

Career Options

Guide to Planning
for Post-Secondary
Study

nscareeroptions.ca



© Crown copyright Province of Nova Scotia, 2011

The material in this handbook may be photocopied for educational or career counselling purposes.

Labour market and employment requirements are subject to change, and it is recommended that the reader verify the information before making any career decisions.

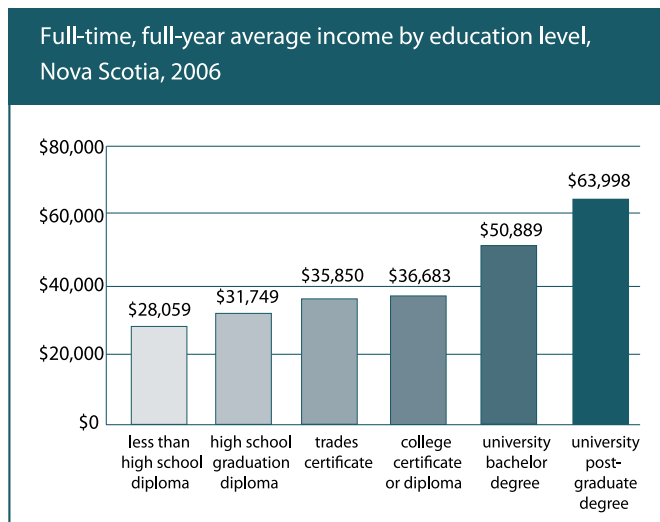
Please visit www.nscareeroptions.ca for the most current and detailed information. To order additional copies of this publication please contact careeroptions@gov.ns.ca.

Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education

An initiative of JobsHere

THINKING OF FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION?

Congratulations! If you are reading this guide you are likely planning to pursue post-secondary education. You probably already know that the amount of education you have can broaden or limit your career options. It can determine whether you can find employment, the type of careers available to you, your chance of finding a career you enjoy, and how much money you earn. One of the biggest perks of a diploma, degree, or trade certification is that these credentials have been proven to guarantee a higher income. In Nova Scotia, individuals who attain some post-secondary education or training earn more. Education pays!



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006; both genders, ages 25-64.

Post-secondary education decisions can be tough. People usually have a lot of questions when they are starting out and most occupations require further training and education. This can sometimes seem overwhelming when you first start to think about it. This booklet will help guide you through the next steps you will need to take to get started on your path to post-secondary education.



Visit nscareeroptions.ca/educationandtraining for links to post-secondary institutions and other training options across Nova Scotia.

Inside this guide you will find information on:

- Post-secondary Options PAGE 4
- Your Learning Style PAGE 7
- Making the Right Choice PAGE 8
- The Journey Ahead PAGE 12

Visit nscareeroptions.ca/educationandtraining for information on financing your post-secondary education/training.

COLLEGE – Offers skilled training diploma programs in a wide variety of fields. Today many credits are able to transfer into university programs. In addition to the 13 Nova Scotia Community College campuses there are a number of private career colleges offering programs throughout the province. A college diploma usually takes one to two years to complete. College programs typically are more of a blend of lecture format and hands-on training. Some programs offer co-op placement or are linked to the apprenticeship program.

APPRENTICESHIP – Is a form of post-secondary education for individuals who want to be certified to work in a skilled trade. It is an agreement between an individual and employer where the individual agrees to work for a set rate of pay, and the employer agrees to provide supervision, technical training, and on-the-job experience. An apprenticeship program can take two to four years to complete through a combination of theoretical and hands-on-learning, both class/online (15%) and on-the-job (85%). Visit nsapprenticeship.ca for more details on apprenticeship in Nova Scotia.

ADULT EDUCATION – The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) provides educational programs throughout the province that are designed to help adults develop a variety of skills needed to learn, live, and work in their communities. Programs include the Adult High School Diploma, the GED test, skills upgrades, and tutoring. For complete details on NSSAL programs visit gonssal.ca.

