



Guide to Universities in Canada





Canadian Universities: In a Nutshell

- ◇ Strong global ranking
- ◇ Friendly to international students
- ◇ A combination of depth and breadth
- ◇ Liberal, open-minded culture
- ◇ Most livable cities in the world
- ◇ Lower cost than university education in the USA

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Setting the Scene

There are approximately 100 universities in Canada - a similar number to the UK, and a much smaller number compared to the USA (which has over 4,000!). Canada is an extremely popular destination for international students for a number of reasons:

- It offers world-class education at a fraction of the cost of the US.
- It provides more flexibility in specialization compared to the UK.
- It has a diverse population and the potential to stay and work after studying.

Here are a few things for you to bear in mind as we go through the guide to applying to university in Canada:

1. As a country, Canada is enormous and home to both city and vast countryside. Many of the universities are very far from each other, although there are some clusters. This means that just because your friend is going to Canada doesn't mean you're likely to see them!
2. The cities that many universities are in (e.g. Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto) are widely considered to be some of the most pleasant 'livable' cities in the world.
3. Some Canadian universities are nowhere near cities and can be hard or expensive to travel to and from.
4. Canada can be seen as a hi-brid between the flexibility of the US university system, and the specificity of the UK university system.
5. Canada's university system is not centralised, so the requirements and deadlines will vary from province to province, as well as from university to university.



Provinces of Canada



Alberta is in the 'prairies' - like British Columbia, it borders the Rockies and therefore draws hikers and skiers from all over the world (although this could be said for most of Canada). Similar to British Columbia again, Alberta has both metropolitan cities like Edmonton and Calgary, as well as picturesque natural beauties like Banff and Jasper.

British Columbia has both coastline and mountains, which is a big draw for adventurers. It has both big cities (Vancouver) and quaint old towns (Victoria), as well as a thriving wine region!

Manitoba is the polar bear campital of the world, and it's one of the best places to see the Northern lights. Need we say more?

New Brunswick is very small and very close to the US state of Maine, meaning it has a beautiful coastline and connects to the Appalachian Range.

Newfoundland and Labrador is also relatively small population-wise. It's known for glaciers and whale-watching, and is another place where it's possible to see the Northern Lights!

Nova Scotia is small but relatively populous. The province is known for its history, seafood and wildlife (puffins and seals).

Ontario is the most populated province in Canada. It boasts natural beauties such as Niagara Falls, as well as lakes and forests.

Prince Edward Island is very small in both size and population. It is known for its seafood and as the setting of the novel Anne of Green Gables!

Quebec is primarily French-speaking and has French-influenced culture and history. It is the largest province and second largest in terms of population size. Beautiful old architecture can be found in Montreal, and a step back in time to cobbled streets in Old Quebec.

Saskatchewan is landlocked, and is known for its rich agricultural industry. The province is known for hunting, fishing and hiking. The campus of Sasatchewan is considered one of the most beautiful in Canada.

Why Study in Canada?



Price

Tuition fees at Canadian universities are typically a lot lower than out-of-state fees in the US, for both private colleges and public universities.

Quality

Canada has established itself as a place of academic excellence to rival the more famous US and UK. At the time of writing, 13 Universities from Canada (over 10% of the total number!) are recognised in the world's top 200 by QS, including 3 that appear in the Top 50.

Diverse with Citizenship Opportunities

Canada is extremely popular with international students, not only because of the high quality education for a lower price-tag, but also because it is culturally diverse and offers more opportunities for students from overseas to stay and work in the country after they have completed their higher education. Being a college student can put you on a fast track to becoming a permanent resident, which can then lead to citizenship.

Not so Test and Transcript-Heavy!

The Canadian admissions system can be good for 'late bloomers'. If your test scores weren't so hot in grade 9 and 10, but they've been getting stronger and stronger in recent years, you can still get into a top university in Canada because more recent grades are typically given more weighting compared to the US admissions process. Canadian universities also place a lot less emphasis on test scores, so while SAT or ACT may sometimes be required, this is the exception rather than the rule.

LGBTQ Friendly

Universities and cities differ, but as a general rule most people agree that Canada is more LGBTQ friendly than the US. Do your research and find the right environment for you if this is important to you.

Natural Beauty

Canada is home to some of the natural wonders of the world, such as the Northern Lights (which can be seen in Alberta), Niagara Falls, Lake Superior, not to mention incredible mountains for hiking and skiing.

Lifestyle

Canada is known the world over for its 'livable' cities, as defined by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). Calgary and Vancouver, for example (which made the Top 10), both have a relatively low population density that allows them to offer an abundance of recreational activities without leading to high crime rates or overburdened infrastructure.

SPEAK FRENCH?

Canada is a bi-lingual country with both English and French as official languages. Through study, you can become a bilingual professional!

