



PROGRAM SELECTION

Understanding your Skills & Strengths

When choosing to attend post-secondary school, it is very important to know what your strengths and interests are.

Strengths include skills, qualities, and characteristics that everyone has.

Interests are activities or hobbies that a person enjoys doing in their recreation or leisure time - such as after school or on the weekends. For some people, interests can even develop into a career.

Knowing what your strengths and interests are can help you select a program of study that helps you engage in your courses and stay motivated even when the workload is demanding.

To help you identify your strengths and interests, ask yourself these questions:

- What extracurricular activities, clubs, or groups do you participate in?
- What subjects in school do you really like and get good marks in?
- What have your teachers said you are really good at?
- What are you really interested in (e.g., history, art, sports, animation, and computer science)?
- What books, television shows, and movies do you like?
- When you talk to other people, what do you like to talk about?
- What would your family and friends say you really care about?
- What do you like to spend your free time doing?
- Have you taken any aptitude tests or career assessments in school? What did the results show?
- Do you do any volunteer or part-time work now that you enjoy?

Write down the answers to the questions above and see if it helps you to decide what program of study you might do well in.

Types of Post-Secondary

There are several different types of post-secondary institutions - each of which has different levels of education, majors, and programs of study to choose from.



Two-year colleges can offer a combination of academic, technical, and continuing education programs. You can obtain a diploma, a certificate or an associate degree. To be admitted to a major or program of study you need to have either a high school diploma or an equivalency diploma (GED).

There are many benefits to beginning post-secondary education at a two-year college, including lower tuition costs and less strenuous admission standards.



AUTISM CAMPUS PREP

Many students choose a two-year college program as a “stepping stone”, and after completing their first two years, they transfer to a four-year university or college to complete their degree program.



Technical or Trade Institutes, also known as polytechnics, offer programs of different lengths. Depending on the program of study, these can range from less than one-year up to 4 years.

Technical and trade institutes grant licenses, certificates, diplomas, associate's and bachelor's degrees. They prepare people for specific careers in many areas including fields like welding, cosmetology, medical imaging, library and information science to name just a few.

Trade institutes provide students with hands-on application of the skills that are needed for a given career. Technical institutes tend to also teach the theoretical aspects of a given career.



A four-year college grants bachelor's degrees, such as Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BSc), and sometimes associate's degrees, such as Associate of Arts (AA).

Four-year colleges can be specialized in the programs of study that they offer - such as colleges whose programs are limited to those in the field of nursing - or they can offer a broad range of programs, such as liberal arts programs in the humanities, sciences, or social sciences.

Class sizes in four-year colleges are usually smaller than universities, which allows students to receive more personalized attention and better access to college faculty.



A university grants bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and typically have a number of programs not found at the college level (e.g., law school, medical school).

Universities are usually larger than colleges. They have a greater focus on scholarly and scientific research, have more course and program selection, larger class sizes, and more resources (e.g., library, student support services).

University professors are usually involved in research, and have graduate students that assist with research and teaching classes known as Research Assistants (RAs) and Teaching Assistants (TAs). The opportunity to work as an RA or TA in a university provides both financial assistance and helps to build your future career and resume.



Choosing the Right School for You

When choosing which post-secondary institution to attend consider the following questions:

- What education and career goals do you have?
- What is your preferred class size?
- What are the annual tuition costs and can you afford it?
- What financial resources do you have or can you apply for (e.g., student loans, scholarships)?
- Do you want to or have to move away from home?
- Is the institution well regarded or well ranked?
- Do you meet the admission criteria and have good enough grades to be accepted?

Helpful Tips:

- Talk with family members who attended post-secondary school about the things they liked and didn't like
- Meet with your high school guidance counsellor to talk about the admissions process
- Review various program websites, catalogues and course options at each school you are interested in
- Attend post-secondary school fairs if they are offered at your high school or in your community
- Attend open house events and tours at post-secondary institutions either in person or online
- Tour the post-secondary institutions you are interested in attending, either in-person or online
- Talk with students who are currently attending post-secondary and ask them about their experience – do they like the school they chose?

