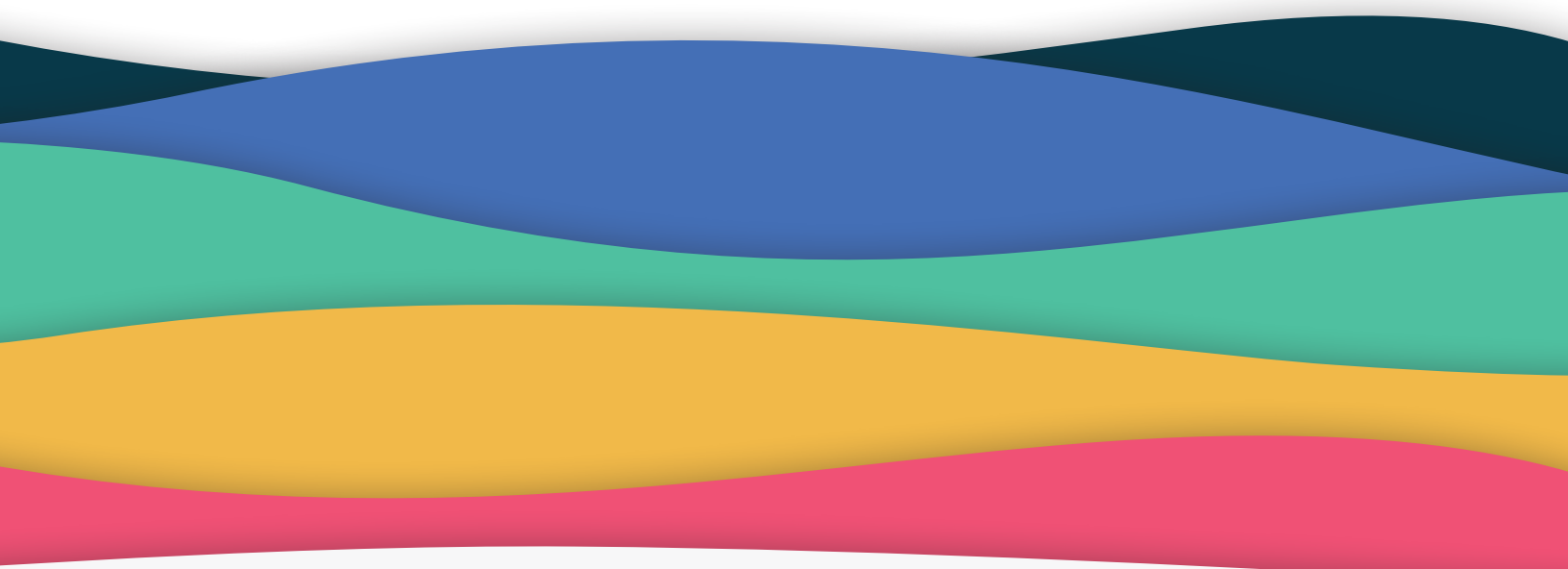


Ontario's Pathways to Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners

Companion Guide for the Pathways to Postsecondary Chart



Revised March 2026



CESBA and the CSCAU would like to thank the many reviewers from our Get SET programs who took the time to carefully review the content, organization, and layout of the Pathways to Postsecondary chart and this accompanying guide. Their wise and thoughtful feedback greatly improved the quality and relevance of this resource.

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Introduction

Many adults in Ontario seek to improve their education and career opportunities by applying to a publicly funded college, university, or Indigenous Institute. These postsecondary destinations offer certificates, diplomas, degrees, continuing education, and more. Apprenticeship training is also a postsecondary destination, though potential apprentices must first be hired by an employer willing to sponsor them through their training; they do not apply directly to a postsecondary institution to register as an apprentice.

Adult learners in Ontario have options and pathways to postsecondary education that are different from those of youth who are attending a mainstream (publicly funded grades 9-12) secondary school. *Ontario's Pathways to Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners* consists of two documents that explain the four main pathways that are available to adult learners:

- a one-page chart summarizing the features of four main pathways, and
- a companion guide (this document) providing more detailed information about each pathway.

The four pathways described in the chart and the companion guide are:

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE)
- Mature Student Status
- Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC - formerly GED)

The chart and guide will be of particular interest to counsellors, advisors, and instructors working with adult learners by providing information and advice for informed decision making when choosing a route to postsecondary education.

The focus of both documents is on access to publicly funded colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes within Ontario. There are also many private career colleges in Ontario offering a variety of postsecondary programs. Ontario's private career colleges are regulated by the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security. For more information, visit the Ministry's [private career college](#) web page.