Entry Requirements



Every University is Different

In Canada, each university has its own entrance requirements and will assess you on an individual basis. However, graduation from a secondary school and good academic standing are typically the minimum requirements for undergraduate study. Below, we'll talk about some general trends in Canadian university entry requirements, but because each university has their own method, it's important to look them up and fully understand them before you apply.

High School Transcript/ Diploma/ IB/ A Level etc.

Canadian universities will generally accept international diplomas. In fact, high achievement on the IB Diploma can even translate to university credits. For the IB, most Canadian universities have similar requirements (at least three HL passes out of six passed subjects; a minimum number of diploma points ~28). However, for particular subjects, these requirements may be more stringent, or may have subject-related requirements.

Language Tests

You will need to prove your proficiency in English or French (depending on the language your university operates in. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a world-recognized language assessment to ensure you have the required English skills to survive in a English-only educational environment. If you've had English as your medium of instruction at high school, you can apply for a waiver, which would mean you don't need to take this test - check with your college counsellor if you're unsure (e.g.: If you recently transferred to an English or French-speaking international school).

Standardized Tests

As a rule of thumb, Canadian universities do not normally require SATs or ACTs, unlike their US counterparts. However, there are some exceptions, notably the University of Toronto. Because Canadian universities (like UK universities) admit students with different academic profiles and grades depending on the course/ program of study, some programs require higher scores in the SAT/ACT than others. The table below will help you figure out which one is the best for you:

SAT	Criteria	ACT
Reading (65 mins) Writing & Language (35 mins) Mathematics 1 (25 mins no calculator) Mathematics 2 (55 mins with calculator) Essay (50 mins - optional)	Test sections	English (45 mins) Mathematics (60 mins) Reading (35 mins) Science (35 mins) Writing (40 mins - optional)
3 hours (or 3 hours 50 mins with Essay)	Length	2 hours 55 mins (or 3 hours 35 mins with Writing)
Reading; relevant words in context; numeracy (maths); grammar; writing	Skills tested	Grammar & usage; numeracy (maths); science reasoning; writing
Questions are in context and can be complex	Test method	Questions can be long, but are typically less complex to understand than the SAT
Two sections (math & evidence-based reading and writing) each scored out of 800 to arrive at a composite score out of 1600.	Scoring	Four sections are scored from 1-36. The final ACT score is the average of the 4 sections.
Arithmetic, problem-solving & data analysis, algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, trigonometry (formulas provided).	Math focus	Arithmetic, algebra, functions, geometry, trigonometry (no formulas provided).
Mathematics questions increase in difficulty as you progress through a section. Reading questions are chronological, rather than ordered by difficulty. Writing & Language questions are random and not ordered by difficulty.	Difficulty	Mathematics and Science sections increase in difficulty as you progress through the test. English & Reading questions are random and not ordered by difficulty.
None - you only get scores for correct answers (not deductions for incorrect ones)	Guessing penalty	None - you only get scores for correct answers (not deductions for incorrect ones)
March/April; May; June; August; October; November; December	Offered	February; April; June; July; September; October; December

Admissions Process



Overview

The Canadian Admissions process is a lot less complex and time-consuming than the US admissions process. But don't let that give you a false sense of security! You will still need plenty of time to research universities and courses to find the best fit for you. You'll also want to start the process early because applying early increases your chances of being admitted.

Course Applications

In Canada, you apply to courses/ programs, not just universities. If you're familiar with the US admissions process, this may surprise you. It doesn't mean you're locked into one series of modules for your whole university life - there's lots of choice within the programs. However, you do need to apply to a program of study (such as Actuarial Science, English or Biology).

