



## A FAMILY GUIDE:

# College/University Pathway

PROVIDED BY THE TCDSB SPECIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND

**SURREY**  **PLACE**



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**IN GOD'S IMAGE:** *Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope*



## About this Resource

This resource has been developed to help you navigate the transition out of high school and into college or university. In this guide you will find important information discussed in school-based transition meetings.

## Pathway to College/University

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Students who are able to meet the academic challenges of high school tend to be on the College/University (C/U) pathway, graduating high school with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Students should consult with their Guidance Counselor for further planning and course selection.

# Building Independence

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To determine which skills would be essential to develop, think, “if my child doesn’t learn the skill, will someone else have to do it for them?” Regular practice in the natural environment in which it occurs is key (e.g., regular use of an agenda, chunking large-scale assignments, meal preparation, budgeting).

To assist with developing independence at home, it is important to teach a skill and then allow your child to work through it independently. Too much support can lead to an inability to cope independently. As more independence is gained, add more responsibility. It would be beneficial to build and establish routines for homework and studying early on in high school with the goal of the individual being able to initiate these skills independently by postsecondary. Below are examples of independence skills that can be established at home:

- Travel independently
- Open a bank account
- Grocery shopping
- Order food
- Make simple meals
- Household chores
- Book appointments
- Social opportunities with family and friends

# Developing Healthy Routines to Promote Wellbeing and Motivation

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Motivation is one of the key traits for success in college and university. Sometimes what appears to be a lack of motivation can be the effects of life changes, stress or underlying health conditions.

Although motivation cannot be taught directly, it can be fostered by practicing healthy habits and routines. Healthy routines, if well-established, can support individuals to develop habits which can boost mental health, and motivation.

You can support your child by giving them lots of opportunities to practice following healthy routines. Consider replacing verbal reminders with visual prompts and natural prompts so that they can learn self-responsibility. Healthy routines include:

- Sleep schedule
- Exercise
- Hygiene
- Nutrition
- Relaxation
- Socializing
- Organization

# Self-Advocacy and Self-Disclosure

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Self-advocacy is one of the most important skills a student can have. It involves awareness, confidence, decision-making, self-evaluation, problem solving and disclosure. Having self-advocacy skills in C/U is important, particularly when students are required to disclose their disability to receive academic support. With this skill set, students will be able to navigate the postsecondary environment with more success.

Consider reviewing and practicing self-advocacy skills at home so that your child is better equipped to use them at school. Here are some ideas:

- Understand and communicate how their diagnosis affects them personally.
- Understand and communicate their individual strengths and needs.
- Regularly participate in the IEP and the IPRC processes.
- Role-play asking for accommodations, extensions, and help from teachers.
- Have your child examine if current accommodations work for their learning needs.
- Coach your child on how to have difficult conversations like asking for extensions.
- Encourage your child to advocate for themselves in social situations.
- Role-play discussions with teachers around planned absences and gathering of necessary work.

Colleges and universities do not have access to a student's diagnosis or high school accommodations unless the student chooses to share.

**It is recommended that your child register with Accessibility Services at their new C/U two months before they start classes.** A Letter of Accommodation will be developed by Accessibility Services and will be shared directly with professors/instructors. This letter states that a student is registered with accessibility services and lists the accommodations granted to a particular student. It does not explain why or disclose a diagnosis.

There are benefits to disclosing a diagnosis, but it is always a personal decision, and one that individuals must make for themselves. Advocacy and disclosure is something that requires a lot of thought and practice. If your child decides that they would like to share more information about their disability and learning needs with their professor/instructor or program coordinator they should request a 10-15 minute appointment with them.

# Important Skills for Academic Success

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Suggested skills required for success in C/U include sustained attention during class, maintaining satisfactory notes, organizational skills, understanding and completing assignments, successfully completing tests and exams, gaining information from written material, and producing quality written work.

**In postsecondary it is usually not the academic component that causes difficulty. Often, impairments in social and executive functioning skills can lead to failures of classes and campus life. It is important that these skills are practiced and developed regularly.**

Below are ways to improve executive functioning skills at home:

- Planning and making a family meal.
- Prioritizing activities to get out of the house on time.
- Building working memory by using agendas, calendars and to do lists.
- Using family calendars or apps for planning.
- Using an alarm clock for waking up.
- Using a timer for transitioning from breaks back to work or chores (e.g., Pomodoro technique).
- Using visual reminders and other apps to ease anxiety and improve calm.

To help plan how much time will be needed for each C/U course per week, it is a good rule to assign 3 hours of independent work for every 1 hour of in-class lecture. This takes into account supplemental reading, assignments, and reviewing notes.

Complete the [Transition to College University Skills Checklist](#), and see which skills need more practice. Choose one or two skills to work on at a time.

## Building Networks

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A larger network of people can help develop social networks and skills for future career development (e.g., volunteering for a gaming conference if you want to get into video game design). To expand your network consider joining activities within the school as well as the community such as:

- Athletics and Recreation or Special Interest Clubs
- Community classes, start your search with Parks and Recreation or the Public Library
- [Student Links Mentoring | Community Living Ontario](#) is an opportunity for students to explore ideas for their future after high school.

# Gaining Experience

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Experience can be gained in a number of ways and it is important to explore and expose your child to as many different opportunities, people, and environments as possible. For suggestions on how to gain experience see the list below.

- **Volunteer**
  - Check out [Volunteer Toronto](#) or [Ontario Volunteer Centre Network](#) for ideas.
  - Check with the Guidance Department for more opportunities.
- **Summer or Part-time Job**
  - [Employment programs for people under 30 | ontario.ca](#) check out the summer jobs for students link for specific programs such as Youth Job Connection Summer Program
  - [TCDSB Focus On Youth](#)
- **Co-operative Education (Co-op)**
  - Credit earning courses for grade 11 or 12 students that combine class work with practical experience in the community.
  - For more information speak to your Guidance Counselor.
- **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)**
  - Allows students in high school to explore apprenticeship opportunities and careers in the skilled trades.
  - [OYAP](#) generally starts in grade 11 or grade 12 and is accessed through the cooperative education program at the secondary school.
  - For more information speak to your Guidance Counselor.

# Deciding on the College/University Pathway

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Deciding between college and university is a tough decision. It is important to consider strengths and interests when making the decision. To help with decisions, encourage self-evaluation and ask your child what appeals to them in terms of career aspirations. The following are the differences between college and university:

**College** offers apprenticeships, certificate programs, and diplomas that range from less than one year to 4 years. Some offer programs in partnership with a university to grant a degree and a diploma. College instruction tends to be practical and hands-on with smaller class sizes, which leads to greater student-teacher interaction.

**University** offers undergraduate degrees (bachelor's degree) that are 3-4 years in length. University instruction tends to be heavy on theory, and lecture based with larger class sizes.

## Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities

The [Transition Resource Guide](#) is a website with resources regarding services available in every college and university in Ontario. This resource helps to explain the [differences between high school and college or university](#), how students are supported, what to expect in this new environment and how students can prepare for success. It is divided into three sections:

- Learn About Accessibility
- Plan Your Journey
- Research Schools

Consider registering for the free online postsecondary prep course to prepare for what's ahead at college or university. [TRG Next: Post-Secondary Prep Course | Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities](#)

## Factors to Help Determine Best Fit of College/University

The following are factors to consider when choosing a particular school (adapted from Transition Resource Guide).

Factor	Question to ask Yourself
Population of students	How do you feel about the size of the school population?
Size of campus	Is the campus too large or too small?
Campus layout	How easy is it to get around the campus?
Size of typical classes	Do I prefer a class with 30 students or 100 students?
Location	How close is the campus to my home? Do I want to live at home or away from home? How easy is it to travel to campus?
Availability of high interest program or courses	Are there enough courses that are of interest to me?
Receptiveness of Accessibility Services	Were questions answered willingly? Were they friendly?
Available supports/services	Are there academic supports to access? Do I currently use any accommodations?
Cost	Do I know how much it is going to cost? Do I have the necessary funds? Am I eligible for OSAP, scholarships or bursaries?