While the chart provides an overview of the four main pathways to postsecondary education that are available to adult learners in Ontario, this companion guide contains more detailed information that explains the features, requirements, and logistics related to each pathway. The guide is organized into six parts:

- Introduction
- Section 1: Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Section 2: Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Program
- Section 3: Mature Student Status
- Section 4: Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC)
- Summary and Next Steps

The *Ontario's Pathways to Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners* chart and the Companion Guide are current as of March 2026. Pathways to publicly funded postsecondary institutions may change over time. Adult learners are encouraged to confirm current admission requirements and pathways directly with the postsecondary institution(s) they are considering.

SECTION 1

Ontario Secondary School Diploma

Overview

Most Ontario school boards offer secondary school credit programs specifically designed for adult learners through their Adult and Continuing Education (A&CE) departments. Adults can pursue a variety of pathways to earn their diploma. A range of supports is also available, including prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and upgrading programs to strengthen skills in digital literacy, communication, numeracy, note taking, and test taking.

Diplomas earned in an Adult education program are issued by the Ministry of Education and have the same official status as diplomas earned through the regular secondary school program.

The courses and credentials required to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) are the same for adult learners as they are for students who are attending a mainstream (publicly funded grades 9-12) secondary school. Detailed information about the policies and programs that shape the educational experience in Ontario is available through the Ministry of Education's [Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements \(2024\)](#).

Considerations for individuals interested in the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

1. The OSSD is attainable for all students regardless of previous academic history.
2. The OSSD supports all pathways including workplace, apprenticeship, college and university.
3. The OSSD is the primary requirement for applying to postsecondary institutions across Canada.
4. The OSSD is the recognized standard by employers province-wide.

Adult Learning Centres - Student Intake Process

Many school boards provide adult education registration on a continuous intake basis.

Although intake and registration procedures vary across Ontario school boards, students should provide a transcript or documentation of their previous academic history to support individualized academic pathway planning. Assistance with obtaining academic records is available during intake. Transcripts can be requested from the last school or school board attended, and a fee may apply.

Delivery Models

Adult learners have access to a variety of delivery models which vary by school board and by community within school boards.

Credit courses are offered in-class and online and are delivered by qualified teachers who have expertise in subject areas and adult learning principles.

Modes of Delivery:

- In-person classroom and individual instruction
- Correspondence courses with or without teacher support (online and 'paper' options)
- Online courses
- Hybrid models

Course models:

- Daytime during the academic school year
- Summer school
- Night school
- Co-op (earn credits while working)
- Dual credit (earn high school and college credits together – for more information [Dual credit programs | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/education/dual-credit))

Registration or enrollment

1. Students will meet with a guidance counsellor to discuss their individual academic pathway plan.
2. The counsellor will review the documentation provided to determine the most suitable equivalency assessment—either the Mature Student Assessment or Mature PLAR—considering the student's work experience and diploma requirements.
3. The counsellor will provide guidance on course selection, remaining diploma requirements, and future pathway planning.

See [APPENDIX 1](#) for details on the Mature PLAR Process

SECTION 2

Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE)

Overview

The Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program is a grade 12 equivalent program that has been offered by all of Ontario's public colleges since the establishment of the college system in 1967. The original program was part of the "Basic Training for Skills Development" (BTSD) program. In 2004, the grade 12 equivalent level of the BTSD program was renamed "Academic and Career Entrance" (ACE) and updated to ensure equivalency to selected secondary school courses in core subjects including English, mathematics and sciences.

The ACE program is often included under the umbrella of "Academic Upgrading" in Ontario's public colleges. Eligible students can usually access the ACE program at no cost. ACE courses are offered at 80+ in-class college sites and online through the "ACE Distance" program. Students may choose to take only the ACE course(s) required for admission to their selected postsecondary college program, or they may complete the four ACE courses needed to earn an ACE Certificate. All ACE courses and final grades are recorded on the student's official college transcript.

Considerations for individuals interested in the ACE program

1. ACE courses are accepted as grade 12 college preparation equivalent for application to Ontario public college certificate and diploma programs (not degree programs) and may also be accepted by Indigenous Institutes.
2. ACE courses have been designed to provide the academic skills and knowledge needed in college postsecondary programs.
3. The ACE Certificate is accepted as a grade 12 equivalent credential for apprenticeship registration in Ontario.
4. A growing number of employers recognize the ACE Certificate as a grade 12 equivalent for hiring/promotion purposes.

Eligibility

Ontario residents who are:

- 18 years or older
- with or without a secondary school diploma
- eligible to work in Ontario
- not on an international study visa
- proficient in English (or French)

Applicants must also have adequate skill levels based on the results of intake assessments, e.g., reading, writing, numeracy, digital, etc.

Application and Registration Process

Processes vary from college to college, but the general format is described below.

The ACE program applicant

- meets with an academic advisor to discuss their previous education, goals (college, employment, etc.) and availability to attend the program
- completes skills assessments, typically in reading, writing and numeracy
- reviews assessment results with the advisor

Based on assessment results and the applicant's background and goals, a learning plan is developed with the advisor. The learning plan may include completion of one or more pre-ACE (foundations or refresher) courses to prepare for ACE-level courses.

