

**3.0 Programs****Admissions Criteria****Minister's Binding Policy  
Directive**

## **Admissions Criteria**

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### **Purpose and Application**

The general admissions criteria provide a clear and consistent method that all colleges are to use when considering applicants for entrance to all college programs of instruction. The criteria, outlined in Section 11 (1) of [O. Reg. 34/03](#) under the [Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#), state that an applicant is to be "considered for admission to an appropriate program of instruction if the person,

- a) is the holder of an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or its equivalent;
- b) is nineteen years of age or older on or before the commencement of the program in which the applicant intends to enrol; or
- c) does not meet the criteria set out in clauses (a) and (b) but is the holder of an admission requirement established by the board of governors for a specific program of instruction."

In practice this means that the holder of an Ontario Secondary School Diploma is eligible for admission regardless of age.

This binding policy directive is issued in accordance with the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*, which gives the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities the authority to make binding policy directives in relation to the manner in which colleges carry out their objects or conduct their affairs.

This binding policy directive, which applies to all colleges, sets out the requirements to establish specific admission criteria and procedures for all full-time or part-time postsecondary programs of instruction. This directive also applies to college baccalaureate degree programs of instruction in an applied field of study, commonly known as applied degrees.

For further information regarding this binding policy directive, click on the Contact link to consult with the appropriate [ministry contact](#), listed in the Contacts section on the web site.

### **Principles**

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has ultimate responsibility and accountability for the college system and has established a policy framework within which colleges have the flexibility to meet local needs.

Colleges should recognize and provide innovative opportunities that foster development of the diverse goals and aptitudes of the applicants.

Colleges should strive to respond to the needs of the economy.

Postsecondary education and training should be accessible to willing and qualified individuals.

Convenient access to appropriate information is essential for individuals to make informed choices to achieve their education and training goals.

Individuals require certain knowledge, aptitudes, and skills, appropriate to the program of instruction, in order to profit from the program of instruction.

College preparation courses at Ontario secondary schools are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for college programs of instruction. University/college preparation courses include content that is relevant to both university and college programs of instruction. University courses include content that is relevant to both university degree and college applied degree programs.

Admission processes established for college programs of instruction must be objective and transparent.

The Ontario [Human Rights Code](#) is to be met in college admissions processes.

### **Glossary**

**Applied degree program:** a prescribed set of courses/studies and work-related experiences oriented to a field of practice that culminates in mastery of the bodies of knowledge and skills appropriate to the baccalaureate degree level in an applied field of study and necessary to be an effective practitioner on graduation and to remain professionally current thereafter.

Colleges may be granted consent to offer baccalaureate degree programs of instruction in an applied field of study by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities according to the [Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000](#).

**Articulation agreement:** a formal agreement between one or more colleges and one or more educational institutions or boards of education that recognizes learning achievement, facilitates student progress, minimizes curriculum duplication, and eases the transition from one institution to the other.

**Collaborative program:** generally, an academic or vocational program of instruction that has been developed co-operatively by university and college partners to facilitate

learners' efficient progression towards one or more credentials for which the learning has been achieved in both a college and a university. Collaborative programs of instruction ensure that learning that has already been achieved will be recognized by the receiving institution according to the terms outlined in the articulation agreement. There are a number of models for collaborative programs of instruction.

**College central admissions publication:** a compilation of college admission requirements and selection procedures for each program of instruction, the waiting list information, and an admission decision review procedure.

**Integrated program:** two or more distinct, approved, free-standing programs of instruction, in one or more institutions, amalgamated into one program of instruction for enrolment, curricula, examination, and administrative purposes and for which the eligible enrolment is reported on the basis of the institution-of-registration. The program of instruction is planned, maintained, and delivered by one or more institutions from each sector and culminates in one credential, normally a baccalaureate degree.

**Mature student status:** status of an applicant who does not have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent but has reached the age of 19 years on or before the commencement of the program of instruction in which he or she intends to enrol.

**The Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC):** a credential of recognition will be granted on request to students who leave school before earning the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, provided that they have earned a minimum of 14 credits (7 compulsory and 7 optional credits).

**Ontario Secondary School Diploma:** a provincially recognized credential of recognition earned on successful completion of secondary school requirements established by the Ministry of Education and known as an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), a Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD), or a Secondary School Honours Graduation Diploma (SSHGD).