Cost & Budgeting

When choosing a post-secondary school to attend, the cost of tuition is one of the most important aspects to consider. Whatever post-secondary school you choose to attend and whatever major, program of study, and level of education you choose to pursue, it all costs money. To read more about budgeting and finances, read the 'Life Skills' handout.

Helpful Tips:

- Compare and rank the costs of different post-secondary schools and decide if this is within your financial resources.
- You may need to create and follow a budget to make sure that you can afford the cost of attending the post-secondary school.

AUTISM CAMPUS PREP

- Consider getting some help from a parent or other trusted adult to create a budget that you can manage easily.

Full-Time vs. Part-Time

When determining the number of courses to take in post-secondary school, you should be aware of the possibility that taking a full course load – which can be overwhelming and stressful as it was the case for me when I was in post-secondary school.

Because of this possibility, you should consider the option of studying part-time, or at least taking fewer courses as a full-time student. You can find out if part-time studies or a reduced course load is an option at the post-secondary's you are interested in.

If this is the case, a part-time student or student who is taking a reduced course load typically takes two or three courses in any given semester, as opposed to the five courses as a full-time student.

Admission Requirements

Other important aspects to consider when choosing a post-secondary:

- Which type of post-secondary school to attend
- Which level of education to pursue
- Which major or program of study to pursue
- What the admission requirements are for the school/educational level/major or program of study that you are interested in

Post-secondary schools can use any of the following admission criteria:

- A high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED)
- The grades received in high school, and the average of those grades
- The types of courses taken in high school
- The grade point average (GPA) of any post-secondary school courses taken, if transferring from a two-year college to a four-year college or university, or moving from undergraduate to graduate studies
- The scores of college or university entrance exams such as the SAT Reasoning Test or language tests like the TOEFL
- Whether the prospective student is applying directly from high school, is applying after having completed courses at another post-secondary institution, or is a mature student

Admission requirements vary between different post-secondary schools and among programs at each school.

- Admission requirements for two-year colleges are usually easier than at other types of post-secondary schools

AUTISM CAMPUS PREP

- Grade point averages (GPA) in high school may be higher for some undergraduate programs than others (for example, nursing may require a higher GPA than an arts or humanities program)
- Different high-school courses may be required in science and engineering programs than for programs in the arts or social sciences
- Graduate programs require a certain GPA for admission, and typically a higher GPA than that required for undergraduate students to proceed with their chosen major or program of study

Make sure you understand and meet the admission requirements before applying to your program of choice.

Touring Campuses

Touring campuses can be helpful when choosing the right post-secondary school to attend. Depending on the location of the school, touring campuses can be done either in person or virtually.

Things to look for when taking a campus tour:

- The disability or accessibility services office
- Buildings and departments that are associated with your program of study
- Buildings and outdoor spaces where student take part in social and recreational activities, such as sports, performing arts, or student clubs
- The students' union or student center
- The retail food options on campus and dining halls
- The student career centre
- The library
- Bulletin boards
- Lecture halls and classrooms
- The neighbourhood, town, or city surrounding the school

Available Funding

Post-secondary school can be expensive. Many people have difficulty paying tuition and other associated expenses and need to apply for financial assistance.

Financial assistance may be available through:

- Scholarships
- Bursaries
- Student loans
- Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)
- Other awards such as prizes, competitive awards, and nominated awards
- Federal student grants for full-time and part-time students, students with dependants, students with disabilities such as autism



AUTISM CAMPUS PREP

You can apply for funding while you are still in high school or already in post-secondary school. Sometimes these applications are based on solely on academic performance, but there are other opportunities to apply based on specific needs (learning disabilities) or talents (like essay writing or athletics).

Make sure to ask guidance counsellors in your high school and staff in the admissions department about financial assistance options well in advance as these applications can take some time to complete.