

Planning Guide

Preparing for post-secondary education

What program options are available?

What are my strengths and interests?

Am I ready to enroll in post-secondary education?

What kind of post-secondary institution is best for me?

What supports do I need to be successful?



Acknowledgements

This Planning Guide has been developed by The Sinneave Family Foundation as part of Autism Campus Prep. It is intended to be shared as an open resource to support emerging adults and families as they prepare and plan for post-secondary education.

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Introduction

Many young people with autism choose to continue their studies after high school. Exploring possibilities in post-secondary education such as certificate programs, diplomas, apprenticeships, applied degree programs, and bachelor degree programs, is a great first step.

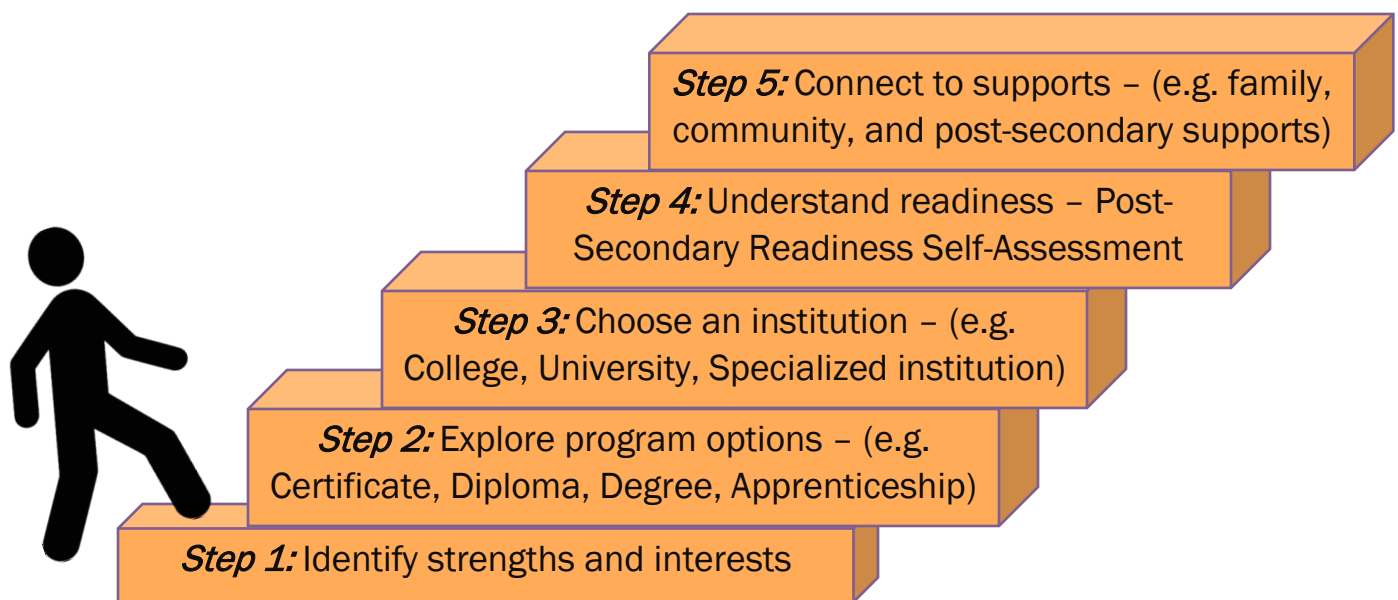
Reasons to attend post-secondary education:

- Many jobs need a post-secondary education
- Allows you to develop a deeper understanding of an area of interest
- Doing something you like to do or are good at
- Develop skills and expertise

The purpose of this guide is to support you and your emerging adult as you begin to explore potential post-secondary education options. This guide can be used to create a *Post-Secondary Plan* that helps to identify post-secondary readiness, explore program options, choose a post-secondary institution, and understand how to access support.

The Steps

5 Steps to Create a Transition to Post-Secondary Plan



Step 1: Understanding your Strengths/Interests

Many people choose their path based on their strengths and interests. Knowing your strengths and interests can help to generate ideas about possible post-secondary education options. Fill out the interest inventory in the link below to see how your strengths and interests align with your post-secondary education path.