Applicants whose assessment results indicate they are not eligible for direct entry into the program may be referred to another service provider in the community (usually school board or community-based adult upgrading programs) to improve their skills. Individuals may be referred back to the college's ACE program when they have completed sufficient upgrading to be eligible for pre-ACE or ACE-level studies.

Advisors may counsel an applicant to consider the OSSD pathway if the number of credits they already have indicates that OSSD is the most suitable route to a credential and/or to accessing postsecondary.

Courses Available

The ACE program focuses on the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to succeed in college certificate and diploma programs and in apprenticeship training. Students also acquire important self-management, digital, and study skills, along with orientation to a college learning environment. ACE students are college students with access to most services available at the college location where they attend. ACE students "prepare for college at college".

ACE courses have been evaluated by an independent evaluator (Curriculum Services Canada), in cooperation with the Ontario Ministry of Education, to confirm equivalency with specific Ontario Secondary School courses. The following chart summarizes the equivalencies.

Table 1: ACE and Ontario Secondary School Course Equivalencies

Academic and Career Entrance (ACE)	Ontario Secondary School
English or French	
ACE Communications	English, Grade 12, College Preparation ENG4C French, Grade 12, College Preparation FRA4C
Mathematics	
ACE Apprenticeship Mathematics	Foundations for College Mathematics, Grade 12, College Preparation MAP4C
ACE Business Mathematics	Foundations for College Mathematics, Grade 12, College Preparation MAP4C
ACE Technical Mathematics	Mathematics for College Technology, Grade 12, College Preparation MCT4C
ACE Core Mathematics	Mathematics for Work and Everyday Life, Grade 12, Workplace Preparation MEL4E
Science	
ACE Biology	Biology, Grade 11, College Preparation SBI3C
ACE Physics	Physics, Grade 11, University Preparation SPH3U
ACE Physics	Physics, Grade 12, College Preparation SPH4C
ACE Chemistry	Chemistry, Grade 12, College Preparation SCH4C

Two additional courses are included in the ACE program: ACE Computer Fundamentals and ACE Self-Management and Self-Direction. These courses do not have direct equivalency to Ontario Secondary School courses but are considered electives in the ACE program.

Delivery Models

ACE (and pre-ACE) programs are offered in-class and online, as described below.

Features of In-class ACE Programs

There are 80 college sites across Ontario where the ACE program is offered. The features listed below vary across colleges and sites.

- Continuous intake (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly)
- Semester-based intakes (3 times per year)
- Daytime and evening classes, occasionally weekend classes
- Hybrid delivery options (combine in-class and online) for some courses
- Use of the college's online Learning Management System
- Academic advising support
- Accommodation for students with a documented accessibility plan

For more information, interested students can visit their local college website and search for "Academic Upgrading" or "Academic and Career Entrance".

Features of the Online "ACE Distance" Program:

- Fully asynchronous delivery (self-directed learning)
- Mandatory 20-hour "Learn to Learn" orientation course for new students (weekly start dates)
- Only one course is allowed to be taken at a time
- Bi-monthly start dates for ACE courses (normally 6 times per year)
- Maximum 20 weeks per ACE course
- Limited number of pre-ACE courses available

For more information, interested applicants should visit www.acedistancedelivery.ca for details about eligibility, requirements, courses, and how to apply.

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment is ongoing throughout both ACE and pre-ACE courses. Assessment may include tests, quizzes, presentations, reports, essays, etc. At the end of each course, students receive a final grade that is recorded on their official college transcript. This transcript is submitted by students to the [OCAS Application Service](#) as documentation to support their application to a postsecondary program.

Credential

Students can choose to take only the specific ACE course(s) they need to meet admission requirements for their chosen college program. They may also opt to take the courses required to qualify for the ACE Certificate credential.

Each course used toward the ACE Certificate requires a final grade of at least 70%.

The courses required to achieve the ACE Certificate are as follows:

- ACE Communications (English or French*)
- One ACE mathematics course
- Any two other courses from the list of approved ACE courses

*French is available at Ontario's two Francophone colleges.

Students can combine ACE courses from more than one college to achieve the ACE Certificate. Courses taken in-class and/or online (through ACE Distance) can be used to meet the Certificate requirements.

ACE Certificates are issued by the Registrar/Student Records department at each college. The student's official college transcript contains a record of their ACE courses and final grades.

Students who are planning to use the ACE program as a grade 12 equivalent credential to register for an apprenticeship in Ontario must complete the full ACE certificate (if they do not have an OSSD or other credential that meets the requirement for apprenticeship registration.)

