts and Design and 24 provincially assisted colleges of applied arts and technology (CAATs).

Universities are degree granting institutions. Each institution has an Act of the Legislative Assembly and operates independently, determines its own academic and admissions policies, programmes and staff appointments. Several privately funded degree granting institutions also exist in Ontario. CAATs provide technical and vocational programmes usually leading to a Certificate or Diploma. In addition to certificate and diploma programmes, CAATs may also apply to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for consent to offer a degree programme in an applied area of study. A combination of theory and applied skills training makes up the four year college applied degree programme model, which also includes a compulsory paid work term.

Pursuant to the Post secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act 2000 (PSECE Act), all institutions – Ontario or out-of-province, public or private for-profit or not-for-profit – require either an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or the consent of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to offer and/or advertise a degree, programs or part of a program leading to a degree, or to call themselves a university or to advertise using the word “university” in Ontario. The act also allows CAATs to apply for a ministerial consent to offer a baccalaureate degree in an applied area of study. The act also enshrines in legislation the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. The Board is responsible for providing recommendations to the Minister on the academic rigour and institutional soundness of new degree granting proposals. The Board has established criteria against which it assesses applications for a Minister’s consent prior to making its recommendations to the Minister for consideration.

The College Compensation and Appointments Council, a provincial government agency, appoints the governing bodies of the CAATs.

Besides various government supported pre employment and apprenticeship programs, there are also many private career colleges which are required to register and have their vocational programs approved by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005.

Stages of studies:

University level first stage: Bachelor’s Degree

Most undergraduate study leads to a “General” Bachelor’s Degree (minimum three years) or a “specialized” degree (four 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.) The first stage also includes the undergraduate Diploma (one to three years of study) and short (up to one year) special certificate programmes; these may enable entry to degree programmes and are frequently given in close cooperation with professional bodies. In addition, the first stage includes other professional programmes that typically require no university level prerequisites and four years of study, e.g. Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.Sc.N.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Comm.). Finally, the Royal Military College of Canada, operated by the Federal Department of National Defence, is located in Kingston.

University level second stage: Master’s Degree

The Master’s Degree normally requires at least one year of study after a specialized Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent. Most Master’s programmes, e.g. in Business Administration, require two years of study. A thesis and course work are usually required. Graduate level Diplomas are considered an intermediate between a Bachelor’s degree or first professional degree and the Master’s Degree). The second stage also includes first professional degree programmes that demand prerequisite university studies e.g. professional Baccalaureate programmes (Bachelor of Law (LL.B.) and clinical Doctorates (Doctor of Medicine (M.D.); Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS).

University level third stage: Doctorate

The research Doctorate is the highest academic qualification awarded by Ontario universities and it comprises the third stage of university-level studies. This degree normally requires at least three 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 research Doctorate should not be confused with the "clinical" Doctorate, which is a first professional degree awarded in certain health science disciplines, e.g., M.D. in Medicine, D.D.S. in Dentistry and D.V.M. in Veterinary Medicine.)

Distance higher education:

Traditional "distance education" in which technology is used to connect learners and educators who are separated by time or distance is well developed with the majority of Ontario's colleges and universities offering courses and some complete programmes.

ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Admission to non university higher education studies:

Alternatives to credentials: Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent. Alternatives: Mature students status (age 19 or older can be considered for admission to the CAATs) or lesser minimum admission requirements established by the college on a program specific basis. Assessment for admission in this circumstance is on a case by case basis.

Mature students age 18 or older can be considered for admission to private career colleges. Assessment for admission is based on an approved qualifying test.

Numerus clausus: For highly competitive programs, applicants will be accepted in the following priority:

Permanent residents of Ontario

Permanent residents of other provinces or territories in Canada

Applicants from other countries

Other requirements: The admission process must consist of the following consecutive steps:

-determination of the applicant's system eligibility (which is any one of the following: an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent; mature student status; any lesser minimum admission requirement as established by a college on a programme specific basis)

- determination of the applicant's programme eligibility

- selection from among all programme eligible applicants to oversubscribed programmes.