MATURE STUDENTS – Outside of the NSSAL program, many colleges and universities have mature student policies for those who do not meet standard admissions requirements. These policies may include allowing work and life experience to replace the need for grade twelve credits. Contact your school of interest directly to find out about their mature student policy.

DISTANCE EDUCATION – Most Canadian academic institutions have made online learning easy and accessible. If you want a degree or diploma from a school that happens to be on the other side of the country and cannot afford to move there, simply check out that school's online or "distance education" offerings. Many schools have extensive program listings and vibrant "e-learning" communities.



WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

There are many options for post-secondary education/training that can lead to a successful and rewarding career that is right for you. Options include:

UNIVERSITY – Offers undergraduate programs leading to a bachelor degree, graduate programs leading to masters and doctorate degrees, and continuing education programs and certificates. A bachelor degree typically takes three to four years to complete; a masters one to two years; and a doctorate can take four to eight years to complete. Classes are typically lecture-style format, but some programs have labs for hands-on learning. Co-op programs are also available in some fields of study to provide work experience prior to graduation.

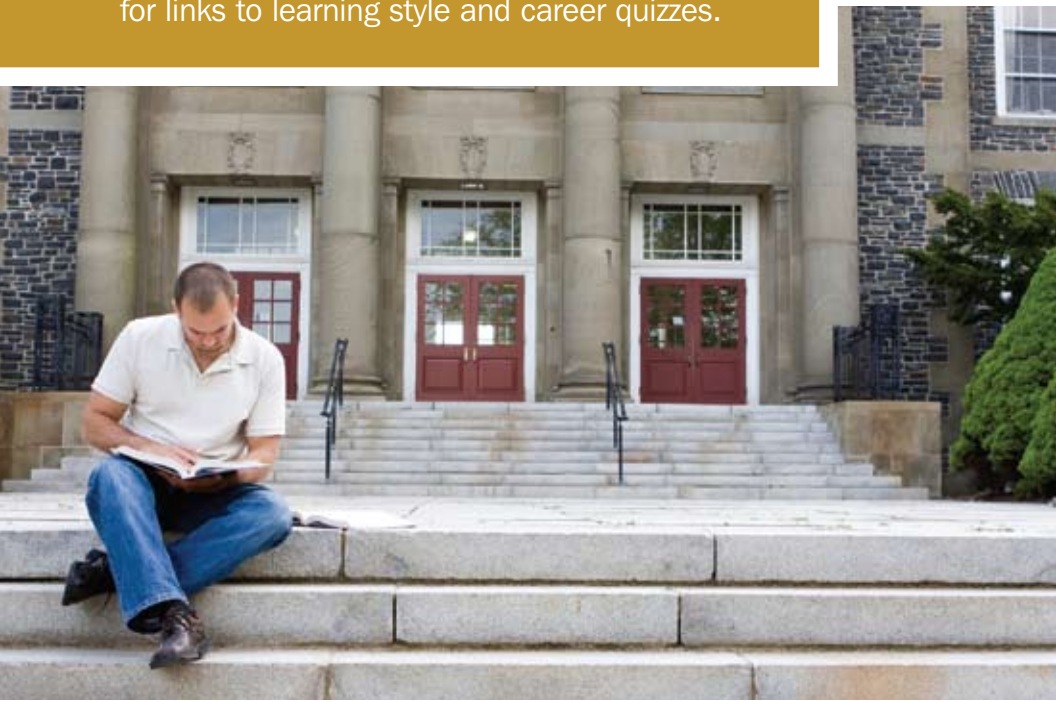
WHICH WAY DO I GO?

Many people are overwhelmed by the variety of education and training options available to them. Which one is right for you and how do you choose? There are a lot of possibilities, including a combination of several options. The key is figuring out which is right for you.

You should ask yourself the big questions, such as:

- What do I want to get out of further education?
- Where do I want to be in five years?
- What kind of learner am I?
- What type of school is the best fit for me?
- What types of occupations do I find interesting?

Visit nscareeroptions.ca/careerplanning for links to learning style and career quizzes.



