



Applying to Canada

July 2014

APPLYING TO CANADA

The process through which students apply to Canadian universities will differ depending on where those universities are located. While students apply directly to most universities in Canada, institutions that are located in the province of Ontario (such as York, Ryerson, University of Toronto, Queen's, etc.) have a separate centralized system for processing applications. Students applying to Ontario universities must use the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC).

What is the OUAC?

The Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) processes undergraduate and professional applications for admissions to the province's universities. Students applying to Canadian universities in Ontario province will apply through the OUAC website (<http://www.ouac.on.ca/>)

Here is a suggested set of steps that you may follow to apply to Canadian universities:

1. Research universities and available courses.
2. Shortlist universities where you wish to apply.
3. Determine whether any of your universities are applied to through OUAC.
4. If **YES**, then follow these steps to apply through OUAC:
 - a. Complete the OUAC form online (or download a paper form)
 - b. Forward supporting documentation to your universities
 - c. Reply to all university offers
 - d. Use the Acknowledgement/Amendment Form to apply to additional universities (if necessary)
5. If **NO**, then follow these steps to apply to Canadian universities directly:
 - a. Check requirements such as deadlines, essays, testing and documents
 - b. Recommendations and supporting documents
 - c. Essays and Personal Statements
 - d. Financial Aid forms and documents (if applicable)
 - e. Admissions Decisions and Responses
6. Begin the Canadian visa process.
7. Get ready for university!

1. Researching Universities in Canada

Take some time to research Canadian universities thoroughly. You can refer to guide books, or online sites such as the following:

- <http://bestcollegerankings.org/specialty-rankings/canadian-university-rankings/>
- <http://www.ouac.on.ca/unilinks/>
- <http://www.canadianuniversityguide.ca/>
- <http://www.4icu.org/ca/>
- <http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/rankings/>

You should also peruse the websites of the universities themselves, and talk to friends and family members who have experience of attending universities in Canada. Remember, a wide variety of criteria are used in ranking universities and some of these criteria may not have any relevance to you, so don't go merely by rankings. Universities in Canada are all publicly funded, so all adhere to a set level of standards. You will not find as wide a disparity in the quality of universities in Canada as you will in private universities in the USA.

Where are the universities located?

Location is often an important factor in deciding which universities to apply to. Plus, some universities offer multiple campus options. Consider whether you would like an urban, suburban or rural setting before you decide on universities and campuses. This link leads to a map showing the respective locations of universities in Ontario: <http://www.electronicinfo.ca/en/map.php?j=1&flash=1>

2. Shortlist universities where you wish to apply

Once you have done your research make a shortlist of universities you wish to apply to. There is no firm limit to the number of universities you can apply to but applying to more than seven or eight may be counter-productive in that it will eat up a great deal of your time. Stay focused in your applications. The basic OUAC fee allows for application to three universities/programs, with an additional cost for each university after the third. If you are applying to a university in Ontario through OUAC use the allowance you are given and apply to at least three universities/programs.

Make sure you are realistic about your university choices. It is fine to apply to some 'reach' schools which are going to be difficult to get in to, but balance that out with at least one 'back-up' school. Make sure you know if the universities/programs you are applying to have any specific requirements. For example, McGill

University lists as a minimum requirement three A Level subjects with a predicted grade of B, B, C, but specific programs may have additional requirements: the Management program requires at least a B in A Level Mathematics (See: <http://www.mcgill.ca/applying/admissionsguide>).

Once you have selected the final universities upon the completion of your research and with the help and advice of your parents, counselors and others, you must begin the application process!

3. Which Universities does one apply to through OUAC?

The OUAC site lists which universities one applies to through OUAC. You should also be able to find this information on the website of the university itself: <http://www.ouac.on.ca/unilinks/>. You must determine which universities you need to apply through OUAC to as the application process will now differ between those universities located in Ontario and the rest.

4. Follow these steps to apply through OUAC:

There are two types of the 105 Application: 105D and 105F. Make sure that you read through this page carefully so that you fill out the correct application depending on your status as a Canadian citizen/permanent resident or international student.

For a full explanation of the application process to Ontario universities through OUAC, please refer to the OUAC website and download the instructions PDF file from: http://www.ouac.on.ca/docs/105/b_105_b.pdf
To check for updates to the information, peruse the addenda to the booklet, available at http://www.ouac.on.ca/addenda_105/.

The following instructions are adapted from the OUAC website:

a. Complete the OUAC form online (or download a paper form)

You can apply to the OUAC by completing an online form (which is recommended) or by downloading and completing a paper form.

There is no one deadline to complete the OUAC application. Individual universities have different deadlines, so make sure you know when the deadline is and complete the form in a timely fashion. Upon receipt of the electronic copy of your application from the OUAC, most university admissions offices acknowledge receipt of your application and provide you with a list of the specific supporting documentation or information that is required in order to process your application (see part b). If, after

a reasonable amount of time you have not received an acknowledgement letter, contact the university directly via e-mail or telephone.

The OUAC will send applicants an Acknowledgement/Amendment Form that summarizes all the data in their application file when their application has been processed and forwarded to the universities selected on their application. If no changes are required, applicants should keep the form for reference. On the form, the OUAC will provide applicants with their OUAC Reference Number and a unique PIN/password that may be used to access their application online.

If you wish to make further university and/or program choices or changes to existing choices you may do so online. Changes entered online are transmitted immediately to the OUAC where they are processed and forwarded to the universities you have opted to apply to. These changes can be verified online at any times.