SECTION 3

Mature Student Status

Most adult learners qualify for admission to postsecondary programs based on a recognized credential, such as the OSSD, ACE Certificate, or CAEC, along with the required prerequisite courses. At many colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes, adults who do not have a high school diploma (or equivalent) may apply through the Mature Student Status process. Application procedures for Mature Student Status vary across Ontario's public colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes.

Ontario's Indigenous Institutes - Mature Student Status

Overview

"Ontario's Indigenous Institutes are grounded in Indigenous cultures and looking ahead to building a stronger future together. Our Member Institutes look to our communities for strength, knowledge and guidance in programming so that we can help learners of every age gain the knowledge and skills to lead the next generation."

Source: <https://iicontario.ca/indigenous-institutes/>

There are seven Indigenous Institutes in Ontario offering a wide variety of programs. Many are affiliated with colleges or universities. Most Indigenous Institutes have pathways to support admission for mature students.

Individuals who are interested in attending an Indigenous Institute apply directly to that institution for most programs. Information about the application process can be found on each institution's website.

Considerations for individuals interested in the Mature Student Status process at an Indigenous Institute:

1. Applicants applying as mature students will be considered on an individual basis.
2. The Mature Student Status pathway may not be available for all programs.
3. Applicants may be required to successfully complete specific prerequisite courses, e.g., OSSD or ACE courses, especially for application to oversubscribed programs.
4. Each Indigenous Institute has its own process for assessing mature student applicants.

Ontario's Public Colleges - Mature Student Status

Overview

"Colleges may grant mature student status to applicants who are over 19 years old and do not have a high school diploma, CAEC, or GED. The colleges will decide if you meet the requirements for mature student status based on the information provided in your college application."

Source: <https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/applying/admission-requirements>

Individuals interested in applying to a program at a college via the Mature Student Status pathway must be aware of the requirements for the program(s) to which they are applying. Although each college has its own process and requirements for mature student applicants, there are two elements common to most:

- testing in English (or French) and in mathematics (for some programs)
- completing program-specific high school (or equivalent) course requirements, usually in mathematics and/or sciences

Applicants applying to a college program as mature students must indicate this category on their online college application form submitted through the [OCAS Application Services](#) website.

Considerations for individuals interested in the Mature Student Status process at a college:

1. Applicants applying as mature students will be considered on an individual basis.
2. Applicants may be required to successfully complete specific prerequisite courses, e.g., OSSD or ACE courses, especially for application to oversubscribed programs.
3. There is usually a fee to write mature student admission tests; each college or Indigenous Institute sets its own fee.
4. If an applicant does not meet the entry requirement on a mature student test, there is a waiting period before they can rewrite the test, usually six months to one year.

Eligibility

Individuals may qualify to apply as mature students if they:

- are 19 years of age or older by the postsecondary program start date
- have been out of school for at least a year
- do not have an OSSD or equivalent credential, e.g., ACE Certificate or CAEC
- currently reside in Canada (Canadian citizens, permanent residents or those currently studying in Canada on a study permit or other visa)
- are a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident living elsewhere (not in Canada)

Application Process

Applicants to public college programs apply through [OCAS Application Services](#) to the college(s) and program(s) they are interested in. They identify themselves as mature student applicants on the application form.

Applicants who wish to follow the Mature Student Status process typically meet first with an academic or pathways advisor at the college they plan to attend. The advisor determines whether the mature student pathway is a suitable option. Advisors are often part of the broader Student Services department.

Once the college approves an applicant for mature student testing, they are informed of the applicable fee, testing time, and location. Testing usually takes place in the on-campus testing centre. Individuals should plan to spend approximately two to three hours completing the required test(s), although the exact duration may vary across colleges. Sample test questions or study guides are often available on college websites.

Tests and Scoring

Colleges use a variety of commercial and/or in-house tests; mature student tests are not the same at every college. There is usually a standard minimum score required for the English language (or French) component, and a sliding score required for mathematics, depending on the postsecondary program to which the individual is applying.

Students not achieving the required score on the testing are advised to meet with an academic/pathways advisor to determine their next steps, which may include rewriting the mature student test within a specified time frame, and/or registering for an adult upgrading or language proficiency program to improve their skills.

Ontario's Public Universities - Mature Student Status

Overview

"The definition of what a mature applicant is varies by university. Refer to each university's admission policies for further information."

Source: <https://www.ouac.on.ca/planning/i-am-a-mature-applicant/>

Requirements for Mature Student Status vary across universities. Applicants should review the mature student requirements for the university(s) they are interested in. Links to information and requirements for individual universities can be found on the [Ontario Universities' Application Centre \(OUAC\)](#) website.

Considerations for individuals interested in the Mature Student Status process at a university

1. Applicants applying as mature students will be considered on an individual basis.
2. In addition to the standard OUAC application fee for universities, additional fees may apply for obtaining transcripts and/or evaluating other required documentation.
3. Mature students are often required to complete one or more specific university courses before being fully admitted to their chosen program.
4. Not all universities offer the option of applying via the Mature Student Status path.

