



Workshop 10 Canadian Universities - What is available?

Student Summary

This workshop will seek to provide you with the following:

- How to identify the 'right' school.
- An overview of available Canadian universities.
- An overview of 'top tier' institutions for various fields of study.
- General academic and financial requirements to pursue training.
- Strategies for maximizing chances of admission.

At the end of this workshop you will take with you:

1. Student handout outlining school selection process.
2. Student handout outlining Top Tier institutions in Canada for specific areas of training.
3. Student handout outlining strategies for maximizing chances of admission.
4. Resource list for further research.



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Introduction

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Setting the Context

For Canadians, higher education is considered **the ticket to future success** because a university education translates into new skills, better prospects and higher salaries.

- A university graduate earns about **75% more** than a high school graduate.
- The unemployment rate for those with only a high school education is **almost double** the national average (Statistics Canada).
- A bachelor's degree can be worth as much as **\$329,000** in extra lifetime earnings!

Now, and even more in the future, a post-secondary education—a university degree, a college diploma or some combination of the two—will help you get a great job. University also prepares you for the challenges you will face throughout your life. Going to university will help you learn how to solve problems, think critically and creatively, present your ideas persuasively, work in teams, and make effective decisions—all attributes that are in high demand from today's top employers.

Source: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
www.aucc.ca/can_uni/general_info/overview_e.html

Regardless of the program, a Canadian degree is globally recognized and considered equivalent to those from American and other Commonwealth universities. So a university education can help you to work in Canada and also pursue a global career.

Choosing the Right School

So how do you know which school is “right” for you? Let's explore the **process** of identifying the right school.



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There are 92 universities in Canada and each one has its own unique personality and assets. Narrowing down your options can be a big, but **very important**, process. Not only will this be the school that gives you your academic credentials, but it'll also be where you live, learn, socialize and work for many years.

Choosing the right school or program is like buying a car: you want to get the best value for your dollar. You want to get a car you can afford and that works for you, with the right options.

Do you buy the first car you see? Of course not! You approach a purchase carefully, start early and look at lots of models before deciding.

It's the same thing with choosing a school or program. Plan your entry to school well ahead of time. Take the time to look around and you'll be happier with your final decision.

Source: Education Planner

<http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/EducationPlanner.pdf>

In essence, you are **shopping** for an education, so you want to choose a university that will fit your unique personality, education goals and career and life needs.

How to identify the right school for you

This process involves collecting as much information as you can about each school and its programs, from various sources, before making your decision. It's a time-consuming process, but well worth the effort.

- Identify your education, career and life priorities.
- Choose the universities you want to explore and research each one in detail.
- Talk to employers in your career area.
- Look at university ratings and graduate surveys.
- Interview university reps.

After reviewing all this info, you're ready to make your decision, based on what fits your needs.

When choosing schools, it's key to remember that there are no right or wrong decisions. You're simply making the best choice for you **right now**, based on your current situation.

It is key to **involve your family members** in this process, so they are as invested as you are in your education and they can offer you support and encouragement along the way.

You should also be open to getting assistance from high school guidance counsellors and university advisors. The more help and support you have, the better your chances are of choosing the right school for you.



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What are your priorities?

In order to know which schools to research, you need to know what's **important to you** and consider all the practical details around the program you want to take: money, student life, housing, etc.

HO1 What are your university priorities?

Activity

Complete the worksheet and then review and discuss your top five priorities. Consider the following:

- Were you surprised at your priorities?
- Did you see any connections between your choices? E.g. If your priority is for university to be affordable, you may not be able to go away to study.

Now that you've identified your priorities, you can start narrowing down your university search and focus on schools that will support your priorities, starting with your chosen career area.

Review

OH3 How to Identify the Right School for You

Researching Schools

You want to start your search by **going to one-stop Web sites** or resources that will link you to many schools from one place, and then you can narrow down your search based on the priorities you identified.

These general Web sites are listed on a "Canadian University Research Resources" resource sheet in your resource guide.

Once you've found the schools you want to look at, you need to know **what to ask**. In your booklet you have a very detailed "Questions to Ask the School" handout that you can use to research each school you're interested in. The more details you have, the more informed your decision will be.

HO2 Canadian University Research Resources

HO3 Questions to Ask the Schools

HO3A Post Secondary Institution Checklist

HO9/OH12 Sample Profiles of Universities



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Activity

Choose the schools you want to explore and research each one in detail.

Talk to Employers

One of the reasons you want to attend university is to get a job in your field afterwards, so it's important to talk to employers, who will be the people evaluating your skills and education after you graduate.

