

High School Education in Canada



2025
STUDENT
HANDBOOK



instiglare
EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

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I. The First Step Toward Canada: The Decision-Making Process

— With INSTIGLARE, your career path takes flight toward a global future.

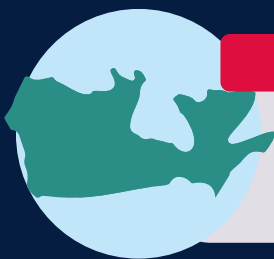


WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE CANADA

Before embarking on your educational journey in Canada, it's important to first get acquainted with the country itself. So, what exactly is Canada like?

Canada is widely regarded as one of the most livable countries in the world, thanks to its high quality of life, renowned education system, safe environment, and immigrant-friendly policies. With its breathtaking natural landscapes, rich multiculturalism, and abundant economic opportunities, Canada offers an ideal starting point for students, families, and professionals alike.

Let's explore these remarkable features of Canada, step by step.



LARGE LAND AREA

Canada is the second-largest country in the world by land area.

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Canada ranks among the top 10 countries globally in terms of quality of life.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Canada is known for hosting the most diverse cultures in the world.

STRONG ECONOMY

Canada is among the top 10 strongest economies in the world.



AMAZING NATURE

Canada holds 9% of the world's forests and 20% of its freshwater.

SYMBOL OF FREEDOM

Canada ranks high in global human rights and free speech indexes.



WINTER SPORTS HUB

Canada is a global leader in winter sports, especially ice hockey.

SAFE COMMUNITY

Canada ranks among the top in global safety indexes.



As you can see, Canada ranks highly in many areas worldwide.

WHAT SETS CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOLS APART

Canada, like in many other fields, ranks among the top countries in the world for education.



THE 3RD MOST POPULAR COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

According to official data, Canada is the third most popular country for international students. It follows the United States and the United Kingdom in this ranking.



SUCCESSFUL IN PISA EXAMS

Canada's education system is globally recognized for its success. In the PISA exams, which measure the mathematics, science, and reading skills of 15-y.o. students, Canada consistently ranks among the top countries.



HOME TO QUALITY UNIVERSITIES

Canada's universities achieve high rankings in international assessments. Canadian public universities regularly appear at the top in QS and THE World University Rankings.

Now, let's focus on high school education.

In Canada, the education system is not centralized (federal), meaning there is no "Ministry of Education" at the national level. Education is the responsibility of individual provinces and territories. Each ministry determines its own curriculum, examination system, teacher qualifications, and graduation requirements.

Each province has its own education ministry, with the Ontario Ministry of Education being the most recognized. The presence of some of the country's best universities and colleges in Ontario makes this province especially attractive to students. As a result, most students tend to prefer high schools in **Ontario**. Therefore, our focus in this High School Education Guide will be on the Ontario system.

In Ontario, high school education lasts for 4 years, from grades 9 to 12. The system is flexible and well-structured, supporting students' academic, social, and career development. Upon completion, students earn the **Ontario Secondary School Diploma** (OSSD). While high schools are commonly referred to as "High Schools," they are officially known as "Secondary Schools" in the education system.

You don't need to start high school in Canada to earn an OSSD. You can begin in any year, meet the requirements, and still earn the diploma. For example, if you study in your home country until grade 11, you can start grade 12 in Canada.

High school education in Canada offers a wealth of opportunities.

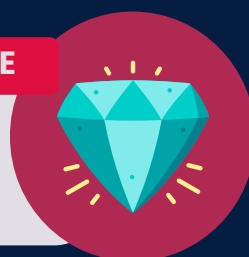


INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA

A High School Diploma with Global Recognition

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Live in One of the World's Top Quality of Life Countries



GRADUATE ON TIME

Complete High School Without Losing a Year (the Credit System)

MASTER ENGLISH

The Opportunity to Master English, the Global Language of Communication



LEARN FRENCH

The Chance to Learn French, Canada's Second Official Language

QUALITY EDUCATION

Access to World-Class Education at the Highest Standards



EASY UNIVERSITY ENTRY

Enter Universities with Your Diploma GPA and IELTS Score

TRANSITION TO THE US AND EUROPE

The Chance for Easy Admission to Universities in the US and Europe



RESIDENCY IN CANADA


Opportunities for Work (PGWP) and Immigration in Canada

MIGRATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES

The Opportunity to Work and Build a Career in Various Countries



Finally, let's compare high school education in Canada with the traditional systems used in many other countries. Once you see the differences, you'll be eager to study in Canada!

