

An Overview of Education in Canada



Education in Canada: a Provincial Responsibility

The Constitution Act, 1867

Education falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Canada does not have a federal Department of Education; instead, it has 13 provincial and territorial ministries of education.

Although these education systems share similar structures, they also differ in legislation, policies and programs.





Role of the Federal Government

While provinces and territories manage the delivery and governance of education, the federal government plays a key supporting role.

It funds Indigenous education, supports bilingual learning, and invests in postsecondary research and innovation through national research councils.

The federal government also provides student financial aid, promotes international education, and helps develop skills and training programs through partnerships with provinces and industries.

And to help with national planning, it collects and shares important education data through Statistics Canada.

In short, the federal government helps strengthen Canada's education system, but provinces and territories lead in its delivery across the country.



Education Systems

Three levels of education

1. Primary (elementary)

2. Secondary



Public education is free

Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 17 or 18

3. Post-secondary or
Higher education



Public and private education

Funded through public funds and tuition fees

Variety of training programs

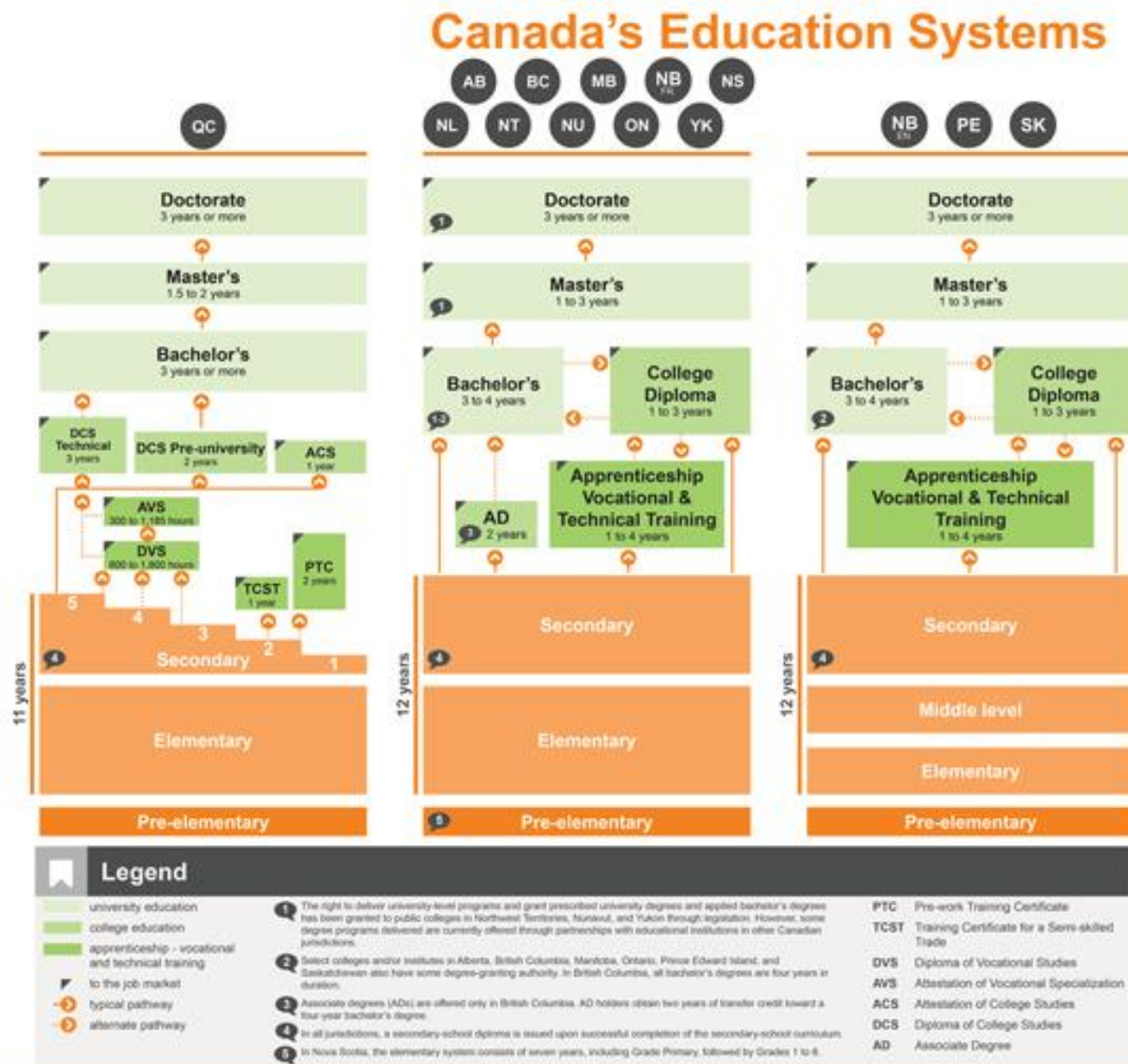
Degrees recognized in Canada and internationally

Quebec has two levels of post-secondary education:

- College (2-3 years)
- University

In Canada, there are three levels of university studies:

- Bachelor's degree (3-4 years)
- Master's degree (1-3 years)
- Doctoral degree (3+ years)



📍 **Canada**

- AB Alberta
- BC British Columbia
- MB Manitoba
- NB New Brunswick
- NL Newfoundland and Labrador
- NS Nova Scotia
- NT Northwest Territories
- NU Nunavut
- ON Ontario
- PE Prince Edward Island
- QC Quebec
- SK Saskatchewan
- YK Yukon

📖 **Notes**

- Colleges and universities may offer certificate programs of variable length.
- Continuing adult education programs, while not shown on this diagram, may be offered at various levels of instruction.