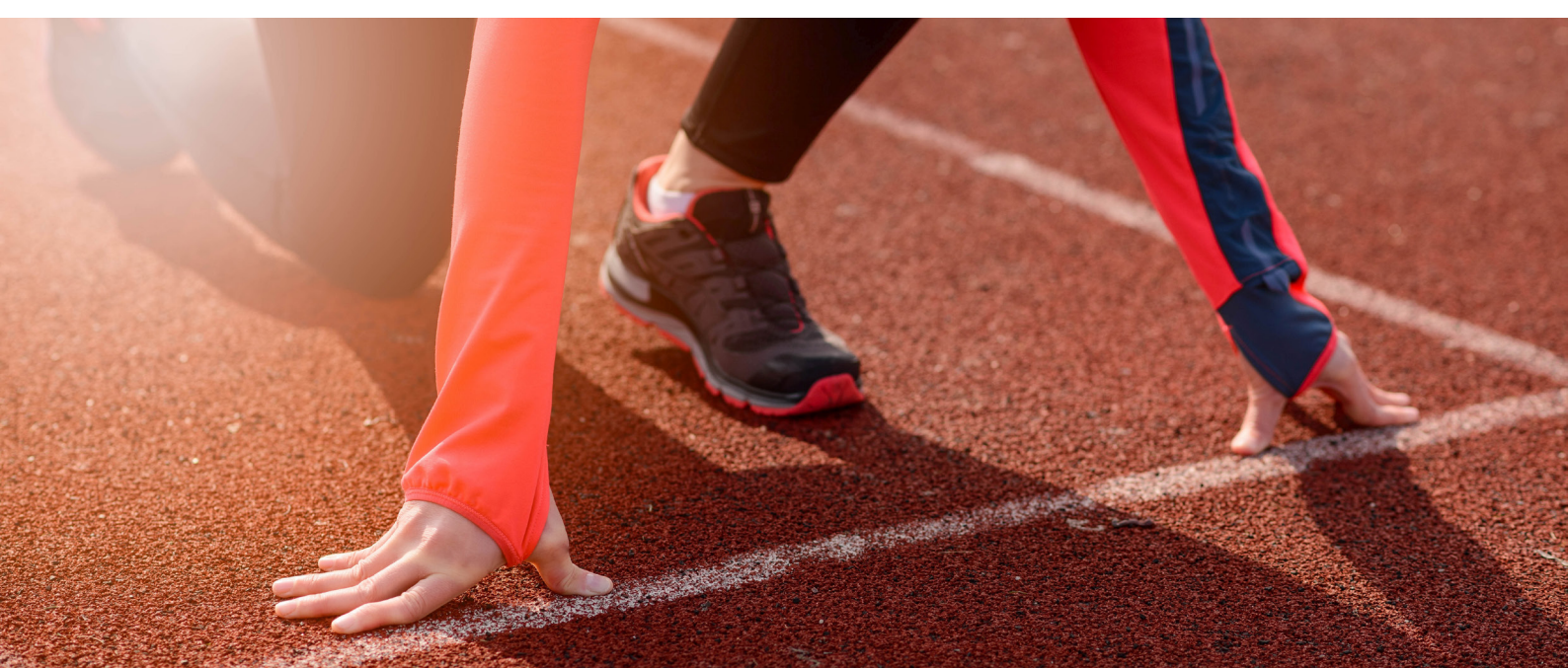
Once you've found the best fit course you'll need to look at the deadlines and requirements because they can vary from province to province, as well as from university to university. Across the next pages, we will give you a guide to each of the provinces so that as you narrow your selection, you can refer to it for help and resources on how to put your application together.

Application Deadlines

Generally speaking, the university application process starts in the fall of the year before you intend to begin your studies for universities across Canada. Be sure to start looking into Scholarships right away as well, as some have early deadlines.

Just to make it a bit more complicated, application deadlines vary by program of study, as well as by university and by province in Canada. They also can change annually, so the best advice we can give you is look it up and check, check and triple check!

Most undergraduate programs in Canada accept applications until March 1 for September entry, however, there are exceptions. For Fall term (September) entry, deadlines can be as early as November 1 the previous year for some programs. You are strongly encouraged to submit your application far in advance of the posted deadlines. Spaces fill quickly for popular universities and programs, and it is common for a program to close before the application deadlines listed. This means that even though you apply 'on time', you won't even be considered because all spots are already filled.



Top University Deadlines



University	City and Province	Applicaation Deadline Guidelines	Scholarship Deadline Guidelines
University of Toronto	Toronto, Ontario	(Recommended) 1st November	1st November (few scholarship) February (Awards Profile Scholarship)
University of British Columbia (UBC)	Vancouver, British Columbia	15 January	1st December
McGill University	Montreal, Quebec	15 January	22nd January
McMaster University	Hamilton, Ontario	November - February (depending on whether you apply early)	You do not need to apply for a McMaster Honour Award. Check the website for other awards and deadlines (if required)
University of Waterloo	Waterloo, Ontario	January - March (depending on program of study)	Scholarships and bursaries are awarded starting in early May once we receive updated marks. Available to all students (no application required)
University of Alberta	Edmonton, Alberta	March	Dependent on the program
Western University	London, Ontario	March - June	Dependent on the program
Universite de Montreal	Montreal, Quebec	1st February	Dependent on the program
Queen's University	Kingston, Ontario	(Recommended) 15th November	In order to give you enough time to access the online Major Admission Award Application, we strongly recommend that you apply to Queen's on OUAC by November 15.
University of Calgary	Calgary, Alberta	March	15th December
University of Ottawa	Ottawa, Ontario	December - April depending on the program	Dependent on the program
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby, British Columbia	February 28	January 15
Concordia University	Montreal, Quebec	February 1	March 1
Laval University	Quebec City, Quebec	January - February (depending on program)	Dependent on the program
University of Victoria	Victoria, British Columbia	February 28	February 28
University of Manitoba	Winnipeg, Manitoba	February 1	February 15
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	May 15	International students are considered for scholarships upon application based on academic achievements.
Carleton University	Ottawa, Ontario	April 1	If you have been admitted to Carleton with an admissions average of 80 per cent or better, you will automatically be considered for a renewable Entrance Scholarship.
University of Quebec	Quebec City, Quebec	February 1	Dependent on the program



More on Canada's
Most Popular
University Provinces

A Quick Reminder...