Traditional High School Education	High School Education in Canada 
Students focus heavily on exams and learn STEM subjects mostly through theory. This leads to memorization-based learning, making true understanding more difficult.	Students focus on projects and assignments. STEM subjects involve hands-on learning, helping students deeply understand concepts rather than just memorizing formulas.
The curriculum is rigid and based on grade levels. Almost all students take the same courses.	The curriculum is flexible, with no fixed classroom structure. A credit-based system allows students to choose courses, similar to university in Türkiye. They only need to take subjects required for their intended field of study.
Calculators are not allowed in exams. Memorization is heavily emphasized.	Calculators are allowed in exams, and in some cases, students can even use summary sheets (cheat sheets).
Exams play a major role in passing classes and getting good grades. The learning process itself is not evaluated—only the final test result matters.	Students actively participate throughout the learning process. Assignments, projects, class participation, and group work make up the majority of the grade. The final exam usually counts for about 20%.
English education is mostly grammar- and test-based, leading to poor language acquisition.	As English is Canada's official language, students are fully immersed in it. Mandatory English classes and exams ensure they learn the language effectively.
A national university entrance exam is required, which puts pressure on students and makes learning stressful.	Students apply to universities using their high school transcript, diploma, and IELTS score—no national exam required.

ADVANTAGES OF A CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



Earning a high school diploma in Canada opens up a world of opportunities. With this globally recognized credential, you can choose from the following pathways:



Direct Admission to Canadian Universities



You can apply to American universities. Some may require SAT or AP exams.



Gain admission to universities in the UK without needing to complete foundation programs or A-Level exams.



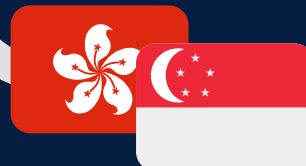
Many Universities Across the EU accept Canadian diplomas without requiring entrance exams and some even offer tuition-free education.



If you complete your entire high school education in Canada, you may also qualify for exam-free admission to universities in Türkiye.



You can be admitted to the universities in Australia or New Zealand without an entrance exam. Some universities may waive the IELTS requirement.



Universities in Hong Kong and Singapore may accept you without entrance exams. Depending on your English grades, an IELTS score might not be needed.

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN CANADA

If you plan to pursue higher education in Canada, it's essential to understand how the system works in advance.

In Canada, the terms "university" and "college" refer to different types of institutions offering distinct educational paths. After graduating from high school, you'll need to make a choice based on your career goals. Let's take a look at the differences:

	 University College	
Program Type	Bachelor's Degree	Diploma
Duration	4 Years	1-3 Years
Education Style	Academic: Theoretical and Practical	Hands-on, Career-Focused
Employment Opportunities	More Long-Term Career Opportunities	Quicker Entry into the Workforce
Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP)	1-3 Years After Graduation	1-3 Years After Graduation (for PGWP-eligible programs)
Immigration Advantage	+30 Points for Express Entry	+15 Points for Express Entry
Sample Programs	Computer Engineering, Kindergarten Teacher, Dentist, Psychologist, Business Manager	IT Technician, Early Childhood Educator, Dental Assistant, Counselor, Business Assistant

International graduates of Canadian universities are eligible to apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows them to work in Canada and potentially continue living in the country. Because of this opportunity, undergraduate programs are especially popular among international students.

On the other hand, only certain college programs offer PGWP eligibility. So, if you're planning to study at a college, it's important to check whether your program qualifies for this work permit.

Canadian universities are recognized globally for their high quality of education. Many of them consistently rank among the top 500 in prestigious listings such as the QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education (THE).

We've listed key details for some of these top institutions below:



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Total Student Population	80.000
N. of International Students	21.000
National Ranking	1
Global Ranking (Times HE)	21
Global Ranking (QS)	23

Located in the city of Toronto, Ontario, this university is consistently ranked among the top 10 globally for medicine and health sciences. It also houses one of the largest academic library systems in the world.



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Total Student Population	61.000
N. of International Students	20.000
National Ranking	2
Global Ranking (Times HE)	41
Global Ranking (QS)	38

Situated in Vancouver, British Columbia, UBC is known for its stunning campus and world-class research.



MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Total Student Population	31.000
N. of International Students	9.000
National Ranking	3
Global Ranking (Times HE)	45
Global Ranking (QS)	29

Located in Montreal, Quebec, McGill is one of Canada's most prestigious universities, particularly recognized for its programs in law, medicine, and science.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Total Student Population	34.000
N. of International Students	9.000
National Ranking	4
Global Ranking (Times HE)	116
Global Ranking (QS)	96

Based in Edmonton, Alberta, this university excels in research and innovation, particularly in the sciences and engineering.



McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Total Student Population	28.000
N. of International Students	6.000
National Ranking	5
Global Ranking (Times HE)	116
Global Ranking (QS)	176

Found in Hamilton, Ontario, McMaster is globally known for its health sciences and innovative learning approaches.



UNIVERSITE DE MONTREAL

Total Student Population	40.000
N. of International Students	9.000
National Ranking	6
Global Ranking (Times HE)	125
Global Ranking (QS)	159

Located in Montreal, Quebec, this French-language university is a leading research institution in Canada.



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Total Student Population	37.000
N. of International Students	9.000
National Ranking	7
Global Ranking (Times HE)	163
Global Ranking (QS)	115

Situated in Waterloo, Ontario, this university is famous for its strong co-op programs and excellence in technology and engineering.



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Total Student Population	38.000
N. of International Students	10.000
National Ranking	8
Global Ranking (Times HE)	191
Global Ranking (QS)	189

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, this bilingual institution offers programs in both English and French and is known for its law and public affairs programs.



WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Total Student Population	42.000
N. of International Students	6.000
National Ranking	9
Global Ranking (Times HE)	201
Global Ranking (QS)	120

Located in London, Ontario, Western is known for business, health sciences, and social sciences.



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Total Student Population	34.000
N. of International Students	8.000
National Ranking	10
Global Ranking (Times HE)	201
Global Ranking (QS)	198

Found in Calgary, Alberta, this institution is noted for its focus on research and entrepreneurship.

Now, let's talk about colleges. Most public colleges in Canada offer a consistent level of quality across the board, and the educational experience tends to be quite similar regardless of which college you choose. A Few Important Notes About Colleges:

- **PGWP Eligibility:** As mentioned earlier, make sure your program is Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) eligible if you plan to stay and work in Canada afterward.
- **Credit Transfer Options:** Some college programs offer pathways to a 4-year university degree. You may be able to transfer your college credits and complete a bachelor's degree through a fast-tracked program.
- **Co-op and Internship Opportunities:** Certain programs include co-op placements or internships, which can give you a competitive edge in the job market after graduation.