# Transition to College Programs

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There are two programs to consider applying to that may help facilitate the transition from secondary school to postsecondary: the Dual Credit program and the School Within a College (SWAC) program. For more information about either of these programs, please speak with your Guidance Counselor.

## Dual Credit

[Dual Credit](#) programs are Ministry of Education approved programs that give students the opportunity to take college or apprenticeship courses that count towards both their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and a postsecondary certificate, diploma, degree, or a Certificate of Apprenticeship while still attending secondary school.

Senior students from all TCDSB secondary schools have access to dual credit programs available each semester at Centennial, George Brown, Humber, and Seneca colleges. Students may earn up to 4 approved dual credits towards their OSSD.

To participate in the program, students need to travel independently to the college. To access accommodations, students will need to meet with the college's Accessibility Services independently to explain the need for accommodations and provide evidence for accommodations.

## School Within a College (SWAC)

[SWAC](#) provides a dedicated classroom centrally located on a college campus at George Brown, Seneca, and Humber College. All OSSD credits are taught by a TCDSB teacher. All college credits are delivered by a college professor. In this program, students will:

- Have access to all the college facilities including: library, computer labs, athletics facilities and a college ID card.
- Have access to all of the college services including: learning skills workshops, peer tutoring and peer mentoring programs, career centre and career advisors, counseling services, academic/learning resources, post-secondary pathway planning.
- Take two dual credit courses that will count as both a college course and a credit towards OSSD.

Benefit to students:

- Complete courses required for your OSSD in a unique environment with a smaller class size and dedicated teachers.
- Earn between 4-5 credits in one semester.
- Receive round-trip TTC fare.

# Applying to Colleges/Universities

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The Guidance Department at your child's high school will give specific instructions on how and when to apply for college and university. To find information regarding the application process for C/U please visit [Ontario Universities](#) or [Ontario Colleges](#)

## Before the Application

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Investigate and visit C/U campuses even before your child has decided on a program of interest. This will give them a sense of what college and university life is like. Consider using the Transition Resource Guide's [school checklist](#) when gathering information about specific schools and [final checklist](#) to compare your child's top three choices. To ease the postsecondary transition, consider engaging your child as early as grade 10 in the following:

- Attend college/university fairs.
- Attend open houses.
- Visit campuses. Take a guided tour. Speak with Program Advisor for the area of interest.
- Participate in a transition experience offered by some C/U. This is an opportunity for high school students to visit a campus and find out more about C/U life.
- Visit the C/U website. Access the campus map.
- Speak to a graduate or someone in the program of interest.

## After the Application

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- Regularly check email for correspondence from the C/U regarding program information sessions and campus tours.
- Accept an offer (save the letter of acceptance).
- Ask the high school for copies of important documents from the OSR (Ontario Student Record) such as assessments, most recent IEP and IPRC.
- Contact the Accessibility Services Office to schedule an appointment after accepting an offer (at least two months before classes start).
- Apply for Financial Aids, if applicable.
- Note important due dates and information such as tuition and registration process.
- Register for any Transition or Orientation programs.
- Schedule a campus tour and visit the campus to increase your comfort level.

## Plan B options:

The following is a list of suggestions if you are waitlisted or declined acceptance into college or university:

- Call C/U admissions to find out about where you are on the waitlist and next steps.
- Consider accredited on-line education, funded by the Ministry of Education [TVO ILC](#) Ontario's largest online high school.
- Take continuing education courses related to the program, or essential skills upgrading courses.
- Consider another year of high school to upgrade courses or take co-op courses.
- Consider another program at a college or university.
- Consider getting a job before going to college or university. Here are some employment supports that can help:
  - [JVS Toronto](#)
  - [Specialisterne](#)
  - [Ready Willing Able Employment Agency Partners](#)
  - [Ontario Disability Support Program](#)
  - [My Job Match](#)

## Financial Aid

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The Financial Aid office at the C/U will have further information on financial assistance.

[OSAP: Ontario Student Assistance Program](#) is available to full-time students. Those with a permanent disability could be eligible for full-time OSAP funding if studying at 40% or more of a full course load. When applying, you must self-identify as having a permanent disability.

If a student qualifies for OSAP they may be eligible to get additional aid to pay for disability-related educational services and equipment. You can find more information through the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities [Bursary for Students with Disabilities and Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Students with Permanent Disabilities](#).