<http://www.roguecc.edu/Counseling/HollandCodes/test.asp>

Consider these examples that link personal strengths to possible occupations:

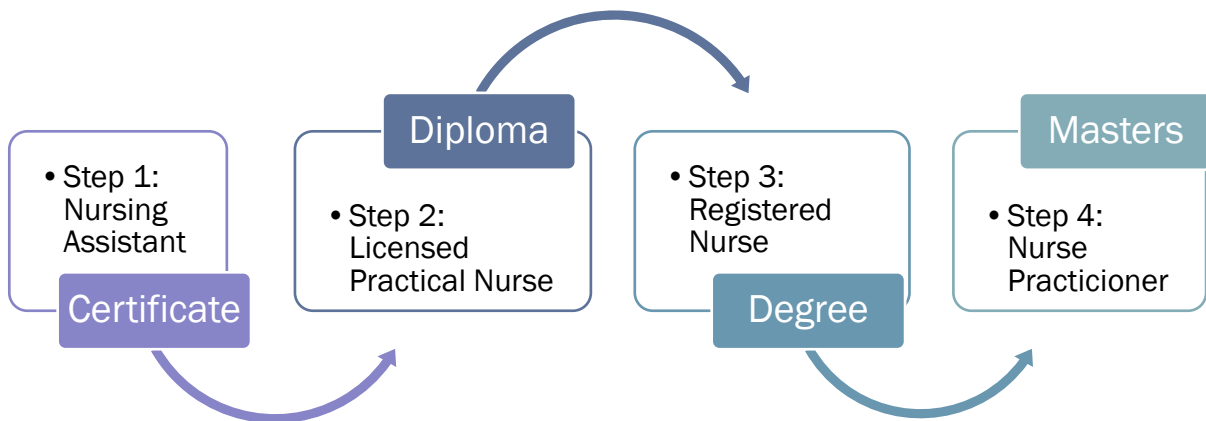
STRENGTHS	OCCUPATION
Ability to use computers	Administration assistant Digital animator Information Technologist Programmer
Caring/People oriented	Teacher Tutor Day Care worker Nursing Assistant Licensed Practical Nurse
Art	Independent Artist Photography Illustrator Chef
Attention to details	Construction Worker Plumber Electrician
Sports	Sports agent Coach Marketing and Event Coordinator

Step 2: Explore Program Options

Post-secondary institutions offer many different kinds of academic programs which vary in length and cost. These result in different credentials (i.e. certificate, diploma, apprenticeship, applied degree, or bachelor degree)

Some people take an educational laddering approach towards the program and credential they ultimately want. If time, cost, or incomplete prerequisites are keeping you from getting into your preferred program, you may want to consider educational laddering.

Example: This diagram shows the credentials at each step in becoming a nurse practitioner



Step 3: Choose an Institution

There are many types of post-secondary institutions. Look into post-secondary institutions that will fit your interests and needs.

There are 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

Colleges

- 11 colleges including Bow Valley College, Olds College, Lethbridge College, Medicine Hat College, Red Deer College, etc.

Colleges of Applied Arts and Culture

- 2 specialized arts and culture institutions including Alberta University of the Arts and the Banff Centre

Institutes of Technology or Science

- 2 institutes of technology including Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)

Universities

- 10 universities including University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, University of Alberta, St. Mary's University, etc.
- Athabasca University is an online, open university, that provides flexible educational programming

Step 4: Understand Readiness

POST-SECONDARY READINESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Use this self-assessment to see how ready you are to pursue a post-secondary education. Based on your answers, create opportunities to practice skills that you marked as “this is hard for me”, or “I need some help to do this.”