TIP: Your decision about which post-secondary institution to choose is a first step into the rest of your life. That being said, it will not determine the whole course of the rest of your life. It is normal these days for people to change positions, or even to entirely new fields, more than once during their careers.

Visit nscareeroptions.ca/searchjobprofiles

to learn about the required training paths and employment prospects for your occupation of interest.

YOU 101

Not everyone has a clear idea of what career they want to pursue. If you have always wanted to be a doctor then your post-secondary route might already be mapped out, but what if you are not quite sure?

It might help to determine what kind of a learner you are, that is:

VISUAL Someone who learns best by seeing
AUDITORY Someone who learns best by hearing
TACTILE Someone who learns best by doing

Finding out what kind of a learner you are is essential to choosing the right institution for you. The way schools deliver their programming may appeal to a certain learning type. If you learn better in a visual or auditory setting, the university lecture-style format with use of a blackboard or screen may be your best bet. If you are a tactile learner, the hands-on experience of a college setting may be your best environment.

It might also help to do some simple and fun self-assessments to figure out what you value in life, what skills you already have, and what your dominant interests might be.

If you are lucky enough to have a specific occupation or career path in mind you should do some research to determine the educational requirements and employment prospects.

TIP: Determining your learning style will not only help you decide on a form of post-secondary education, it can help you improve your performance because you can structure your preparation and study appropriately.

Visit nscareeroptions.ca/educationandtraining to identify where a particular program may be offered in Nova Scotia.



MAKING A CHOICE

Choosing where to get your post-secondary education/training is a personal decision. It will be based on your unique needs, values, and desires. What is important to you might not be important to someone else. Once you have an idea of the type of program you would like to take, you need to determine what schools offer that program.

The following is a list of things to think about when checking out schools.

SIZE – Consider both the size of the school and your program. Some people would find a class of 600 daunting; others desire the anonymity it provides. Generally, a lower student/instructor ratio allows for greater interaction with your instructor.

LOCATION – Do you want to move away from home or stay close by? Would you like to live in a rural or urban area? Remember, you will be there for a few years, so make sure you like the location.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM – Find out what the entrance requirements are and make sure you have them. Also, ask yourself if the program feels too long or short for you. Finally, think back to what kind of learner you are and compare that to what is being offered, such as lectures, hands-on labs, discussions, and work placements.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES – If you already know that you are going to want to be involved in sports, student organizations, activities, and events, sometimes a larger institution will offer more options than a smaller one.

COST – This may be your biggest consideration when choosing where to study. It varies widely among institutions, especially between university and college. There is a wide spectrum of scholarships, grants, and bursaries available to students entering post-secondary institutions. Inquire about awards and scholarships at the institutions you are considering.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES – Find out what employers hire graduates of that program and discover what kind of jobs they are doing.



For more general information on awards that might help with the costs of schooling, check out nscareeroptions.ca/educationandtraining.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

This is about your future, so treat the decision-making process with respect. Do not just follow what your friends are doing or what your teachers or parents suggest.

READ whatever literature you can find about the institutions you are considering. Look at printed calendars and scan their websites. This will help you decide whether to go visit the school in person.

VISIT the schools you are considering and take advantage of opportunities they offer prospective students. Open houses? “A day as a student?” “Test Driving” a program? Most schools will allow you to sit in on a class, talk to an instructor or professor, and wander around campus. Pick up the school newspaper, have lunch in the cafeteria, and visit the library or the fitness centre. Get a feel for the place.

TALK TO PEOPLE and lots of them! Find a graduate of the program you are interested in and pick their brain about it. Talk to employers about what training they recognize and from where. Inquire with professional or trade associations related to your potential career. Use any mentors or people you trust as sounding boards. The important thing is to get other perspectives and opinions on the school, its reputation, and its programs.