Each college on a programme-specific basis will establish the programme eligibility requirements.

Admission to university-level studies:

Alternatives to credentials: Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent. Alternatives: Varying credentials for mature students.

Other requirements: Overall average of 60% and six Grade 12 university (U) or university/college (M) courses. Universities and/or programmes often have additional specific requirements.

Foreign students admission:

Apply to national body: Applications for bachelor's degrees are submitted to the provincial body: The Ontario University Application Centre. Also valid for applications to the majority of programmes offered at CAATs.

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 at a university, college or other educational institution in Canada.

Quotas: Generally no. However, in a small number of professional programmes, there are limits to enrolment.

Admission requirements: Generally, as for domestic students, a high school diploma or equivalent will be required. A lack of proficiency in English or French will be taken into account by the Canadian Immigration Office in the evaluation of the application.

Entry regulations: Before an international students can come to study in Canada, he or she will need: a “Study Permit” if the programme of study the individual is admitted to is longer than six months in duration, regardless of the length of your stay in Canada. In order to obtain a study permit, the student must provide: a letter of acceptance from the postsecondary institution; proof of enough money to pay school fees and living expenses; confirmation that the student will return home at the end of his or her studies; passing a medical exam if required; and qualification 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).

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 are required by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for students from many countries.

RECOGNITION OF STUDIES

Quality assurance system:

There are more than 100 provincial standards which set the expected outcomes for college programs. The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) implements and manages the self-regulatory quality assurance mechanism for Ontario’s publicly supported colleges through the Credentials Validation Service (CVS) and the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA). The CVS ensures that all proposed new or modified certificate and diploma level programs of instruction conform to provincial standards. The PQAPA independently audits, on a cyclical basis, the colleges’ quality assurance policies and procedures. Once a university program receives approval from the University’s Senate, the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee of the Council of Ontario Universities (reviews undergraduate programs only), and Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (reviews graduate programs only) review and approve the program proposal. Also, Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) are bilateral agreements signed by the executive heads of all publicly-supported colleges and universities and the government. The agreements outline the government’s goals and commitments for access, quality and accountability, and the system-level measures and indicators that will be used to demonstrate clear and tangible results for the increased investment in postsecondary education.

Special provisions for recognition:

Recognition for non-university level studies: In general none. The institutions themselves, given available teaching and other resources, determine any restrictions on admission to the provincially-supported CAATs and other institutions, but in some instances are a result of government policy. Priority is usually given to provincial residents, other Canadian residents, and then foreign students.

Recognition for university level studies: In general none. Universities establish their own admissions criteria and make their own admissions decisions in response to individual applications.

For access to advanced studies and research: In general none.

For exercising a profession: In general, none. Both Canadians and non-Canadians who studied abroad have to meet specified educational, experience and language requirements, and usually pass registration examinations. The Comparative Education Service (CES) of the University of Toronto assesses foreign qualifications relating to numerous professions. Access to most professions is governed by provincial and/or federal statutes and is generally restricted to Canadian citizens or immigrants accepted as permanent residents. Applicants must also meet examination and/or practical training requirements set by the relevant professional body or provincial or federal licensing board.

PROVINCIAL BODIES

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

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Role of national body: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is responsible for: developing policy directions for universities and colleges of applied arts and technology; planning and administering policies related to basic and applied research in this sector; authorizing universities to grant degrees; distributing funds allocated by the provincial legislature to colleges and universities; providing financial assistance programmes for post-secondary school students; defining courses of study at faculties of education; and registering private career colleges.

Council of Ontario Universities

Chairperson: Peter George
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Role of national body: The Council provides services to its University members and the community including research advocacy, communication and public affairs, and the central processing of university applications. The Council is comprised of Ontario University Presidents and is the primary advocacy group for the public university system.

Colleges Ontario

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Role of national body: Advocacy and marketing association of the 24 Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario.

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 Ontario, 2008