Find out who the employers are in your career area and ask them for a bit of their time to answer your questions. You'll want to know what **qualifications** they look for, if the university you're researching has a good **reputation** and if they **hire graduates** from the university you're considering.

- Identify employers in your career area that you want to work for after graduating.
- Find out what qualifications they look for.
- Find out if the university has a good reputation.
- Find out if they hire grads from the university you're considering.

HO4 – Questions to ask Employers

University Ratings

Look at university ratings and graduate surveys

- Use rankings as one of many tools to help you make decisions about the university for you.
- Look at ratings with a critical eye.
- Use graduate surveys to get past students' perspectives on a specific university and find out if they ended up working in their field after graduation.

University ratings are basically an evaluation tool rates schools according to a set criteria and ranks them. Ratings are often done by major media outlets. Canada's most popular university ratings are created by *Macleans* magazine as a special issue every year, "Macleans Guide to Canadian Universities", <http://www.macleans.ca/universities>

Ratings can be helpful, because they explore various areas of a university, not just academics, and they come out every year, so you're getting pretty fresh information.

However, it's important to remember that they're only one piece of the information puzzle that you need to consider when making decisions.

- Statistic: A 1997 survey of college freshmen reported that only 8.6% of college freshmen considered colleges' rankings in national magazines to be "very important" when selecting a college.



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It's also important to look at these rankings with a critical eye. For example, what does being “the best” school mean, when every student’s version of the best is different?

So, use them as another tool to evaluate a university, but not necessarily the primary source of information to help you make your decision.

The last research activity involves looking into **Graduate surveys**. They are collected by most universities as a way to find out where their graduates end up and how they’re applying their studies in the workplace. They also include info on what past students thought of the program, which is helpful information for potential students.

They’re worth looking into and most universities have this information available for potential students to review, you just have to ask for it.

So those are all the steps you need to go through to identify the right school for you! Again, it is a time-consuming process, but university is a major investment of time, money and energy that you and your family will be making, so you want to make the most informed choice possible.

Exploring Canadian Universities

Universities offer bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral (usually a PhD) degree programs in diverse subject areas like business, astronomy, genetics and fine arts. These degrees can prepare you for various professions and careers, not just one specific career. University offers awesome opportunities for academic study.

Some provinces and territories also have University Colleges. These institutions combine university and college traditions to offer students degree programs, college diplomas and certificates. This system allows students to **ladder** their studies by starting off with a certificate, moving on to a diploma and then getting a degree.

Undergraduate programs leading to a bachelor’s degree generally require three or four years of full-time study, depending on the province. An honours degree usually involves a higher level of concentration and achievement within the honours subject and may require additional credits.

There are **92 universities** across Canada, each with a unique focus and programs, with at least one university in every province. Canadian universities offer more than **10,000** undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Use these resources to explore some of the universities and colleges that interest you.

HO5 – Canadian Universities

HO5A –Canadian Colleges, Universities and Trade Programs Online Resources

Look at the Top Institutions in Canada

This list comes from the *Macleans* university rankings for 2004. Again, keep in mind this is only one source to consider when choosing a school, but it is a **good starting point**.



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H06 Top Tier Schools

Now that we know more about universities, the next step is figuring out how to go **apply** and **get accepted** into a university.

General requirements to pursue university training

The requirements to get into university differ from school to school, but they are the “**must have**” elements that you need to qualify for entry.

Requirements Include:

- General academic achievements: high school credits, specific courses and marks.
- Other specific requirements for your program. For example, fine arts or journalism students need to present a portfolio of work.
- Financial requirements: you’ll need to pay a processing fee to apply for entry, and you should have an idea how you’re going to pay for your studies.
- You may need to write a statement or essay about your interests, abilities and career plans.

Important points to keep in mind:

- Getting into a university is **competitive** business: although you may meet a program’s requirements, some students may not get accepted because there are often more applicants than classroom spaces.
- Schools often choose students with the **highest marks** first and people with lower grades may not get in.
- Many times, you will be reviewed on **more than just your marks**. To choose well-rounded students, schools look at your extra-curricular activities or any volunteer or community work you’ve done.
- Make sure you **read the fine print** carefully and know exactly what’s needed to get into the program and university you’re interested in.
- First year is often a time to try a variety of courses and then choose an area you want to specialize in. Be sure to find out the process for **switching majors** if you change your mind, as many students do after first year. In fact, about 60% of students change their majors at least once!
- Have a **plan B** in case you don’t get into the program you want.