Skill Set	This is hard for me	I need some help to do this	This is easy for me
I can limit my use of non-academic screen time such as gaming, cellphone use, and internet use			
I can complete homework/assignments on time			
I can arrive on time to class			
I can attend classes as scheduled			
I am able to prioritize assignments and tests in order to meet deadlines			
I can regularly check, respond to, and attach documents to my email			
I can accurately estimate the amount of time I need to study for tests			
I can schedule my own appointments with professors, academic advisors, accessibility services, etc.			
I am able to self-disclose my diagnosis(s) to get support when needed			
I know how to give and receive constructive feedback			
I am able to listen to suggestions/opinions of other group members			

Skill Set	This is hard for me	I need some help to do this	This is easy for me
I am able to meet group assignment deadlines			
I am able to use a variety of tools to communicate with group members (email, text message, other social media tools)			
I am able to compromise in group decision making			
I can begin assignments/tasks without prompting			
I have a system for scheduling (calendar, phone app, planner/agenda)			
I can keep my school materials organized			
I have a strategy for completing tasks even if I find them boring			
I can break down & schedule large tasks into smaller manageable steps			
I am able to find my way around campus			
I am able to get to and from school by myself			
I am able to locate the various student services on campus			
I am able to maintain and adapt a daily routine			
I know what to do if I am lost in the community/on campus			
I do my own banking			
I know how to locate financial support (loans, income supports, scholarships & bursaries)			
I am aware of fee deadlines			
I am able to create & follow a budget			
I am able to identify potential scams/fraudulent activity on my bank and email accounts			
I am able to identify social groups/clubs that match my interests			
I am comfortable introducing myself to new people			
I know the difference between a friendship and a romantic relationships			
I understand the meaning of consent			

Skill Set	This is hard for me	I need some help to do this	This is easy for me
I am able to resolve conflicts through effective communication			
I am able to recognize and resist peer pressure			
I can schedule my own healthcare appointments			
I can administer my own medications and fill my prescriptions			
I am able to recognize when I am becoming stressed/overwhelmed			
I have calming/stress management strategies that I can use			
I am able to communicate and ask for help when I am stressed/overwhelmed			
I understand plagiarism & know how to reference and source			
I am able to work within a group and independently			
I am able to take good notes in class			

Skill Set	Yes	No
I am aware of my legal rights as a student with a disability		
I reach out for help when I need it		
I understand my diagnosis and the supports I need		
I am enrolling in a program that is interesting to me		
I believe that I have the skills and abilities to be successful in my chosen program/courses		
I have a system for studying/preparing for tests & exams		
I can understand & follow a grading rubric		

Step 5: Accessing Supports

It is important to have a support network that may include:

- Parents
- Supportive family members (e.g. siblings, relatives)
- Friends or community supports
- Service providers (e.g. transition specialist, disability service office sometimes referred to as accessibility office)

Most institutions have a variety of services that include:

- Supports for learning differences (academic)
 - Flexible course delivery and exam formats
 - Assistive technology
 - Individualized services
- Tutoring programs (academic)
- Study rooms
- Mental health supports

It is important to access these supports early before you enroll to understand what supports are available.

Some institutions require documentation or proof of learning need. This is often a letter from a physician or psychiatrist that are qualified to diagnose Autism. Make sure you understand the documentations you need to provide to access services before starting your program.

Other things to consider...

- Check admission requirements for the program you are interested in
- Class sizes differ depending on the post-secondary institution
- Cost of tuition
- Campus size
- Financial resources available (e.g. scholarships, grants)
- Connect with disability services/accessibility services for your post-secondary education
- Opportunities for internships
- Ability to take a reduce course load
- Location of campus

List out some of the pros and cons of each post-secondary institution you are interested in based on the list of things to consider.

Post-Secondary Institution	Pros	Cons

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you want to explore the transition to post-secondary education in more depth, you may be interested in the following resources:

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS)

ALIS provides information for career planning, post-secondary education and training, education funding, and work search.

<https://alis.alberta.ca/>

Columbia Regional Program ASD Transition Toolkit.

This toolkit covers a variety of topics such as post-secondary education, self-determination, employment, etc.

<https://www.crporegon.org/page/175>

OARS – Finding Your Way: A College Guide for Students on the Spectrum

This guide is intended to help students with ASD become better prepared for college life and academics.

https://researchautism.org/findingyourway/?utm_source=OARacle+Newsletter+Subscribers&utm_campaign=334c70ed62-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_21_03_43&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_132914a232-334c70ed62-171392521