Alberta is in the 'prairies' of Canada - like British Columbia, it borders the Rockies and therefore draws hikers and skiers from all over the world. Similar to British Columbia again, Alberta has both metropolitan cities like Edmonton and Calgary, as well as picturesque natural beauties like Banff and Jasper.

Climate

Alberta has a semi-arid, brown landscape. It is relatively dry with four seasons with warm summers and cold winters. Day-time temperatures in the summer are likely to be 20 to 25 degrees centigrade, but in winter they go down to -5 to -15 degrees. You can expect snowfall every year (hence its reputation for incredible skiing!).

Living in Alberta

Alberta is home to a diverse set of cultures and communities. It has some of the world's most livable cities. It has a relatively low violent crime rate (although this has risen in the past decade).

Profiles of Top Universities and Colleges in Alberta



The University of Alberta is ranked at #109 in the QS world rankings. It has a strong reputation for research and excellence in humanities, sciences, creative arts, business, engineering and health sciences. It offers French instruction at the Faculté Saint-Jean.



\$14-16K annual tuition fees
for international students



~25K undergraduate students
~5K international undergraduate students
~3.5K total faculty staff

The University of Calgary is a research university with four campuses across the Alberta region as well as a fifth campus in Doha, Qatar. Among the university's traditions is 'Bermuda Shorts Day' (BSD), an annual event in April that marks the last day of classes. As well as wearing shorts on BSD, students attend a huge event on campus that features bands, barbecues and beer gardens.



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



\$14-16K annual tuition fees
for international students



~25K undergraduate students
~5K international undergraduate students
~2.6K total faculty staff

There are many other great universities in Alberta, including the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal University, MacEwan University, SAIT Polytechnic, Concordia University of Edmonton, to name a few.



British Columbia



A Quick Reminder...

British Columbia has both coastline and mountains, which is a big draw for adventurers. It has both big cities (Vancouver) and quaint old towns (Victoria), as well as a thriving wine region!

Climate

British Columbia is a large province which has a wide range of climates. It has both dry and mild areas, as well as wet and more extreme and varied temperatures. The average temperatures are relatively similar to Alberta, with cold winters (below freezing) and warm summers.

Living in British Columbia

Communities in British Columbia are culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, with people who have migrated to Canada from all over the world, as well as five percent of the population made up of indigenous Aboriginal peoples. While B.C. is an English-speaking province, Vancouver alone has over 700,000 residents who speak languages other than English in their own homes. According to Forbes, B.C. is home to the 10th cleanest city in the world (Vancouver again!). Arts, music and theatre are abundant, as well as many outdoors adventurous activities (hiking, canoeing, snowboarding among many others!).



Profiles of Top Universities and Colleges in British Columbia



The University of British Columbia is in the QS top 50 world rankings. It is highly international and has a reputation for specialized degrees (i.e.: journalism, international economics, food market analysis).



\$26-28K annual tuition fees
for international students



~53K undergraduate students
~10K international undergraduate students
~4.7K total faculty staff

Simon Fraser University, like UBC, has a large international student body (with almost a third of undergraduates being international). It also has partner exchange programs with universities all over the world. SFU is the only Canadian member of the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), the largest college sports organization in the world.



SIMON FRASER
UNIVERSITY



\$14-16K annual tuition fees
for international students



~21K undergraduate students
~6K international undergraduate students
~979K total faculty staff

There are many other great universities in British Columbia - do your research on all options if the area looks right for you!

A Quick Reminder...

Ontario is the most populated province in Canada. It boasts natural beauties such as Niagara Falls, as well as lakes and forests alongside its bustling metropolitan cities.

Climate

Northern Ontario has long, very cold winters and short summers. The southern part of the province, however, enjoys the tempering effect of the Great Lakes.

Living in Ontario

Ontario is both a bustling metropolis, and a place of serene natural beauty. You'll find people from all over the globe - it's a cultural melting pot! This is especially the case in large and diverse cities in Ontario such as Toronto, Mississauga, Ottawa, Hamilton, or Windsor. It's known for being friendly and welcoming, and for its historical buildings as home to the nation's capital with its Victorian parliamentary history.

Profiles of Top Universities and Colleges in Ontario



The University of Toronto is in the QS top 30 world rankings. It is a public research university with 11 colleges, each of which differs in character and history. The University of Toronto is particularly well known for scientific research, but has a general excellent reputation as one of the best research institutions in Canada.



\$32-34K annual tuition fees
for international students



~57K undergraduate students
~18K international undergraduate students
~9.4K total faculty staff

Ranking in the QS top 200, the University of Waterloo is a large university located in Canada's technology hub. With close connections to industry, the university aims to trailblaze innovation, research and discovery for the world of tomorrow.