Eligibility

Mature student eligibility varies across universities and may include some or all of these criteria:

- a specific age requirement, e.g., 19 years or 21 years
- a specific length of time out of formal education, e.g., one year or two years
- Canadian citizenship or permanent residence status
- various academic requirements

Application Process

Applicants apply through [OUAC](#) to the university(s) and program(s) they are interested in. The application is a "smart" form which automatically places mature student applicants into the "group B" category (for applicants not coming directly from high school).

Applicants interested in the Mature Student Status process may first meet with an academic advisor at the university to discuss the requirements and eligibility for mature student admission.

If testing is required, the applicant is advised of the fee, time, and location. Applicants may need to provide additional information or documentation to support their mature student application e.g., portfolio, resume, reference letters, etc.

Evaluation of Applicants

The process for evaluating mature student applicants varies across universities. It may involve written submissions, portfolios, previous academic performance, testing, etc.

At some universities, mature students may be admitted on a part-time basis and required to take specific courses in their first year. Performance on these initial courses is then used to determine if the student is allowed to continue in their chosen program.

SECTION 4

Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC)

Overview

In 2024, the CAEC replaced the GED (General Education Development) testing services in most of Canada. The CAEC is a series of online tests for adults who do not have a high school diploma but need a high school equivalency credential to pursue employment, apprenticeship, or further education. CAEC testing is available in both English and French and is administered online at more than 40 supervised test sites across Ontario.

Ontario's Ministry of Education designated the "Independent Learning Centre" (ILC) as the exclusive provider of CAEC testing in the province. The [CAEC website](#) contains helpful information about the CAEC credential, requirements, testing, and resources.

Some information from the [CAEC website](#) has been summarized in the following pages of this guide. However, individuals are encouraged to visit the website for complete details on the CAEC testing process and requirements.

Individuals who pass the CAEC tests in Ontario earn an Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate, issued by the ILC. To qualify for the certificate, test-takers must achieve a grade of at least 55% on each of the five tests listed below:

- Reading (75 minutes)
- Writing (75 minutes)
- Science (90 minutes)
- Social Studies (90 minutes)
- Mathematics Part 1 (no calculator; 30 minutes)
- Mathematics Part 2 (calculator; 90 minutes)

Considerations for individuals interested in the CAEC

1. The CAEC is recognized by many (not all) employers for hiring purposes.
2. Some of Ontario's public colleges and Indigenous Institutes accept the CAEC reading/writing tests to meet the grade 12 English (or French) admission requirement.
3. Most of Ontario's public colleges and Indigenous Institutes do not accept the CAEC math/science testing to meet admission requirements for programs requiring specific grade 11/12 mathematics or science courses.
4. Applicants with the CAEC normally require specific OSSD or ACE courses to meet math/science admission requirements for Ontario's public colleges and Indigenous Institutes.
5. Universities in Ontario typically do not accept the CAEC for admission purposes.

Eligibility

An individual who would like to participate in the CAEC testing process must:

- be at least 18 years old
- not have graduated from high school
- not be currently registered with an Ontario high school
- be a resident of Ontario for at least six months

Individuals who are 18 years of age must provide a “date of leaving letter” from the last high school they attended. Individuals who were home schooled must provide proof of their home schooling program.

Registration Process

To register for CAEC testing at the Independent Learning Centre an applicant must:

- meet the eligibility criteria
- set up an account on the CAEC portal
- provide their personal information (name, address, etc.) on the portal
- upload government-issued identification
- pay the test registration fee
- submit their registration

Note: Accommodations are available to support individuals with documented needs. The CAEC registration process includes an area to request accommodations and provide supporting documents that have been completed by a qualified professional. Each request is considered on an individual basis. If accommodations are approved, the local testing centre is notified by CAEC staff.

Preparation Courses

There are no specific courses required for an individual to be eligible for CAEC testing. However, most individuals require some preparation and study to pass all five CAEC tests.

Some programs that offer CAEC preparation are described in the “Study” section of the [CAEC website](#). Many programs listed on the website are part of Ontario’s “[Get SET](#)” (formerly Literacy and Basic Skills) network of adult education providers and are free to eligible adult learners in Ontario.

Other suggestions for preparation included in the “Study” section of the [CAEC website](#) include the following:

- Review the CAEC test outcomes/description document.
- Use the practice tests provided for each subject area.
- Watch the video to learn more about the test structure and scoring.
- Find an organization in Ontario that provides CAEC prep courses or modules, e.g. a [Get SET](#) program.

Individuals can also work through a CAEC test preparation guide on their own. The guides are available to purchase by searching online for “CAEC Test Preparation”, or they can be borrowed from some public libraries.

Delivery Models

Organizations that offer CAEC test preparation differ in their format and scheduling, as described below.