Types of institutions

K to 12 system (public or private):

- ☐ Primary/elementary school
- ☐ Middle/Junior high school
- ☐ Secondary/High School

Post-Secondary Education:

- ☐ CEGEP System (Quebec)
- ☐ Language Schools
- ☐ Universities (public or private)
- ☐ Colleges and institutes (public or private)



K to 12 system

Canada's education system is designed to provide learners with high-quality education from early childhood through to postsecondary studies. Compulsory schooling typically begins around age six, when children enter primary school, and continues until age 17 or 18, depending on the province or territory. This marks the completion of secondary school. This full journey is often referred to as the K to 12 system.

Primary and elementary school, which includes kindergarten to grade 6. Then there is middle or junior high school, which typically includes grades 7 to 9 (but that not the case in all provinces). Followed by secondary or high school which again typically includes grades 9 or 10 to 11 or 12. In Quebec, high school ends at Grade 11, and students complete an additional step before university through the CEGEP system.

Canada's K–12 system prepares students for success in postsecondary education and life beyond the classroom, with a strong focus on critical thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning.



CEGEPS

Quebec is home to 48 public collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP), which offer a unique stage between high school and university or the workforce. These institutions are central to Quebec's postsecondary system and are recognized for their accessible, structured, and career-relevant education.

All public CEGEPs are government-funded and operate under Quebec's Ministry of Higher Education. While most are French-language institutions, six operate primarily in English. CEGEPs must follow provincial quality standards and curriculum frameworks to ensure academic consistency and recognition.

CEGEPs offer two main program types:

- Two-year pre-university programs, which prepare students for university studies.
- Three-year technical programs, which equip students with the skills needed to enter the workforce or pursue further training.

CEGEPs emphasize small class sizes, practical labs, and strong employer partnerships, especially in technical programs. Many also include internships or stages, giving students valuable hands-on experience.

In addition to diploma programs, CEGEPs provide continuing education, adult learning, and bridging programs for students transitioning between education systems or seeking new career paths. CEGEP diplomas are widely recognized within Quebec and beyond, offering a direct path to university admission or employment in sectors like health care, technology, business, and skilled trades.



Language Schools

Canada is also home to over 225 accredited language schools and pathway programs, offering instruction in English, French, or both. Language programs are delivered by public colleges and universities, as well as private language institutions. Many are members of Languages Canada, which ensures national quality standards for teaching, curriculum, and student support.

Programs range from General English or French instruction, Academic preparation for college or university admission, IELTS, TOEFL, or TEF test preparation and Professional and business communication courses. Many institutions offer language pathway programs, structured routes that allow students to meet the language proficiency requirements for admission to a partner college or university without needing a separate standardized language test.

Language training is often full-time and immersive, with flexible start dates, small class sizes, and support services to help students adapt to Canadian academic and cultural life.

These programs offer more than just language learning—they help international students build confidence, develop academic skills, and transition smoothly into Canadian postsecondary education or the workforce.



Universities

Canada is home to over 100 universities, offering a wide range of academic and professional programs in every province and territory including certificates and professional development courses, 3 to 4-year bachelor's degrees, 1 to 2-year master's degrees, and 3 to 5-plus-year doctoral degrees.

Most Canadian universities are public, partially funded by provincial and territorial governments. A small number of private universities, often faith-based or specialized, also operate in Canada and must meet provincial quality standards to grant recognized degrees.

These institutions are known worldwide for their high academic standards, research excellence, and inclusive learning environments. Canadian university degrees are globally recognized, opening doors to further study, global careers, and post-graduation pathways in Canada.



Colleges and Institutes

Canada is also home to over 200 public colleges and polytechnics, offering a wide range of applied and career-focused programs in every province and territory, including certificates, diplomas, and applied degrees, usually ranging from one to four years in length, as well as micro-credentials, bridging programs, and continuing education. These institutions are known for their strong industry connections, hands-on training, and commitment to student success.

Most Canadian colleges and polytechnics are publicly funded and operate under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. A number of private career colleges also exist, primarily offering specialized or vocational training. Programs are designed to meet labour market needs and often include co-op placements, apprenticeships, or work-integrated learning, helping students graduate job-ready.

Canadian college and polytechnic credentials are respected across Canada and internationally for their practical focus, real-world relevance, and strong pathways to employment or further education.



National Associations



Bureau canadien de
l'éducation internationale



Canadian Association of
Public Schools - International | Association canadienne des
écoles publiques - International



**Fédération
des cégeps**



COLLÈGES &
INSTITUTS
CANADA



**Universités
Canada.**



ACUFC

ASSOCIATION DES COLLÈGES ET UNIVERSITÉS
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CANADIENNE



Provincial Associations





Main Funding Agencies

At the federal level

- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)