\$28-30K annual tuition fees
for international students



~24K undergraduate students
~7.4K international undergraduate students
~1.7K total faculty staff

Western University typically ranks between 200-250 in the QS world rankings. It is a top research university in Canada offering students a choice of over 400 study programs! Western is considered one of the country's most beautiful universities, with hundreds of acres of land with beautiful Gothic-style buildings.



\$20-22K annual tuition fees
for international students



~21K undergraduate students
~3.6K international undergraduate students
~1.5K total faculty staff

There are many other great universities in Ontario, such as York, McMaster, Queen's, University of Ottawa, Ryerson University, Carlton University, and many others - do your research on all options if the area looks right for you!

A Quick Reminder...

Quebec is primarily French-speaking and has French-influenced culture and history. It is the largest province and second largest in terms of population size.

Climate

Covering such a large area in Canada, Quebec has a range of different climates. The south has four seasons varying from hot summers to cold, snowy winters. As you move north, the temperatures in both summer and winter get colder. In the far north, you can expect an Arctic climate with a freezing and long (~ 8 months) winter.

Living in Quebec

Quebec is culturally distinct from the rest of Canada because its sole official language is French - visually (and architecturally) it has a lot of character. Having said that, Montreal is bi-lingual, so you could be successful at university just with English. Beautiful old architecture can be found in Montreal, and a step back in time to cobbled streets in the old towns of Quebec City and Montreal. Quebec is ethnically diverse, particularly in the larger cities. Quebecers are known for loving ice hockey, their national dish: poutine (cheese and gravy on french fries) and - most of all - Quebec!

Profiles of Top Universities and Colleges in Quebec



Based in Montreal, McGill University is in the QS top 50 world rankings. It attracts thousands of international students from over 150 countries every year. It offers many international scholarship programs and has an excellent academic reputation in both the arts and sciences.



\$12-14K annual tuition fees
for international students



~22K undergraduate students
~7K international undergraduate students
~3.7K total faculty staff

In the QS top 500, Université Laval is a French-language University with undergraduates from 120 countries.



\$14-16K annual tuition fees
for international students



~20K undergraduate students
~2.3K international undergraduate students
~2.3K total faculty staff





Admissions Requirements

Overview of Information Reviewed in Canada Admissions

Academics

- Your high school grades or predicted grades in an official transcript. Generally, you're expected to achieve at least 70% in final year of high school, but for some competitive universities or programs, this increases to up to 85%).
- If they require SATs/ ACTs (which is a minority, but still a possibility), your test results will be reviewed as part of your application.

There is no centralized admissions test in Canada, so each institution sets its own standards. However, below is a general guide to what will be expected of you for different programs of study.

Program	Typical Entry Requirements
Business OR Computer Science	70% in 12th grade (or last year of high school), TOEFL 580-600, 12th grade level Math.
Engineering	70% in 12th grade, TOEFL 580-600 minimum. 12th grade level Math (algebra, calculus, geometry), Physics, Chemistry & English
Fine Arts	70% in 12th grade, TOEFL 580-600 minimum. Portfolio/ audition or documented evidence of creative skills
Media/ Communications	70% in 12th grade TOEFL: 600 minimum.

Tests

To ensure your English language is at the right level, you may need to take a TOEFL (580-600) or IELTS (usually 6.5). If you are applying to a Francophone university, you will need to demonstrate your proficiency in French.

Statement of Purpose

Many colleges require a statement of purpose to explain who you are. This is important not only in the process of evaluating your application, but also your financial aid because it gives the faculty assessing your application their most significant impression of you as an individual. This section is the key to distinguish your application from other suitable candidates - to stand out from the crowd. A personal statement should include your reasons for choosing a particular course, the suitability of your education and experience for the chosen course, your personal interests and career goals. Some courses like Business school courses will have their own essay questions and format. Others may ask for a résumé or reasons for applying to that particular course.

Example requirements for an IB candidate (from University of Toronto)

- IB diploma (English HL or SL).
- Prerequisite courses for the program (for programs requiring math, "math studies" is not acceptable).
- A total score of at least 27 (not including bonus points). Most programs require a significantly higher score.
- For Engineering programs, Mathematics (recommended at Higher level), Physics and Chemistry (SL or HL).



The Ontario Application System (OUAC)

The OUAC processes all undergraduate and professional applications on behalf of Ontario's universities (except the Royal Military College of Canada). Applicants submit their application to the OUAC, indicating all choices they wish to apply for. The OUAC does not make any admission decisions.

Undergraduate

The OUAC forwards undergraduate applications to all requested universities and/or programs. Depending on the applicant's current situation, either the 101 or 105 online applications are used.

Professional

The OUAC processes applications for professional programs at Ontario universities (medicine, law, teacher education, and rehabilitation sciences). While the OUAC processes the applications, it does not make any admission decisions.