Make sure you keep your OUAC Reference Number and PIN/password in a safe place as it will be required for future access to your application and will be needed to respond to any offers of admission you may receive.

b. Forward supporting documentation to your universities

You are responsible for arranging for official transcripts to be forwarded directly to each university to which you have applied. If you add a new university, it is your responsibility to arrange to have official transcripts sent to this new university. **Transcripts and supporting documents should not be sent directly to the OUAC.**

You will receive official document 'packets' from school which contain your transcripts, certificates and recommendations, stamped and sealed by the school office. Please ensure you have informed the school and your counselors well before the deadline about when you need these packets and in what quantity. You are responsible for mailing them to the universities you are applying to.

It is very important that you indicate your OUAC Reference Number, full legal last name/family name and given names, as well as any former last names/family names, on all documents. This will ensure that your documents are properly handled.

c. Reply to all university offers

Offers are made at different times throughout the application processing cycle, depending on the university and program. You are responsible for meeting the deadline dates stipulated by the universities. Most universities require that responses to offers for admission be made online. Ensure that you respond to all offers within the given time.

You will require your OUAC Reference Number and the unique PIN/password that was provided on your Acknowledgement/Amendment Form to respond to offers.

d. Use the Acknowledgement/Amendment Form to apply to additional universities (if necessary)

If you are refused admission by one or all of the universities to which you have applied or if you discover that you are not qualified for a program you have chosen, you may amend any of your university/program choices by submitting the Acknowledgement/Amendment Form to the OUAC or by logging onto your application online. See the website for further details.

5. Follow these steps to apply to Canadian universities directly (i.e. not through OUAC):

a. Check requirements such as deadlines, essays, testing and documents

Please pay careful attention to specific deadlines and other requirements. It is very easy to misread requirements and the biggest crime would be to lose the opportunity to attend your top choice simply because of a preventable mistake!

Once you know the deadlines for all your institutions, formulate a complete plan to ensure that you do not miss any of them. The easiest way is to get the work done well in advance, knowing that you will need to fill in things as they become available. Remember, it is better to submit documents early, accounting for the delivery time of international courier services (usually at least 4 working days).

b. Recommendations, Supporting Documents, Essays and Personal Statements

Requesting supporting documents such as transcripts and recommendations from your school must be done on time. Your most recent transcripts, along with AS grades and predicted A Level grades are more likely to be the focus of any admissions review. It is never too late to show improvement in your grades! Do not include too many certificates or awards because they will simply clutter your file and not add much to the admissions decision. Choose the ones that add the most value to you.

Your teacher and counselor recommendations should be complete and reflect your accomplishments as well as your future potential. It is important that you make your referee(s) aware of anything that is important to highlight in your recommendation. Again, do not give them long lists of things because it will not help them choose what to include and what to leave out. Pick the important things and give them the task of incorporating these accomplishments into their own words.

All personal statements and essays are reviewed for plagiarism and it is in your best interests to follow the simple guidelines provided by each institution when writing yours. Essays are your opportunity to speak to the universities about your strengths as a person and a student; why you have chosen a particular educational path; how your educational choices fit into future career plans; to highlight any major accomplishments or to answer specific questions posed by the institution. The best essays are simple and straightforward. Try and write your personal statement well before the deadline so that you can discuss it with your counselor or General teacher and rework any weak areas. A rushed essay written at the last minute is less likely to reflect your abilities than one you have had time to mull over.

c. Financial Aid forms and documents (if applicable)

Some Canadian universities offer limited amounts of financial aid or merit-based scholarships to international students, but generally securing such grants or scholarships is a difficult proposition. Check individual university websites for details about what, if any, opportunities are available and how to apply for them. Make sure you fill out all the necessary forms and provide the relevant documents. Do not provide any inaccurate or fake documents as they can have a negative impact on admissions and the visa process. Omitting information or documents is equivalent to misrepresenting facts and is treated in the same manner.

d. Admissions Decisions and Responses

Hopefully you will have a number of university choices when the final admissions decisions are published. At this time, you will have to compare the options available in the context of all the factors that you considered when you selected your initial set of universities. Working with your family and counselor, you should analyze all aspects of the available choices and make your best decision. Do not hesitate to research the institutions further or contact the admissions office (or others) for additional information before your final decision.

6. Begin the Canadian visa process

International Students must apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) for a Study Permit once they have received an approval letter from a qualified Canadian educational institution. Students must show that they have enough funds to survive and study in Canada, undertake Medical Examinations and provide Police Clearance Certificates in order to enter Canada as a student. For details about the visa application process see: <http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/pakistan/study-etudie/visa.aspx?lang=eng>.

The visa process takes a *minimum* of 4 weeks, and can take significantly longer, so you should apply as soon as you get the approval letter from your university.

7. Get ready for university

Apart from your parents, friends and counselors, there are several online resources available to guide you through the process of getting ready for university. A few useful things to keep in mind are:

- Obtain complete information about your responsibilities and meet all required deadlines.
- Pay attention to every detail, read the fine print. Before you sign anything or make a commitment, make sure you read it and discuss it with your parents.
- Spend carefully, always keeping your budget in mind.
- Remember cultural norms for your new country, things are likely to be very different from what you might be familiar with.
- Be knowledgeable about changes in laws and societal expectations.
- Know your rights as a student and individual within the university and beyond.
- Be sure to know the location and contact information for your country's embassy.
- Develop strong relationships with the International Student Office at your university.
- Get familiar with your surroundings at university and the local area.
- Find people who can be mentors and guides throughout your university years.
- You will meet lots of new people. Remain friendly, while using good judgment.
- Have fun but stay focused on your primary purpose, i.e. to succeed at obtaining the best education possible.
- Adjustment to the freedom of university is one of the biggest initial lessons you will learn so manage your time wisely and set your priorities well.

Going to university is a major step and important new phase in one's life. The better one prepares for this great new adventure, the greater it is likely to be. Good luck!