What you’ll need to apply:

- Application form and application deadlines.
- An “official transcript” from your previous school: this is a list of your courses and marks. Each province has a different process for students to get their transcripts, but you can often get transcripts from your province’s department of learning/ministry of education.
- Some schools may require a medical form or reference letters.
- Funds to pay an application processing fee.



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Activity

With the person next to you or in a small group with the group leaders, brainstorm things you can do to increase your chances of getting accepted into university.

Think about:

- Academic requirements
- Financial requirements
- Extracurricular and other life activities

Examples: If you need to increase your marks, get a tutor. To round out your experiences, volunteer.

We hope you're more aware of the detailed process of applying for admission. It's a lot to think about and there are many small steps involved, but it won't be an overwhelming process if you plan ahead and give yourself lots of time to get everything done.

Key Factors of Life in University

Once you've been accepted into university, there are a lot of factors to plan for your life on and off campus.

Some of these factors include:

- Paying for university
- Supporting yourself financially and budgeting your money
- Choosing and registering for courses
- Housing
- Transportation
- Being a good student
- Having fun while in university
- Getting support from friends and family while you're in university

In your booklet you have a "Choosing the Right Courses" and a "Registering for Classes" handouts that will help with this process. You can also check out the education planner at:

<http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/EducationPlanner.pdf>

Choosing which courses to take each semester can be quite challenging and if it is your first time even more so! There are some key things to keep in mind. The following will outline those points for you to consider.

Interests

It is always important to choose a course that is interesting to you. Try courses that explore a subject you loved in high school, or select courses in new and intriguing areas that excite you.



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Skills

What skills do you want to acquire? Do you want to improve your writing or mathematical skills? Do you want to develop computer skills or historical research skills? Choose courses that will help you reach these goals and that build on or expand your current skills.

Class Size

Do you learn better in small classes that encourage discussion or in large lecture classes? From lecture halls to seminars, educational programs and institutions offer courses of different sizes in various locations. This may include more lecture time and less small class time, or the opposite. You may even consider distance education for some of your classes.

Prerequisites

Some courses that you may want to take will require you to have completed one or more prerequisites. A prerequisite is a course that gives you the background knowledge and skills you need in order to successfully complete another course or sequence of courses. You should plan on taking prerequisites early in your academic career to avoid challenges later. So think about what you want to take now, and in your second, third, and fourth years. Plan ahead!

Requirements

The core curriculum and specific college requirements are designed to give you a well-rounded education and to prepare you for your future. These requirements establish guidelines for choosing courses and also offer the opportunity to explore majors you may have never considered.

Majors

You should try to choose courses that help you explore an area that you think you might like to declare as a major. Most majors and programs of study offer introductory courses that provide a general overview of the subject and may encourage you to pursue that major. Educational advisors are often available and familiar with introductory courses for each major and minor and can help you include them in your academic plan.

Careers

Look at courses—not necessarily in your major—that may help you in your future career. Careers may or may not be related directly to your major. Think about taking courses that have application in your chosen career. This may include a practicum course, or a focus within the selection of courses required. For example if you are taking criminology and you are interested in law not policing, you could choose courses that prepare and explore the legal area of the degree.

Take a look at these resources as well to help you with your choices and decisions:

[H07 How to Use a University Calendar](#)

[H08 Canadian Colleges, Universities and Trades Program Links](#)

Small Group Discussion

Group leaders will discuss with students university life and answer questions from the participants. Find other people who are at university or have recently completed their degree, talk to them. Remember make allies and find people who you can learn from.



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Closing and Next Steps

We've reached the end of this workshop, thanks very much for giving us your attention for the last 90 minutes and for actively participating in the activities. There is a lot of information here, and it is crucial that you keep going with your activities supported by your allies.

- University can help you get a **great job** and **prepare you for life** in general.
- There are **many universities** and academic programs across Canada to choose from.
- Be as **informed** as you can when shopping around for a university.
- Choose a university that meets all your education, career and life **priorities**.
- **Research** universities in detail and get a number of opinions from employers, university ratings and graduate surveys.
- Be aware of the **requirements** to get into school and plan ahead to meet admission deadlines.
- **Prepare** for all the details of university life.
- Involve your **family** in the university selection process, especially if they're going to help you pay for your education.
- Get ready to choose your courses.
- Remember, it takes focus and commitment to succeed, set goals, manage them, and keep on top of your studies.

Next steps:

- Share this information with your parents and let them know what you're thinking around your university choices.
- Review all the handouts.
- Begin doing your research, exploring the possibility of a university education and getting ready for the application process.

Remember success is something you make happen. You don't do it alone, and it doesn't happen overnight!