





# EDUCATION

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*This chapter will be very useful for families moving to Canada as it covers the education system in Canada.*

You will find information on how to find a school for your child, the different types of schools in Canada as well as information if your child wants to go to college or would like to get a skills trade.

### **How do I find out about schools for my children?**

Public education is free in Canada. Most children start going to school when they are 4 or 5. By law, children must attend school until the age of 15 or 16, depending on where they live. Most children in Canada attend public school, approximately 5% of children go to private fee-paying schools.

Public education is run by the provinces and territories and is paid for through taxes. In some provinces, there are separate public school boards. These boards manage education in another language, or education that is based on a specific religion.

Generally the language of instruction in Canada is either English or French. If a student has difficulty, language training is usually available. In Québec almost all newcomers must attend French-language schools.

To find out more about education in a specific province or territory please see the website [www.cmec.ca/educmin.en.stm](http://www.cmec.ca/educmin.en.stm)

## What types of schools are there in Canada?

There are 2 types of schools in Canada, Elementary and Secondary School.

### **Elementary school**

Children begin their education in elementary school. Elementary school starts with kindergarten for young children, and runs through to grade 6 or 8.

### **Secondary school**

This is followed by secondary school, or high school. In some provinces, high school is divided into junior high (grades 7 to 8 or 9) and senior high (grades 9 or 10 to 12). Students must complete high school to be admitted to college or university.

## How do I enrol my children in school?

Parents must register children at the local school or school board office. School boards are listed in the blue pages of the telephone book. When you register your child, you must bring your child's:

- **Permanent Resident Card, Record of Landing (IMM 1000) or Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM 5292)**
- Birth certificate and
- Vaccination certificate
- Your child's previous school records.

Your child's language and mathematical skills might be tested before being assigned to a class. Once the testing is complete your child will be placed in the program the school thinks is best for him or her. If you think that your child has not been placed at the right level talk to the teacher, guidance counsellor or school principal.

## What options are available for post-secondary training and education?

In Canada, there are various opportunities for education beyond secondary school. You can study at a community college, at a university or at a professional school.

### Community colleges

You can learn a trade or acquire technical or administrative skills, for example, you can study to be an electrician or a Healthcare worker, or to work in business. After you successfully complete your studies at a community college you should receive a diploma rather than an academic degree. It usually takes 1 to 3 years to complete a diploma at a community college. The length of time it will take you depends on the program of study you enter and your previous education. Courses such as computer programming, communications or administration can take from 1 to 3 years.

To find out more about colleges in Canada visit the website of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges at [www.accc.ca](http://www.accc.ca)

## Universities

Universities offer programs of study in a wide variety of areas, usually leading to an undergraduate degree. You will usually need an undergraduate degree if you want to learn a profession, such as law, medicine or social work. To go to university you must have a high school or an equivalent diploma.

As in Ireland most universities in Canada receive more applications than the number of students they can admit. If you want to attend university, you must have above-average marks. Many universities allow adults over 25 or 30 to enrol as mature students. A mature student is usually admitted based on their abilities, experience and background, not just their previous education.

A bachelor's degree normally takes 3 or 4 academic years. An honours bachelor's degree usually requires 4 academic years. Bachelor's degrees are offered in arts (BA, BA Hons) and in sciences (B.Sc., B.Sc. Hons).

## Fees

You must pay fees to attend college or university. Tuition costs range from \$3,000 (2007 figure) to \$9,000 (2007 figure) year depending on the province, the program and the university. Medicine, science and business programs generally cost more than the humanities and arts.

Living expenses, books and supplies, student fees and other expenses are extra. You may be able to get a scholarship or student loan to help you pay university costs. Many university students get a part-time job to help pay for their education. Many graduate students support themselves financially through bursaries, scholarships and loans or by working as teaching assistants.

Careers such as law, medicine and accounting require a professional degree. You may also have to register with a professional association.

To enter a law degree program (LL.B.), you usually need a bachelor's degree or at least 2 years of undergraduate courses, plus high marks in a standardised examination. A law degree takes 3 years to complete. After completing the program, law students must article with a law firm for 1 year, and then pass bar examinations to be granted professional status. Lawyers who move to another province may have to re-qualify by passing another bar exam.

A medical degree (M.D.) usually takes 3 to 4 years to complete. High marks and an undergraduate degree in science are usually required to get into medical school. Medical students must work as interns for 1 or 2 years before they receive a licence to practise from the medical board in their province or territory. Students who want to specialise in a particular field of medicine have to study longer. Doctors who want to move to another province or territory may have to re-qualify by passing another exam.

Professional degrees are also offered in engineering, accounting, social work and many other fields. If you want to continue your education you can study for a graduate degree. A master's degree usually takes another 1 to 2 years, while a Doctorate (PhD) can take up to 5 or 6 years to complete.

Canada's provinces and territories are responsible for education. They each do things a little differently. To find out more about universities in Canada please visit the website [www.aucc.ca](http://www.aucc.ca). Also for more information please see the website [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

## Skilled trades

You may also be able to get training through your workplace, talk to your employer to see if this is a possibility. If you want to become a hairdresser, an electrician or a mechanic, you must start as an apprentice. An apprentice works with an experienced tradesperson to learn a skilled trade. Skilled trades are also known as registered trades. Your apprenticeship will include in-class sessions, on-the-job experience and examinations. Depending on the trade you select, your training could take several years.

In order to work in a registered trade, you must have the required qualifications. There are many registered trades. Qualifications for registered trades are controlled in each province or territory. When you complete your training and pass an exam, you will become registered in the trade you chose. If you move to another province, you may have to re-qualify.

To find out more information on skilled trades please see the website [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca)