

Degree programs

The bachelor's degree from a Canadian university is usually awarded after three or four years of study, depending on the student's high school graduation level at time of admission. An honours bachelor's degree, which is more specialized than the general "pass" degree, may require an additional year of study.

Admission to some professional faculties such as law, engineering, medicine, dentistry and business administration, is usually conditional upon completion of part or all of the requirements for a bachelor's degree. The programs for these fields of study, therefore, take five or six years after high school graduation to complete.

Master's degree programs are of one or two years' duration, usually following an honours bachelor's degree or equivalent. Entrance to a doctoral program normally requires a master's degree in the same field.

Community colleges

Although universities account for nearly 60 per cent of full-time students, postsecondary education is also provided by a variety of institutions that do not have degree-granting status.

More than 250 institutions offer college-level programs. Many began as private colleges, public technical schools, or university-affiliated junior colleges. Not until the 1960s did provinces structure postsecondary non-university education into a community college system, either by transforming older institutions or by founding new ones. Community colleges are based on the philosophy that choice in postsecondary education should extend beyond universities to include students interested in a career-oriented technical program as an alternative to university education.

These colleges have developed a range of programs to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Not all of their programs are postsecondary, in that high school graduation is often not a requirement for admission, as in the skilled trades programs, for example. They also operate extensive adult education programs, so that workers already employed can take trade and technical courses.

The structure and organization of community colleges differ from province to province. In general, the province is responsible for co-ordinating, regulating and financing.

Total full-time postsecondary enrolment in community colleges was an estimated 320,000 in 1987-88, down slightly from the all-time high of 322,600 recorded in 1985-86, but still an increase of 365 per cent over 1965-66, when enrolment totalled 69,400.