The Ontario Law School Application Service (OLSAS) processes applications for admission to Ontario's law schools.[9] For York University, the application is for the Osgoode Hall Law School.

The Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS) processes applications for admission to Ontario's medical schools.[10] For Lakehead University and Laurentian University, the application is for the jointly operated Northern Ontario School of Medicine. For McMaster University, it is for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, and for Western University, it is for the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

The Ontario Rehabilitation Sciences Programs Application Service (ORPAS) processes applications to occupational therapy, physiotherapy and physical therapy, audiology and speech-language pathology programs offered at the graduate level at some Ontario universities.[11]

The Teacher Education Application Service (TEAS) processes applications for admission to Ontario's faculties of education.

Division	Deadline	Description
Ontario Medical Schools (OMSAS)	September 15	Recommended deadline for reference requests to be made to ensure they have sufficient time before the deadline
	October 1	Deadline to submit applications
Ontario Law Schools (OLSAS)	November 1	Deadline for application to first-year programs. Transcripts and reference forms are also due.
	April 15	Deadline for applications to the Canadian & American Dual JD Program at Windsor
	May 1	Deadline for application to upper-year programs
Ontario Faculties of Education (TEAS)	December 1	Deadline for TEAS to receive applications and program choice amendments.
Ontario Rehabilitation Sciences Programs (ORPAS)	January 4	Deadline for applications to first-year programs. Reference forms are also due.



How To Stand Out From The Crowd

1. Commit to your passion

Canadian admissions directors recommend students show commitment to an extra-curricular activity that they love. It's never too early to involve yourself in a passion, hobby or extra-curricular. If you've shown dedication and proactivity with something across a long period of time, this can help you to stand out.

2. Get a job

Volunteering is great, but a job shows that your drive and efforts are valued to the extent that someone is prepared to pay for them. Even better if your job is something that connects to your degree, but even if it isn't, it'll help cultivate important transferrable skills.

3. Be a self-starter

Talking about things you've taken the initiative to do (rather than just activities that are organized by other people) will help your application stand out as interesting.

4. Join the dots

Make sure the admissions person who reads your application is left in no doubt about your ability to thrive and succeed at college. This means demonstrating your aptitude to the challenges of college life - being resilient, a self-starter, open and positive. Tailoring this to the college is critical, so do your research!



Finding University Fit





Different Types of Degree

Term / Semester Structure

The year will be split into 3 semesters:

- Fall (end of August/start of September to December/January),
- Winter (January to April)
- Summer (April/May to July).

Academic Degrees: Course Structure

Canada sits in what could be called a 'sweet spot' between the US system and the UK system of higher education. This means that, like the British system, applicants apply to a course of study, but they have flexibility to make their own path to the degree. You can expect to take around 5 courses per semester; it is these classes which make up your program. Typically, each course is made up weekly of two hours of lectures and a one hour tutorial where a teaching assistant leads a discussion based around that lecture or the week's reading.

Applied Degrees

Applied Degree programs in Canada combine the academic focus of a university degree with the practical, job-ready skills students learn in college. A number of colleges and technical institutes across Canada, as well as some universities and university colleges, have introduced Applied Degree programs to respond to today's demanding job market. Applied Degrees fill the need for educated and highly-skilled workers by producing graduates who bring a strong combination of technical and theoretical skills to the job.

Differences between Quebec & the rest of Canada

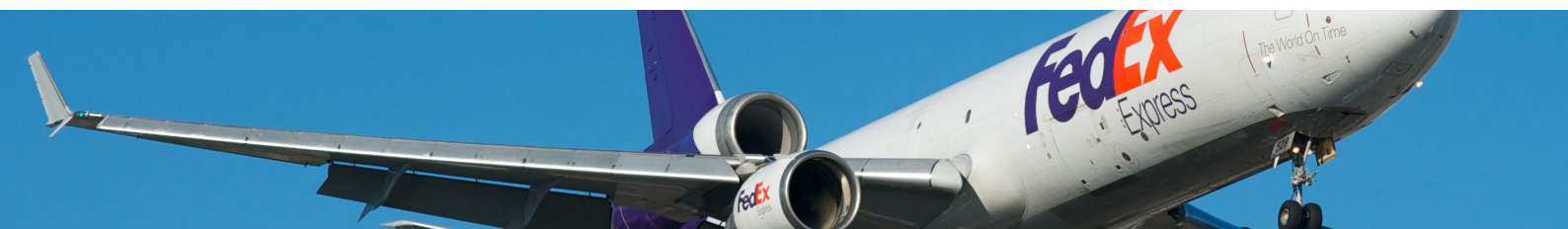
There are some differences between how things are structured in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada, as well as the language or terminology used. In Quebec, 'college' (or 'CEGEP') refers to either a 2-year pre-university program or a 3-year professional program. These could be thought of as equivalent to a British 'sixth form', and are required to progress to traditional undergraduate study at a university. This is typically 3 years long and results in a bachelor's degree.

