



## EDUCATION

In the modern knowledge-based economy, a highly educated and trained work force is one of the most important resources in making a country competitive. Canada has gained international respect and admiration for the excellence of its educational system. Successful graduates from Canadian universities and colleges are now providing leadership in many governments and businesses around the world.

Canadians have always placed a premium on education and demanded first-rate schools. They spend more per capita on their education system than any other country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): 7.1 percent of gross domestic product compared with an average of 6.1 percent in other OECD countries.

Many Canadian universities — such as British Columbia, Alberta, Queen's, Toronto, McGill, Laval, Montreal, Dalhousie and Waterloo — are widely known and respected around the world. While perhaps not as well known, comparable programs are offered at dozens of other Canadian universities, including Simon Fraser, Lethbridge, Calgary, Manitoba, Concordia, New Brunswick, St. Mary's and Memorial. A consistent level of top-quality programs is offered at all schools. Instruction is available in either English or French, and at some institutions in both languages.

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Canada's community colleges, which offer training toward specific careers, complement the country's university system. Often their training is technical and provides hands-on experience. Many Canadian students are now combining university degrees with college degrees to ensure that they obtain the highest level of academic qualifications and specific training in a targeted job sector.

Learning is a lifetime occupation in Canada. Many Canadians undertake mid-career training through continuing education courses to upgrade their qualifications, acquire new professional skills and keep pace with changes in technology and with new theories and practices in the work place. Canadian educational institutions and corporations have designed courses specifically to meet the needs of a rapidly changing work force.

In 1996, Canadian educational institutions attracted 59 200 international students at the post-secondary level: 22 500 to colleges and trade schools and 36 700 to universities.

International students who have studied in Canada speak glowingly of the country's safe and clean surroundings, its high quality of education, and the friendly welcome they receive from Canadians. Most overseas students are also happy that the weather is not as severe as they anticipated and that clothing and housing are adapted to the climate. Most Canadian cities are no colder than those of the northern United States. With four distinct seasons, Canada offers a wide range of outdoor activities, including skiing, skating, hiking, swimming, cycling and sailing.

Tuition fees for international students vary among institutions and programs of study. In many cases, fees are lower than those in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, while the quality of education remains excellent.

A network of Canadian Education Centres (CECs) has been established to provide professional assistance to recognized education and training institutions to market their programs. CECs located in Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Canberra, New Delhi and Mexico are designed to help match the interests and need of international students with the resources available at Canadian schools. These CECs, plus a centre in Beijing, help businesses and governments secure corporate and group training from Canadian suppliers and as well as facilitate links with Canadian schools. The centres are operated by the CEC Network in co-operation with the Government of Canada. The Canadian embassies in Athens and Caracas provide similar educational services outside of the CEC Network. The Canadian government plans to open additional education centres in the coming years.