- Classes may be in person or online; they may be full-time or part-time.
- Some organizations use standard CAEC preparation guides, while others have developed alternate or supplementary materials to help individuals become familiar with the knowledge and skills assessed in the CAEC tests.
- Study and test-taking skills may be included in CAEC preparation courses.

As mentioned above, individuals can consult the “Study” section of the CAEC website to find programs (mostly free of charge) that offer preparation classes.

Scoring

CAEC testing compares an individual's performance on each test to similar curriculum standards that high school graduates obtain. The tests take into consideration the skills and knowledge that individuals are expected to retain from high school, especially the ability to understand and apply information, to evaluate, analyze and draw conclusions, and to express ideas and opinions in writing.

Many test questions are multiple choice or involve matching or sequencing. The writing component requires the test-taker to complete a writing task.

Test-takers achieve a percent score on each of the five tests. (Scoring does not provide specific grade equivalencies.) Scoring on each test results in one of the following designations on the CAEC transcript issued to each test-taker:

- 80 to 100% - exceeds minimum standards
- 55 to 79% - meets minimum standards
- 40 to 54% - approaches minimum standards
- Below 40% - does not meet minimum standards

Credential

The Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate is issued to successful test-takers by the Independent Learning Centre (ILC), under the authority of the Ontario Ministry of Education. The CAEC demonstrates that the holder has the potential of a high school graduate and the educational skills to succeed in many jobs that require high school graduation or equivalent. However, subject-specific knowledge that a recent high school graduate might have acquired such as mathematical formulae, research/report writing, the work of specific authors, chemical/physical science processes, etc., is not tested.

There is no high school course credit value associated with the CAEC tests, and the high school equivalency certificate awarded is not transferable for the purpose of granting an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. However, the CAEC can be used to earn up to 26 equivalent credits through the Mature PLAR process.

Summary and Next Steps

Adult learners in Ontario have four main options to support their preparation for, and access to, postsecondary education.

The four pathways described in this guide and in the accompanying chart are:

- Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE)
- Mature Student Status
- Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC - formerly GED)

While adult learners come to education with diverse backgrounds and needs, there are key steps that all adults should consider when planning a pathway to postsecondary education.

1. Decide which postsecondary destination to pursue (apprenticeship, college, Indigenous Institute, or university).
2. Research the prerequisites (courses and credentials) required for the chosen destination and specific programs by consulting individual institution websites and/or speaking to an academic/pathways advisor at the postsecondary institution.
3. Determine whether the applicant meets all prerequisites necessary for admission and is prepared to succeed in their chosen postsecondary program.
4. If the applicant has the required prerequisites, research application deadlines for postsecondary program start dates and apply as directed, on time, with required documentation.
5. If the applicant does not have the academic foundation to succeed in one of the four pathways described in this guide, they may need to upgrade their skills (in a [Get SET](#) program, for example) and later transition to one of the four pathways.

Adults must carefully consider how much time is required to complete the academic prerequisites needed for application to a postsecondary program. They also need to consider their family, employment, health, financial and other personal aspects of their life and the demands those elements place on their time.

Sometimes the shortest pathway to postsecondary is not the one that will set up an individual for success. Seeking advice from an academic/pathways advisor who is familiar with the features and requirements of all four pathways is important and recommended.

Appendix 1

Mature PLAR (MPLAR) Process for Obtaining a Diploma

Diploma Requirements for Mature Students (18/18+ years)

Adult learners who previously attended secondary school in Ontario may be eligible to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Eligibility is determined based on the school year in which the student first began a secondary school program in Ontario, as outlined in the chart below.

SSGD – Entered Secondary School Prior to 1984	OSSD (Under OS:IS) – Entered 1984 to August 1999	OSSD (Under OSS) – Entered Sept 1999 to August 2024	OSSD – Beginning September 2027 for Mature Students
Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) Curriculum – 27 Credits	Ontario Schools: Intermediate Senior (OS:IS) Curriculum – 30 credits	Ontario Secondary Schools (OSS) Curriculum – 30 credits	Ontario Secondary Schools (OS) Curriculum - 30 Credits
13 Compulsory Credits	16 Compulsory Credits	18 Compulsory Credits	17 Compulsory Credits
4 English, including 2 Senior	5 English, including 2 Senior	4 English (may use OSSLC for 11 or 12 English)	4 English (1 per Grade)
2 Mathematics	2 Mathematics	3 Mathematics (at least one grade 11 or 12)	3 Mathematics (Grade 9, Grade 10 and one credit in Grade 11 or 12)
1 Science	2 Science	2 Sciences	2 Science
	1 French	1 French	1 French
1 Canadian Geography	1 Canadian Geography	1 Canadian Geography	1 Canadian Geography (Grade 9)
1 Canadian History	1 Canadian History	1 Canadian History	1 Canadian History (Grade 10)
1 Senior Social Science 3 Arts Visual, Music, Family Studies, Physical Education	1 Senior Social Science Geo, Law, History and Contemporary Studies, Personal Life Management, Family Studies or Economics	1 Arts Music, Visual Arts, Dramatic Arts	1 Arts
		1 Health and Physical Education	1 Health and Physical Education
		0.5 Civics	0.5 Civics
		0.5 Careers	0.5 Careers
		Group 1 1 Additional credit in: English (incl OLC), or French or Native, Classic, International Language, or Social Sciences and the Humanities, or Canadian and World Studies, or Native Studies, or another Guidance and careers or CO-OP	1 Technological Education (Grade 9 or Grade 10)