Everywhere else in Canada, 'college' refers to community college or a technical school where students can earn a certificate, diploma or associate's degree. Students can study an undergraduate or postgraduate course at a university (though they will need a degree with honours to do so), while at graduate school they can obtain an advanced certificate, degree or diploma.

Different Institutions

Canada is not Unified When It Comes to University!

In Canada, each province and territory is responsible for education at all levels within it including universities. This is rather annoying for international applicants, because it means that you need to research each university's deadlines and requirements and application system, rather than just using one central portal (like UCAS for the UK). There is one central portal for Ontario universities, but if you're also applying to a university in British Columbia, or Quebec, you'll need to prepare three separate applications. In some cases, you'll also need to send them in different ways (i.e. some universities accept online applications, such as Ontario universities, while others only accept physical documents sent via FedEx or UPS).



How Canadian Universities are Different from Each Other

There are a wide variety of higher education institutions which you can choose from in Canada, each located across a wide range of environments as well as having strong reputations in distinct subject areas. Similar to the States, in Canada you can choose to study at a technical or community college if you have a particular career in mind; or you can transfer to a university to continue your studies at undergraduate level.

Liberal Arts Colleges

Similar to American liberal arts colleges, these have a particular emphasis on undergraduate courses in the liberal arts which are usually interdisciplinary (i.e. they overlap between more than one discipline), namely the humanities but also including the social, natural and formal sciences.

Public

A public institution is one that receives funding from the provincial, territorial and/or federal government, although they do charge students tuition fees as well as accept private funding.

Private

A private institution generally does not receive funding from the provincial, territorial or federal governments, instead receiving private funding through donations from wealthy alumni and faculty research grants as well as traditional tuition fees. Private universities often attract and retain the very best staff possessing esteemed reputations in their respective fields.



Factors to Consider

Environment & Setting

Universities and colleges in Canada cover a wide variety of different settings which will have a huge impact on student life, your experience there and whether it's the right fit for you. Some examples of this include:

Physical Setting: Town/ Suburban, City, Rural

The area you spend the next 4 years in is worth very careful consideration! Do you like nature walks, skiing, or being near the Ocean? Do you love discovering big sprawling cities? Do you like being able to escape into a quieter/ country area but also having a city nearby? If you can't visit the campuses of the universities you're considering, then think about what you enjoy and do your research.



Residential options

Some Canadian universities are what's called 'commuter' colleges, where most people travel to university each day from housing in a nearby city or town. However, most large universities have on-campus housing at least for international students, if not for everyone. If you don't live on-campus, you'll still live nearby, so it doesn't prevent you from having a busy and fulfilling social life with other students at the university. If housing is something that is important to you, remember to research the city, not just the university!

Living costs, travel costs and accessibility

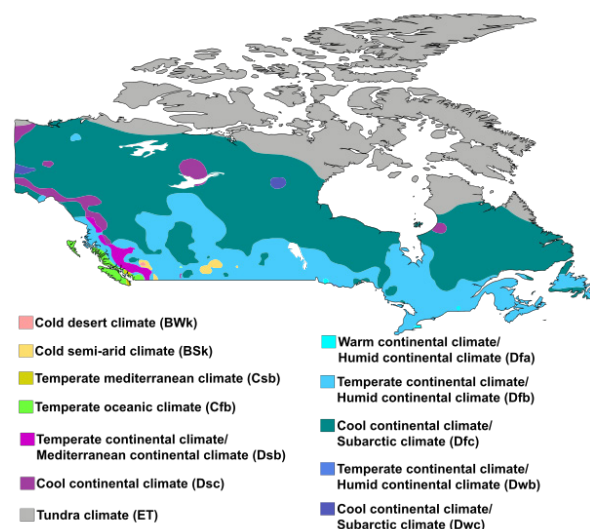
Remember that Canada is HUGE! If you are an international student, it's important to consider how easy and costly it is to get to an international airport to go home. Also consider how limited you will be if you can't drive/ need to take multiple forms of public transport to visit the nearest city with international/ family connections. Different cities and provinces have different average costs of living (Vancouver, for example, is one of the most expensive!). Alongside your tuition, it's worth considering how much you will expect to pay on food and transport so you can figure out your budget.

Weather!

Canada is known to be very cold, but it's not all snow storms. If climate is important to you, and you prefer warmth, look at universities closer to the US border. Some provinces or areas of provinces have 4 seasons, which makes a difference to lifestyle and activities.

Take a look at the map opposite to get a sense of the different climate options.

Canada map of Köppen climate classification





Rank and Reputation

Different universities have different 'personalities' and have local (and in some cases international) reputation for their social and academic environments. It's worth trying to speak to people who have been at the university to check how accurate these reputations are if that is a reason you are choosing (or rejecting) a college.

