

The Career Centre

<http://careercentre.sheridaninstitute.ca>

Selecting a University

If you are planning on university after Sheridan, the first question to consider is: **do you have a career goal in mind?** This will help you determine the type of degree and major field of study you wish to pursue.

If you need help exploring career options, setting goals, and making educational plans to attain those goals, speak with one of our Career Counsellors in the Career Centre:

2008-09 Career Counsellor Weekly Drop-In Times		
Day	Trafalgar D103	Davis B219
Monday	2:00 - 4:00	1:00 - 3:00
Tuesday	10:00 - 12:00	10:00 - 12:00
Wednesday	10:00 - 12:00	11:00 - 1:00
Thursday	2:00 - 4:00	1:00 - 3:00
Friday	11:00 - 1:00	10:00 - 12:00

Assuming you know what type of degree and program you want to study, here are some of the factors you should take into account as you contemplate which universities to apply to:

Programs & Courses. This should be one of your most important considerations. You want to go to the school which has the program that will take you in the direction of your career interests and goals.

No two university programs, even by the identical name, will be the same. The backgrounds and specialties of faculty affect the type and scope of courses available, as does the research and academic emphases of the school. It is a good investment of your time to explore university web sites to research and compare programs so you understand what they involve.

Keep in mind that university programs do not have set timetables like we do at college. You will be given a list of required courses to then assemble your own program and timetable. In most programs you will have many electives, often amounting to nearly half of the credits within your program.

Some schools offer co-op or internships in certain programs. This allows you to gain practical, paid work experience through work terms, which are part of your program. If that is something of value to you, find out which schools offer a co-op option in the program(s) you are considering.

Classes. Class sizes can vary by school, and by program within any given school. Some courses may have very large lectures (e.g., hundreds of students) but smaller tutorial groups. Find out what to expect. Student union organizations on university campuses often survey and compile data not only on class size, but also on students' perceptions of course relevance and quality.

Financial Considerations. The most obvious numbers to consider are tuition, ancillary fees, and costs for materials and other expenses related to studying what you wish. Be sure you have a realistic estimate of the total cost. The cost of Ontario tuition for a typical 5 course academic year plus supplementary fees is around \$5000 plus approximately \$1000 for textbooks.

Don't forget to add in living expenses like accommodation, transport and food; these can vary greatly from one school to another depending on where it is located.

Look into scholarships and bursaries—even if you are not on financial aid. In some cases they may even be awarded automatically if you are at a certain marks level. Some universities offer a wider range (of types and dollar values) of financial assistance than others.

Services. University academically intensive (lots of reading, researching and writing), you will find that library and information technology resources are of particular importance. Compare what schools have to offer and how much they emphasize these resources.

In addition, find out about other student services (e.g., counselling, health, athletics, etc.) that may be of importance to you. Some universities operate mentoring, or "buddy" programs, where first year students are paired up with senior students.

Reputation. A school's reputation is mainly a function of its teaching faculty and the performance of its graduates. Some schools are known for the study of certain disciplines. Some schools (often the larger ones) may have better national or international name-recognition. There are a variety of factors that affect reputation and it may be helpful to consult university ratings guides to help you assess this. In the end, much comes down to employer preferences.

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Location. Think about how close the university is to home and family in terms of your level of (or desire for) independence. Might it be a good time to spread your wings, or are there reasons you should be cautious?

Think about things like the availability (and cost) of residence and travel back-and-forth to family and friends, as well as climate (varies, even within Ontario) and, if it is out of province, your entitlement to medical and social services.

Atmosphere & Social Life. Campus setting (urban, suburban, etc.) will be an important factor in how much you enjoy student life. Look into what facilities are available on, and near, the campus and how far it is to the types of activities and amusements you plan on enjoying and making use of. You will want to know what types of clubs, associations, and activities take place on campus in order to get a feel for student life.

Retention. This factor may say as much about students as it does the school, but it might be of interest to you in comparing schools. The Maclean's University Rankings (see Resources section, below) includes measures of first year students who return for second year as well as the proportion of students who graduate from their program within one year of the expected graduation date.

Transfer Credits. In some cases there may be formalized college-to-university transfer agreements in place for your program (see resources list, at right). If there isn't a specific agreement in place, the university may have a general policy for college transfer students. Even if there is neither, you can apply for advanced standing in a university course that looks similar (in hours, learning outcomes, and evaluation methods) to one or more courses you did at Sheridan... remember to keep your course outlines when you leave Sheridan!

While it makes sense to want to save time and money by getting some credit for what you have done at Sheridan, it may be a mistake to transfer credits the defining factor in deciding on which school to attend. The most important considerations should include getting the degree from a school you enjoy attending that will take you in a direction toward your chosen career goals.

International Education. In addition to the considerations outlined above, if you are considering going to a school abroad look into:

- All school-related fees and expenses as well as the cost of getting there and back... not only at the start and end of the school year but also if you plan to go home at breaks.
- Study permits/visas required by law.
- What options you have to work in that country in order to earn part-time income.
- Specific services and people on campus to assist international students in applying and making arrangements before they arrive AND support once they are there at the school.
- The reputation of the school and its credential back home, or wherever it is you plan you work after graduation.
- Insurance requirements—provincial health insurance may not apply or may be limited.

If you are interested in combining travel with further education, you may also want to look into the many Canadian universities that have study abroad partnerships that allow you to take courses for one semester at a university abroad with the credits directly transferred to your home university.

Does it capture your heart? Going to university, it is almost certain that you will spend more time on campus, in studies and in extracurricular activities, than you do at college. For this reason, it is all the more important that you like the school and choose the best one to suit your style and preferences.

A visit to the school is the best way to gauge that reality. All schools offer some type of tours or prospective orientations. Taking the time to attend these is an investment in yourself and can help you assess many of the considerations listed above. Alternatively, many schools have video tours available through their web sites or on CD-ROM promotional products.

In addition, there is nothing to stop you simply going on your own to visit a school and walk around. Talk to a few students, explain you are in college and considering university, and see what they have to say.

Resources

Check-out these immediately useful resources to help you locate, research, and compare schools.

Canadian University Program Locator

<http://oraweb.aucc.ca/showdcu.html>

A searchable database of all university degree programs in Canada. Choose from degree type, field of study, province, and more. Search results link to the university web sites.

Ontario College University Transfer Guide

<http://www.ocutg.on.ca/>

Sponsored by the Ontario government, this site is a database of existing formalized agreements for transfer between colleges and universities. Do a "college to university" search, selecting the appropriate options then read the details on transfer credit options and requirements. Important: it is telling you the minimum required to be eligible and not guaranteeing you will receive that for meeting the requirements.

Maclean's University Rankings

<http://www.macleans.ca/universities/>

This annual review of Canadian universities is seen by many as one of the most comprehensive comparisons, taking into account a variety of academic and extracurricular factors. The website has rankings and basic info. The newsstand issue contains detailed comparisons as well as profiles of each university. We have a reference copy you may read in the Career Centre.

Student Awards

<http://www.studentawards.com/>

A searchable database of scholarships, bursaries and cash awards and Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Ontario University eInfo

<http://www.electronicinfo.ca>

Published by the Ontario Universities Application Centre, eInfo provides information about programs, requirements, admissions and much more.

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Need more help?

Career Counsellors are available to help you with your career exploration and educational planning. No appointment necessary. Simply come by during drop-in hours (see over).