Colleges and universities will have scholarships and bursaries available for incoming students. Check the particular college/university for more information.

For scholarships through Autism Ontario visit [Scholarships | Autism Ontario](#)

# Support Services

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Every college and university offers a variety of supports and services that are available to all of their students. Students are encouraged to use these resources to help them connect and succeed in postsecondary. Some resources available in C/U include:

- Student Health Centre
- Counseling Centre
- Peer Tutoring, Writing/Academic Centres
- Academic Advising
- Career Services

Additional support can be obtained through Accessibility Services to address the specific needs of a particular diagnosis.

## Accessibility Services

- Once an offer is accepted students are encouraged to register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible to set up an intake meeting. Check out [Tips for Your Intake Meeting at the Accessibility Services Office](#).
- For a detailed list of all the C/U Accessibility Services offices in Ontario see the research school section of the [Transition Resource Guide](#).
- Parents need written permission from their child for any correspondence with the college or university.
- Some C/U offer summer transition or orientation programs for students with disabilities to help them prepare for life on campus and learn about available supports and services. Register through accessibility services.

# Accommodations in College/University

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- The laws that regulate accommodations at C/U are different from those for high school.
- Students will not automatically receive the same accommodations at C/U that they received at high school.
- Each C/U requires specific documentation to register with their Accessibility Services to arrange accommodations. Learn what specific documentation is required ahead of time.
- It's the student's responsibility to access their accommodations.

## Examples of Accommodations:

- Extended time on exams
- Access to a computer or spell check on exams
- Reduced course load
- Note taking support
- Accessible media format
- Access to a Learning Strategist

# Appendix A: What Will Be Different in Postsecondary?

This chart is taken directly from the [transitionresourceguide.ca](https://transitionresourceguide.ca) Rights and Responsibilities page.



TRANSITION RESOURCE GUIDE

## Differences between High School and College/University

Points to Consider	High School	College/University
Access to education for students with disabilities is regulated by ...	The Education Act	The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
To show that a student has a disability, they must ...	Have an IEP that can be based on a formal diagnosis or an informal identification	Have recent documentation (3-5 years old) of their disability (for students with a Learning Disorder/Disability, a full Psychoeducational Assessment is often required)
The decision to disclose one's disability is made by ...	Your parent or guardian (until you're 18)	You
To decide which accommodations students need ...	Teachers can recommend various accommodations to students, often all students with learning difficulties have access to the same accommodations	Accessibility Services advisors will review your documentation and only choose specific accommodations that address your areas of functional impairment
To inform teachers/professors of accommodations ...	The special education teacher provides each classroom teacher with IEPs for appropriate students	Accessibility Services develops a letter of appropriate accommodations that is communicated to professors/instructors
Teachers/professors will know your specific disability ...	Always – your identification/diagnosis is written right on your IEP beside your list of accommodations	Only if you specifically tell them – otherwise they will only know which accommodations you receive, but not why
The cost of assessments is provided by ...	The school board (due to limited availability many seek private assessments)	You (funds may also be available via private health insurance and/or OSAP)
The cost of assistive technology is provided by ...	The school board via SEA application	You (unless you qualify for the BSWD)

# Appendix B: Going to C/U Transition Checklist

Consider using this appendix once you know what campus you will be attending.

## Visit the campus to find:

	S		S
Admissions and Office of the Registrar		Dining Hall	
Financial Aid Office		Library	
Student Accessibility Services		Bookstore	
Athletic Centre		Quiet spots to relax	
Student Centre		Faculty Offices	

## Accessibility Services:

Where to find it	
Name(s) of Staff	
Address and Email	
Phone Number	

Task	✓
Activate your new student email account.	
Gather necessary documents needed to register with Accessibility Services.	
Book appointment with Accessibility Services to arrange academic accommodations. Ideally, all accommodations should be in place at least 3 weeks before the start of school.	
Apply for OSAP and/or other financial aid.	
Prepare for the Accessibility Services intake meeting. Understand accommodations and why they are needed.	
Book your Skills Assessment if required for your program.	
Pay fees and register for courses.	
Sign up for any transition or orientation programs offered during the summer.	

