

A Parent Guide to Post Secondary Education in BC

Helping your student find the right post-secondary school and program can be difficult. It is important to find a school that suits the learning and other needs they have. The following 4 questions can help you begin this process.

What does my student want to do?

Some programs will only be available at certain schools, so that can limit choice.

What atmosphere does my student want to learn in?

Visiting a school can help a student get a feel for life there. I encourage you, if possible, to sign up for a campus tour as part of your decision process.

What are my student's grades?

Grades can be a barrier for entrance to some schools. You should check to ensure that your student has the grades necessary for the program/school they are interested in.

How much money is available for school?

Costs do vary from school to school so it can be a key factor for some in their decision making.

Where are the options?

The answers to the above questions should help you decide what type of school is best suited to your student. One is not better than the other, but certainly students will be better suited to one due to who they are and what they want to study.

University- These offer undergraduate (bachelor) degrees. As well as graduate (master's or doctoral) programs and Professional schools like Law, Education, Veterinary, etc. (Example- UBC)

College- These will offer many first and second year classes transferable to universities but do not have the same range of Bachelor degrees, if any. They also offer associate degrees, which can be transferred to universities. Colleges also offer full and part time diploma programs, and many have trades, apprenticeship training and high school upgrading. (Example- Okanagan College)

Institute- These offer specialized training programs as well as some degree programs and trades/apprenticeship training. (Example- British Columbia Institute of Technology)

Public vs Private

Public post-secondary schools are subsidized by the government. This makes tuition at these schools less expensive when compared to private, for profit, post-secondary schools who do not receive this funding.

Differences between Colleges and Universities

Tuition Costs are typically higher in University.

Access to Residence (not typically available at Colleges)

Smaller Class sizes at Colleges.

Greater variety of available classes at University.

Access to research opportunities (typically not available at Colleges)

Grades required for entrance (higher grades required for University but is dependent on program)

The number of required high school courses for acceptance is less at Colleges.

Credentials and where you can get them.

Credential	University	College	Institution
High school Upgrading		✓	
Certificate -up to one year of full-time study		✓	✓
Diploma -typically 2 years of study		✓	✓
Associate degree -Years 1 and 2 of a Bachelor's degree		✓	✓
Bachelor's Degree 4 years of study in a particular area	✓	✓ Limited options	✓ Limited options
Professional Degree -Bachelors is a prerequisite -Law, Education, Dr. 1 to 4+ years of study	✓		
Master's Degree -Bachelors is a prerequisite Typically 2 years in length	✓		
Doctoral Degree -Masters is a prerequisite 3+ years of study This is the highest level of education that can be obtained.	✓		