SSGD – Entered Secondary School Prior to 1984 (cont.)	OSSD (Under OS:IS) – Entered 1984 to August 1999 (cont.)	OSSD (Under OSS) – Entered Sept 1999 to August 2024 (cont.)	OSSD – Beginning September 2027 for Mature Students (cont.)
		Group 2 1 Additional credit in: Health/PE or the Arts, or Business Studies, or CO-OP, or French	1 STEM – related course Group Business Studies or Computer Studies or CO-OP, Math (in addition to 3 Compulsory) Technological Education (in addition to 1 Compulsory)
		Group 3 1 Additional credit in: Gr 11/12 Science or Technical Education (Grades 9 – 12), or CO-OP, or Computer Studies, or French	<i>The Grade 11 English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices</i> can meet the Grade 11 English compulsory credit And <i>The Grade 9 Expressions of First Nations, Metis, Inuit Cultures</i> to meet the compulsory Art Requirement
14 Elective Credits	14 Elective Credits	12 Elective Credits	13 Elective Credits
		Literacy Requirement- Mature students can complete this requirement through test or course. 40 Community Service Hours (Mature students can earn 0 – 40 CSH at the principal's discretion) Online Learning Graduation Requirement https://www.ontario.ca/page/high-school-graduation-requirements	Literacy Requirement - Mature students can complete this requirement through test or course. 40 Community Service Hours (Mature students can earn 0 – 40 CSH at the principal's discretion) Online Learning Graduation Requirement https://www.ontario.ca/page/high-school-graduation-requirements
Note: Student may choose to have an equivalency assessment via *MSA or MPLAR. Students who opt for MPLAR process will be required to complete the Graduation requirements for an OSSD under OSS 1984-1999 *Mature student assessment	Note: Student may choose to have an equivalency assessment via *MSA or MPLAR. Students who opt for MPLAR process will be required to complete the Graduation requirements for an OSSD under OSS 1984-1999 *Mature student assessment	Note: Students seeking equivalencies are eligible for Mature PLAR only	Note: Students seeking equivalencies are eligible for Mature PLAR only

Mature Student Assessment

(PPM 132-Appendix 1)

Students eligible to receive equivalent credits under their original diploma type (Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) for students who entered the Ontario secondary school system in Grade 9 before September 1, 1984 or OSSD 1989 for students who entered the Ontario secondary school system in Grade 9 before September 1, 1999 – see chart above) may undergo a Mature Student Assessment. Eligible students may be recommended for one or more of the following types of equivalent credits to bring their credit total to within their 4 final credits.

Equivalent Credit Allowances (max to 26 credits)

- QMA- Maturity Allowance: maximum of 12 credits assigned
- QEE - Equivalent Education allowance: assigned for courses successfully completed that are considered acceptable by the principal based on postsecondary transcripts, certifications or designation that are not usually considered secondary school subjects (this could be certification or designation in a specific program that required a minimum of 110 hours of instruction or training)
- QAP – Apprenticeship Training Allowance: 2 equivalent credits assigned per successful completion of each period of an apprenticeship program (for example, electrician, hairdresser or mechanic)
- QSE – Out of Province allowance: assigned for recognized out of province equivalency credits

Students must earn at least 4 Grade 11 and/or Grade 12 credits to be awarded an SSGD or OSSD 1989. The equivalent credit allowances (max to 26 credits) assigned will be recorded on the Ontario student transcript as the final entry(s).

Mature PLAR (MPLAR)

The Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD 1999) is available to all eligible adult learners, regardless of when they began secondary school. It applies to students who entered Grade 9 in Ontario in the 1999–2000 school year or later, as well as to mature students who entered the Ontario system after February 2004. Students enrolled in the OSSD program may also be eligible to earn equivalent credits through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for mature students.

Overview

Ontario's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for mature students (MPLAR) is a formal evaluation and credit-granting process whereby eligible students may obtain equivalent credits for prior learning.