Important	Due Date
Payment due for deposit and Fall Term	
Fall Term course registration date	
Date for selecting residence	
Fall Term classes begin	
Final date to change or add Fall Term courses	
Last day to drop Fall Term courses without financial loss	
Last day to drop Fall Term courses from academic record	
Reading week	
Fall Term last day of classes	
Fall Term exam period begins	

## Appendix C: Family Guide Checklist

Consider using this checklist to support individual goals and planning.

Goals and Area of Interest:	Plans for After High School: <input type="checkbox"/> College program _____ <input type="checkbox"/> University program _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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Creating Opportunities (pg. 4-7)	
It is important to develop skills and engage in experiences to prepare for postsecondary education.	
Choose 1 or 2 areas you want to focus on this year.	Ideas for home, community and school
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Building Independence:</b> Consider life skills, responsibilities, flexibility, time management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario Photo Card/driver's license</li> <li>• Bank account, money management</li> <li>• Plan and prepare meals, household responsibilities</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Developing Healthy Routine to Promote Wellbeing and Motivation:</b> Consider sleep, nutrition, exercise, hygiene, self-regulation, relaxation, and socializing.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Self-Advocacy and Self-Disclosure:</b> Consider practicing communication in specific situations using specific modalities (face-to-face, phone or email); practice communicating strengths, needs and accommodations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctor appointments</li> <li>• Discussions with teachers, coaches or employers</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Important Skills for Academic Success:</b> Consider time management strategies, breaking down tasks into manageable chunks.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Building Networks:</b> Consider fostering relationships and connections within and beyond school around interests.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Gaining Experience:</b> Consider possible school and community opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operative Education, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)</li> <li>• Certification (e.g., CPR, First Aid)</li> <li>• Volunteer or Part-time Job</li> </ul>	



## Investigating College or University (pg. 7-8)

Understanding how postsecondary institutions operate will help you prepare for the switch to C/U.

**Consider starting your investigation as early as grade 10.**

- Learn about how colleges and universities work and what to expect.
- Visit environments
- Real world practice

## Preparing for the Transition to College/University (pg. 9-13)

Gr10 ✓	Gr11 ✓	Gr12 ✓	Here are some ways to prepare for the transition to C/U. This chart can help break down the tasks into manageable chunks. Put a check next to the grade(s) you plan to complete each task.
			Research and learn about the college and university systems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.transitionresourceguide.ca">TransitionResourceGuide.ca</a></li> <li>• TRG Next - free online postsecondary prep program</li> <li>• My Blueprint</li> </ul>
			Investigate programs of interest. Consider the best fit (C/U) for you and your learning style. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend College and/or University Fair</li> <li>• Take interests surveys (e.g., My Blueprint)</li> <li>• Make appointment with Guidance Counselor</li> <li>• Discussions with family/trusted adults</li> <li>• Research specific C/U programs offered</li> <li>• Understand your learning style and what accommodations are beneficial</li> </ul>
			Visit environments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour campuses</li> <li>• Attend open houses</li> </ul>
			Real world practice in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer in area of interest</li> <li>• Get a part-time/summer job in an area of interest</li> <li>• Meet up with someone in your area of interest</li> </ul>
			Real world practice at high school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-op</li> <li>• OYAP</li> <li>• Dual Credit</li> <li>• SWAC</li> </ul>
			Apply to college/university by the equal consideration date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check emails for correspondence from c/u</li> <li>• Attend program information sessions</li> <li>• Attend campus tours</li> <li>• Accept an offer</li> </ul>
			Prepare for your first term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register with Accessibility Services</li> <li>• Gather important documents necessary for Accessibility Services</li> <li>• Participate in transition opportunities at your c/u</li> <li>• Investigate support services available at your c/u</li> <li>• Apply for scholarships, bursaries and financial aid</li> <li>• Activate your new student account(s)</li> </ul>
			Consider Plan B if you do not receive an offer.

## Notes:

## Notes:

**“Build up, build up, prepare the way,  
remove every obstruction from my people’s way.”**

Book of Isaiah (57.14)

