

## NEWS RELEASE

# Ontario Expanding Degree Options at Publicly Assisted Colleges

New three-year and more four-year programs will ensure that colleges are able to offer programs to fill province's labour needs

April 11, 2022

[Ministry of Colleges and Universities](#)

KITCHENER — Beginning today, Ontario's public colleges will be able to develop new three-year degree programs and additional four-year degree programs in key sectors to address gaps in the province's labour needs. These new programs will help build the pipeline of job-ready graduates needed to support the growth of the province's auto sector, bolstered by recent investments in electric vehicles and batteries, as well as help build roads, highways, hospitals and long-term care homes, among other critical infrastructure projects. This expansion will also enable increased access to education for students in smaller communities and rural areas, allowing learners to graduate sooner and enter the workforce more quickly in these critical fields.

"Ontario colleges play a key role in providing students with career-focused education and in addressing the labour needs of key sectors driving the province's economy," said Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities. "Expanding college degrees aligns with our government's priority of investing in critical infrastructure and positioning Ontario as a North American leader in the auto sector while helping learners gain the skills necessary to support this sector of the economy. This expansion will also provide students more opportunities to access high-quality education and ensure they graduate with the skills, expertise and credentials that meet the demands of today's job market."

Three-year applied degrees will provide an opportunity for colleges to develop programs to address workforce shortages, such as highly skilled technology workers in the health care, digital, data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and process automation sectors. To support the growth and transformation of Ontario's auto sector, the government will also be looking for programs that help to prepare the talent needed to build electric, autonomous and connected vehicles, as well as

programs to support the development of workers who will help build the province's infrastructure, roads and transit.

“Ontario is facing a historic labour shortage, and we need all hands-on deck to tackle it,” said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. “That is why our government is taking action to ensure young people are graduating with the skills they need to earn bigger paycheques that are waiting for them. This is how we build back a stronger province and bring good jobs to every corner of Ontario.”

Colleges will be allowed to develop new three-year degree programs that are in an applied area of study, career-oriented, distinct from university degrees and are reviewed by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) and approved by the minister. The cap on degree programs that colleges can offer will be raised by five per cent for all publicly assisted colleges. This means degree cap limits will become 20 per cent for Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITALs) and 10 per cent for all other colleges.

## Quick Facts

- Ontario first signaled its intention to explore more options for advanced learning, including expanding degree programs offered by colleges, in the [Supporting People and Business Act, 2021](#), which was introduced in October 2021.
- The [Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee](#) identified a shortage of trained workers in a number of fields, including health care, digital, data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and process automation sectors.
- The [Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000](#) allows colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in applied areas of study with review from PEQAB and approval from the minister.
- Previously, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology could offer up to five per cent of their program activity as four-year applied degrees while ITALs – Conestoga, George Brown, Humber, Seneca and Sheridan – could offer up to 15 per cent.
- It is anticipated the new three-year and more four-year college degree programs in applied areas of study will be available to students by fall 2023.
- In the 2020-21 reporting year (2019-20 graduation year), about 77 per cent of Ontario college graduates were employed within six months of graduating, and 90.6 per cent of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with the graduates they hired.

## Quotes

"This is a tremendous announcement and a truly historic day for postsecondary education in Ontario. Expanding the degree programs at colleges will open the door to more career opportunities for graduates and produce a more highly qualified workforce. This is a major policy improvement that will ensure Ontario remains an economic powerhouse."

**- Linda Franklin**  
**President and CEO, Colleges Ontario**

"The expansion of degree programming at Ontario's public colleges will play an important role in addressing critical workforce needs and contributing to the prosperity and well-being of our communities. We are delighted to work with our government and industry partners to provide more career-focused learning opportunities for students and build a stronger Ontario."

**- John Tibbits**  
**President, Conestoga College**

## Additional Resources

- [Ontario Colleges](#)

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