**OSSD equivalent:** a secondary school graduation diploma, such as the General Education Diploma (GED), from another jurisdiction, or documentation, as determined by the college, that supports the applicant's claim of having completed the learning outcomes of an OSSD.

**Oversubscribed program:** a program of instruction for which the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of applicants required to fill the program.

**Postsecondary program of instruction:** collectively, basic postsecondary and post-basic programs of instruction, which are defined below.

- **Basic postsecondary program:** a program of instruction that conforms to the levels of learning articulated in the Credentials Framework (see the Minister's Binding Policy Directive on [Framework for Programs of Instruction](#): Appendix A) and leads to the awarding of one of the following credentials: Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or an applied degree. Basic postsecondary programs also include joint college-university programs that lead to the awarding of a degree by the university partner.
- **Post-basic program:** a program of instruction that conforms to the levels of learning articulated in the Credentials Framework (see the Minister's Binding Policy Directive on [Framework for Programs of Instruction](#): Appendix A) and leads to the awarding of an Ontario College Graduate Certificate.

**Program of instruction:** a group of related courses leading to a diploma, certificate, or other document awarded by the board of governors.

**Resident of Ontario:** a person who fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

- A person who can establish bona fide residency in Ontario as a Canadian citizen or permanent resident as defined by the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#) (Canada) for a period of 12 consecutive months (excluding periods spent in a postsecondary institution) prior to registration in the year for which application is being made.
- A person who is dependent on a parent or legal guardian, and that parent or legal guardian can establish bona fide residency in Ontario as a Canadian citizen or permanent resident as defined by the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#) (Canada) for a period of 12 consecutive months prior to registration in the year for which the application is being made. For purposes of this binding policy directive on admissions criteria, a person is considered to be independent of his or her parent or legal guardian if:
  - he or she has been out of high school for five years; or
  - he or she is married, widowed, or divorced; or
  - he or she has dependent children.

- A person who can establish bona fide residency in Ontario as a Canadian citizen or permanent resident as defined by the [\*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act\*](#) (Canada) for a period of 12 consecutive months prior to being stationed temporarily outside of Canada as an employee of a provincial or Canadian government or an international organization.
- A person who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident as defined by the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) who has taken up permanent residency in Ontario prior to registration as part of a bona fide family relocation from another Canadian province or territory. This does not include relocating to Ontario for the sole purpose of attending an Ontario college of applied arts and technology.

Evidence of bona fide residency may include (but is not restricted to) filing of Ontario tax returns, eligibility to vote in Ontario, production of a permanent driver's licence or an Ontario motor vehicle registration, proving place of employment, and filing municipal tax returns.

For the purposes of this policy, a Canadian citizen includes a Status Indian or Inuit as defined by the federal government.

**Resident of a province or territory in Canada:** an applicant who is a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident in a province or territory as defined by the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) who can establish bona fide residency in a province or territory other than Ontario, in accordance with the Ontario residency definitions outlined above.

### **Binding Policy Directive**

- A. **A central admissions publication is to be made available to the public, including by posting it on the college web site and by allowing people who do not have Internet access to look through the publication at the office of the college registrar. The publication is to include the college's current admission criteria and selection procedures for each postsecondary program of instruction to be offered by the college. Any other college publication that contains reference to admission criteria or selection procedures is to refer to the central admissions publication.**
- B. **The admission process is to consist of the following consecutive steps:**
  - I. **the determination of the applicant's system eligibility**

- II. the determination of the applicant's program eligibility
- III. the selection of program-eligible applicants from among those who applied to oversubscribed programs

### C. System Eligibility Requirements

The system eligibility requirement is to consist of any one of the following:

- I. an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent,
- II. mature student status, or
- III. any lesser minimum admission requirement established by a college on a program-specific basis.

#### Explanatory Note

An Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) is considered to be an acceptable admissions requirement for specifically identified Ministry-approved programs.

### D. Postsecondary Program of Instruction – Eligibility Requirements

Within the overall framework of the system eligibility requirements described in Section C, program eligibility requirements are to be established that:

- I. are program specific;
- II. are capable of objective demonstration or measurement and are relevant to the program; and
- III. do not include secondary school university preparation courses, or Ontario Academic Courses, with two exceptions as noted below.