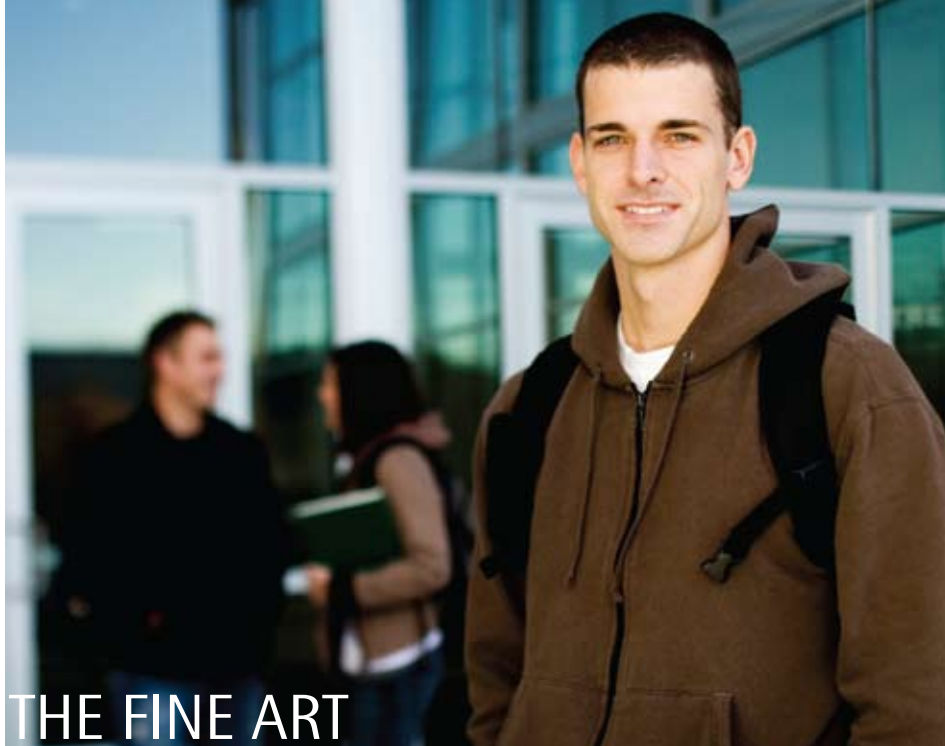


TIP: *It is important that you ask yourself if you like the personality or the feel of the school. Can you see yourself there? Trust your gut – if a place just does not feel right, then no matter how great it looks on paper, it probably is not a good fit for you.*



Visit nscareeroptions.ca/educationandtraining to learn where graduates of a particular program could work.





THE FINE ART OF COMPROMISE

As you can see, there are a number of factors that go into making this important decision. Keep in mind that you may have to make compromises when deciding where to study. Things like cost, location, and time investment may not work with your current situation. Remember, you can always go back to school in future, so make sure you weigh your options with the big picture in mind.

Your Journey Begins

As you embark on your post-secondary journey it might also be helpful to keep the “High Five Messages of Career Development” in mind.

FOCUS ON THE JOURNEY – Make sure you are not so focused on the end goal – a degree, a diploma, your dream job – that you forget to enjoy each experience along the way.

KEEP ON LEARNING – You will keep learning new things your whole life. All of your experiences, inside and outside school, educate you and help you become a well-rounded, unique individual.

ACCESS YOUR ALLIES – Do not be afraid to reach out. The most successful people are the ones who build a network of support – including friends, mentors, and family – around them. These supporters can help you get through a rough day, be your sounding board, and help you score the first job of your career.

FOLLOW YOUR HEART – We are at our best when we are passionate about our work. If you truly love your job, it hardly seems like work at all.

CHANGE IS CONSTANT – It is true that change can be jarring, but it can also bring new opportunities and encourage flexibility. These are traits that today’s employers are seeking.

A Change of Heart

You made a decision you felt pleased with but three months into the program, you realize you have made a mistake. This happens to more people than you would think. You should not think of it as a waste in any way. The courses you end up completing could be transferred to another school and the learning that you have acquired will certainly be useful down the road. Also, any experiences like this will help get you even more focused on what you want to do. Begin researching your options again and chances are, you will feel more confident next time around.

Visit nscareeroptions.ca/careerplanning
for further information on planning your career.

Always remember that your dedication
to post-secondary education
NOW is an investment in your FUTURE.

Best of luck with your decision!