



## Overview

Until about 25 years ago, higher education in Canada was provided almost exclusively by the universities, which were mainly private institutions, many with a religious affiliation. During the 1960s, however, as the demand for greater opportunity and variety in postsecondary education rose sharply, systems of publicly operated “postsecondary non-university” institutions began to develop.

These institutions are known by a variety of names: colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario; general and vocational colleges (CEGEPs) in Quebec; institutes of applied arts and technology in Saskatchewan; institutes of technology, colleges of agricultural technology, or community colleges. Some provide training only in limited, specialized fields such as fisheries and marine or paramedical technology. They also provide most of the registered nurses’ training programs. Virtually all of these institutions (as well as the universities) offer adult education — both full-time and part-time.

Degree-granting institutions in Canada take several forms:

*Universities* — institutions which have, as a minimum, degree programs in the arts and sciences, and which usually award graduate degrees.

*Liberal arts colleges* — smaller institutions with degree programs, usually offering undergraduate degrees in arts only.

*Theological colleges* — independent institutions granting degrees in religion and theology only.

*Other specialized institutions* — offering degree programs in a single field such as engineering, art or education.

## University development in Canada

The first institutions of higher education in Canada followed European traditions. The *Séminaire de Québec*, which later became the base on which the *Université Laval* was established, was founded in 1663. The oldest English-language institution (King’s College at Windsor, Nova Scotia) opened in 1789. By 1867, Quebec had three universities and 712 classical colleges. There were also three universities in New Brunswick, five in Nova Scotia and seven in Ontario. A number of theological colleges were also established for the training of the clergy and selected lay people who wished to enter the professions. Teaching in the universities concentrated on philosophy and the classics, as well as the traditional professions of theology, medicine and law.