Collaborative college-university postsecondary programs of instruction governed by joint agreements are not subject to the restrictions on the use of secondary school university preparation or Ontario Academic Courses, where those requirements are specifically stated in the agreement. Non-integrated programs that



provide a diploma exit must continue to be accessible to applicants without university preparation or Ontario Academic Courses.

College applied degree programs are not subject to the restrictions on use of secondary school university preparation or Ontario Academic Courses.

In cases where admission requirements for a postsecondary program of instruction at a college are changed in the direction of greater stringency (i.e., added requirements), applicants are to be given a minimum of one year's notice before the change is implemented. To give applicants sufficient time to adequately prepare for entry, 18 months' notice is preferable.

To ensure consistency and to adhere to the destination-based objective of the new secondary school curriculum, the practice of weighting between university (U), university/college (U/C), and college (C) courses in the new curriculum is not appropriate when making admissions decisions.

## E. Applicant Selection

### I. Residency Priority

Applicants are to be accepted into oversubscribed programs according to the following order of preference:

- a) residents of Ontario
- b) residents of provinces and territories in Canada
- c) other applicants.

See [Exemption Applications](#) below.

### II. Postsecondary Program of Instruction – Specific Selection Criteria

If the postsecondary program of instruction continues to be oversubscribed after the application of the residency priority, colleges may introduce program-specific selection criteria. In developing program-specific selection criteria, the following elements are to be considered:

a) **Measurable**

Applicant selection criteria are to be capable of objective demonstration or measurement and be relevant to the program.

The use of interviews as a selection tool is discouraged due to their subjective nature. If interviews are used, colleges are to demonstrate their validity and reliability.

b) **Evaluation of Secondary School Credits**

No secondary school university preparation or Ontario Academic Courses are to be required as an applicant selection criterion, except as noted under Section D, [Postsecondary Program of Instruction – Eligibility Requirements](#).

c) **Random Selection**

Random selection is not to be used as an applicant selection technique.

d) **Tests, Interviews, and Mandatory College Visits**

Where selection criteria include applicant tests, interviews, campus orientation, or other selection tools requiring mandatory college visits, alternative arrangements are to be made available for any applicant who resides outside of normal commuting distance from the college (i.e., 40 kilometres).

Colleges should endeavour to minimize an applicant's travel and testing costs, as well as the time required for and duplication related to college pre-admission testing and interviews.

e) **Waiting Lists**

Realistic waiting lists are to be established for oversubscribed programs and maintained up to the end of the registration period. A waiting list is to be realistic in relation to the experience of the college and the likelihood of

**vacancies occurring after the college has sent out final admission offers.**

**Applicants are, at their request, to be informed of their relative position on the waiting list as soon as their relative position can reasonably be ascertained. The purpose of waiting lists and their relation to eventual admission is to be explained in the college central admissions publication.**

- F. Each college is to have a written admission review process, set out in the college central admissions publication that is to specify both the means by which applicants who are refused admission to a college postsecondary program of instruction can obtain the specific reason for such refusal, and the means by which to request a review of the admissions decision.**
- G. Articulation agreements between secondary schools and colleges must not result in guaranteed admission. Postsecondary programs of instruction included in articulation agreements must be open to applicants who are enrolled in secondary schools that are not participating in the articulation agreements.**

### **Exemption Applications**

A college may apply, on a program-specific basis, to the College Admissions Review Committee for exemption from the residency requirements in [Section E.I](#) of this binding policy directive.

The College Admissions Review Committee considers only the residency-based selection procedures outlined above. To apply for an exemption, colleges are to e-mail requests to the Colleges Branch director at [colleges.branch@ontario.ca](mailto:colleges.branch@ontario.ca).

### **Summary of Responsibilities**

#### **Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology**

The college is responsible for:

- Ensuring that a central admissions publication that contains the college's admission criteria and selection procedures on a program-by-program basis is publicly available.

- Ensuring that the college admission processes are objective and transparent and consistent with published criteria and selection procedures.
- Incorporating a sufficient notice period when changes are made to program-specific admission requirements or selection procedures.
- Overseeing the establishment and operation of a written admission review process.

### Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

The ministry is responsible for:

- Making recommendations to government regarding the system eligibility requirements for admission to colleges established through regulation, and communicating those recommendations to the college system.
- Establishing the policy directive in consultation with the college system.
- Monitoring the policy's application within the college system to determine its effectiveness on a system-wide basis.
- Identifying best practices and sharing these with the college system.