Prior learning refers to the knowledge and skills that students have gained, both formally and informally, outside regular secondary school programs. Students can have this learning assessed against the expectations outlined in provincial curriculum policy documents to earn credits toward an OSSD. The Mature Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (MPLAR) process includes three components: 9/10 equivalency, 11/12 equivalency, and 11/12 challenge (used to grant a credit with a grade). Following the MPLAR assessment, principals determine the number of credits—including compulsory credits—a mature student needs to meet the diploma requirements.

MPLAR Process

Eligibility includes a mature student who:

- is at least 18 years old on or after January 1 of the current school year. A school year is defined from September to August 31
- is enrolled in a secondary school credit program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD
- has fewer than 26 credits
- mature students who started secondary school under the other diploma types (HS1, OS:IS) who choose to have their prior learner assessed through MPLAR

MPLAR Intake Process

Students who wish to participate in PLAR for Mature Students (PPM 132) must meet with a school board principal or the principal's designate to determine their eligibility.

Upon determining eligibility, the principal or designate will:

- Review the transcript to determine if individual assessments through the equivalency process are required for Grade 9 and 10 credits to bring a student's credit count to 16
- develop a plan to complete any outstanding Grade 9 and 10 individual assessments as well as opportunities for support and preparation
- complete Grade 9 and 10 individual assessments as necessary and assign credit
- advise mature students on the creation of a portfolio of relevant work experience, learning, training and other accomplishments to submit for evaluation of credentials through the equivalency process for Grade 11 and 12 credits
- review and assign equivalent Grade 11 and 12 credits as appropriate
- provide advice to mature students on outstanding credits required to obtain the OSSD, such as compulsory credits, electives and/or postsecondary pre-requisites based on the student's chosen pathway

MPLAR Equivalency and Challenge Processes

Grade 9/10 Equivalency Process

Mature students without a transcript showing successful completion of the first two years of secondary school in Ontario must complete an individual assessment. This assessment includes subject-based evaluations in English, Canadian Geography, Canadian History, Math, and/or Science, allowing them to earn up to 16 Prior Learning Equivalent (PLE) credits.

Grade 11/12 Equivalency Process

An eligible student can earn up to 10 senior equivalent credits by completing a formal application that documents work, volunteer, and other education-related experiences for consideration.

*Students who provide evidence of a completed Canadian postsecondary diploma or degree from an accredited institution, or a certificate of apprenticeship from Skilled Trades Ontario, may earn up to 14 senior equivalent credits.

Grade 11/12 Challenge Process

Students may request to challenge for prior learning for the purpose of granting credit(s) with a grade. This is a formal application process pending principal approval. Students are eligible for up to 10 equivalent and challenge credits combined.

MPLAR Support

Many school boards offer support with preparation for the MPLAR grade 9/10 subject-based assessment, as well as the gathering of documentation and evidence for the 11/12 equivalency process through an adult upgrading Get SET program.

MPLAR Reporting

The equivalent credits an adult learner is assigned through the Mature PLAR process is recorded on the Ontario Student Transcript. The transcript is issued to the student at graduation or upon request.

MPLAR Final Diploma Requirements

PLAR eligible students need to fulfill the diploma requirements as outlined for the OSSD 1999 including:

- Literacy Requirement (test or course*)
- Community Service Hours (0-40 at the principal's discretion)

As well as the Mature PLAR final diploma requirements including:

Four final senior credits:

- Grade 11 English*
- Grade 12 English*
- Senior Math
- Grade 11 or 12 science, technology, computer science or math (can be substituted)

*The Ontario Literacy Course (OLC) can fulfill the Grade 11 or 12 English requirement and meet the Literacy Requirement

Resources

 Academic and Career Entrance Program (ACE) https://www.cscau.com/ace https://www.acedistancedelivery.ca/	 Government of Ontario – Earning your Highschool Diploma https://www.ontario.ca/page/earning-your-high-school-diploma
 Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) https://www.ilc.org/pages/caec	 Government of Ontario – Mature Student Assessment (PPM 132-Appendix 1) https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-132#section-9
 CESBA https://cesba.com/	 Government of Ontario – Ontario Schools, K to 12: Policy and Program Requirements (2024) https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-schools-kindergarten-grade-12-policy-and-program-requirements
 College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading https://www.cscau.com/	 Ontario Colleges – Application service https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en
 Indigenous Institutes Consortium https://iicontario.ca/	 Ontario Colleges – Admission Requirements https://www.ontariocolleges.ca/en/applying/admission-requirements
 Get Set (Skills, Education and Training) https://www.ontario.ca/page/adult-learning-literacy-program	 Ontario Universities' Application Centre – Mature Applicants https://www.ouac.on.ca/planning/i-am-a-mature-applicant/
 Government of Ontario – Career Colleges https://www.ontario.ca/page/career-colleges	 Ontario Universities' Application Centre – Undergraduate – Mature Students https://www.ouac.on.ca/guide/undergrad-mature/
 Government of Ontario – Dual credit programs https://www.ontario.ca/page/dual-credit-programs	