Subject / Program Reputation

Some universities are known for particular programs or departments, so it's worth researching this if you want to go to one of the best universities for your area of interest.

Examples of universities with good reputations for particular programs:

Business: York University, Queen's University, HEC Montreal, University of British Columbia

Medicine: McGill University, University of Toronto, University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Montreal, McMaster University, University of Waterloo, University of Calgary

Music: University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, McGill University, Wilfrid Laurier University

English: University of Toronto, University of British Columbia, McGill University, McMaster University

Engineering: McMaster, University of Calgary, Queen's, Waterloo, University of British Columbia

Global Top Ranked Canadian Universities

Considering how few universities it has, Canada has a number of universities that make the global top tier overall, and many more that excel in particular subjects. Below, we've listed out the ones that have an amazing reputation and really deliver the goods.

Canadian Universities in the QS Top 50 2018

- University of Toronto (#31) similarly ranked include: Hong Kong UST (#30), UC Berkeley (#27), University of Tokyo (#28)
- McGill University (#32) similarly ranked include: UCLA (#33), LSE (#35), Seoul National University (#36)

Canadian Universities in the QS Top 200

- University of British Columbia (#51) similarly ranked include: NYU (#52), Brown University (#53), CityU Hong Kong (#49)
- University of Alberta (#90) similarly ranked include: St. Andrews (#92), Pennsylvania State University (#93)
- Université de Montréal (#130) similarly ranked includes: University of Southern California (#132), Kyushu University (#128)
- McMaster University (#140) similarly ranked include: Cardiff University (#137), Aalto University (#137)
- University of Waterloo (#152) similarly ranked include: Michigan State University (#149), University of Exeter (#158)

Canadian Universities in the QS Top 500

- University of Western Ontario (#210) similarly ranked includes: Vanderbilt University (#212), University of Antwerp (#210)
- University of Calgary (#217) similarly ranked include: University of Notre Dame (#216), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (#218)
- Queen's University (#224) similarly ranked include: Georgetown University (#227), University of Sussex (#228)
- Simon Fraser University (#245) similarly ranked include: Tufts (#243), Amherst (#249), University of Tsukuba (#250)
- Dalhousie University (#279) similarly ranked includes: Rutgers University (#283), University of South Australia (#279)
- University of Ottawa (#289) similarly ranked includes: SOAS University of London (#296), Wuhan University (#282)
- University of Victoria (#346) similarly ranked include: Northeastern University (#346), Boston College (#339)
- Université Laval (#378) similarly ranked include: University of Kent (#373), Stony Brook University New York (#382)
- University of Saskatchewan (#461) similarly ranked includes: Tulane University, Beijing Institute of Technology (#451-460),
- Concordia University (#464) similarly ranked includes: University of New Mexico, University of Florence (#461-470)
- York University (#481) similarly ranked includes: Colorado State University (#481-490), Chang Gung University (#481-490)

Your University Visit Checklist

Before You Visit / Kicking Off Your Research

- Talk to alumni from your school who have attended the college you're thinking about applying to.
- Read blogs and discussion forums to get insight into what it's like to study at the university.
- Read about the university and be fully prepared with questions when you go to visit.



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE ON THE CAMPUS TOUR

- Sit in on a class to get a feel for the type of teaching and the learning environment.
- Talk to students and ask about their social and academic experience of the university. Probe areas you're interested in, such as extra-curriculars, support services or learning environment.
- Talk to academic staff members and ask them about what type of student thrive at the university - you'll get an interesting perspective from them. Try to speak to a member from the department (i.e.: engineering/ music) you are applying to.
- Walk around and 'use' the campus - go and sit on the lawn, go eat in the cafeteria and see if you can visit the dormitories. Try to imagine yourself living there!
- Go to see facilities that are important to you - it might be a laboratory, sports facility, art studio etc.
- If there is a town/ city nearby, go exploring! Make sure you can imagine yourself living not just on campus, but in the area.

VIRTUAL TOURS!

If you can't go to Canada to visit universities before you apply, don't panic! There are lots of virtual campus tours that you can access online that give you lots of information about the facilities and feel.

Example Questions to Ask Current Students

- How would you describe this university in 3 words? What makes it different from others that are in the same area/ similar on the surface?
- Why did you choose this university? Has it lived up to it?
- What do you do for fun/ on the weekends?
- What is the international student community like?
- How easy is it to travel to and from the campus?
- What is the social life like?
- What student support is there?
- What is the typical cost of living in this area?

Don't Ask about anything you can look up. Use your precious campus tour time to get information you *can't* get on the website. Examples of questions you don't need to ask during a tour are:

- Tuition fees
- Acceptance rate
- Number of students

BridgeU

LONDON

18-26 Suncourt House
Essex Road
London N1 8LN

HONG KONG

4/F Cheung Hing Industrial Building
12P Smithfield
Kennedy Town
Hong Kong

E.hi@bridgeu.com

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