Seneca
SENECA COLLEGE

Toronto, Ontario



CONESTOGA COLLEGE

Kitchener, Ontario

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

Toronto, Ontario



GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

Toronto, Ontario



BOW VALLEY COLLEGE

Calgary, Alberta



SHERIDAN COLLEGE

Toronto, Ontario



DOUGLAS COLLEGE

Vancouver, British Columbia



HUMBER COLLEGE

Toronto, Ontario



ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

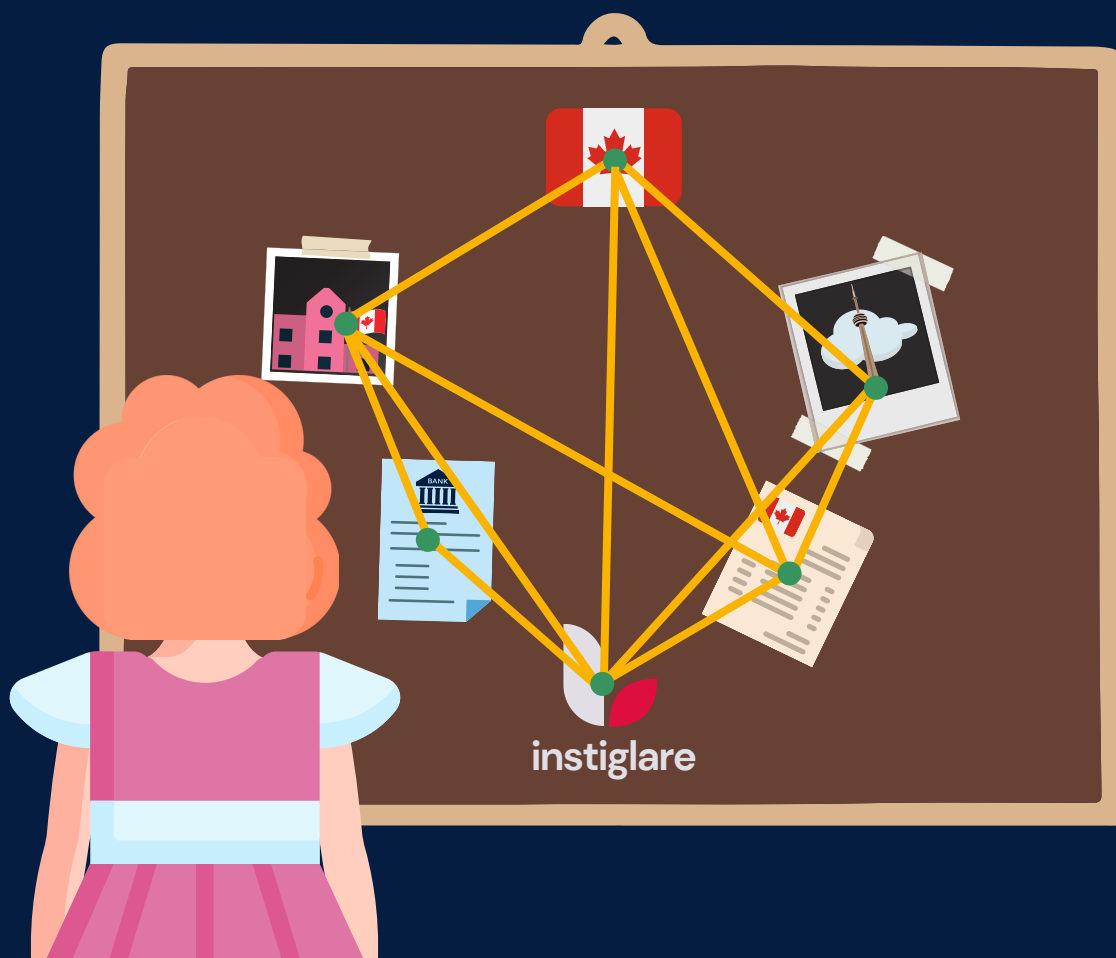
Ottawa, Ontario

With all this information about Canada and its education system, you now have a solid foundation. So, if you're ready, let's talk about the next steps to bring your Canadian dream to life.



II. Time to Prepare: Pre-Departure Steps

INSTIGLARE builds all the essential connections to ensure your success.



If you want to pursue high school education in Canada, start by doing your own research. Then, let's review the process in 5 steps.



START YOUR JOURNEY WITH INSTIGLARE

The first step in studying high school in Canada is to seek support from our experienced education consultants. At Instigare, we provide you with all the details and create a comprehensive roadmap to ensure your success.



GET YOUR PASSPORT

The first official step for traveling abroad is obtaining your passport. Since it's also required for your high school application, it's important to complete this process as early as possible.



GET ACCEPTED TO A HIGH SCHOOL IN CANADA

Once you have your passport, you should immediately contact the high school where you want to study and get an official acceptance letter. You'll need this acceptance letter for your student visa application.



APPLY FOR A CANADIAN STUDENT VISA

After receiving your official acceptance, you should apply for a student visa without delay. Processing your visa application may take several months, so completing all official procedures promptly is essential.



FINALIZE YOUR PREPARATIONS AND MOVE TO CANADA

The final step: Once all your paperwork is in order, you can move to Canada. Now, you can take the important step of starting your educational journey in Canada!

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH INSTIGLARE

At INSTIGLARE, we provide expert consultancy services for students who want to pursue high school education in Canada. Our consultants work tirelessly to offer you the best environment and support. If you'd like to benefit from our services, feel free to get in touch with our consultants to obtain more detailed information.

Here are our service packages and their details:

INSTIGLARE BASIC

HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION GUIDANCE



1

We help you find a school that matches your preferences, contact the school and start the official process for you.

LETTER OF INTENT SUPPORT



2

We assist you in presenting a professional application to the school by providing you a letter of intent.

REGISTRATION CONSULTATION



3

We manage your registration process from Canada, ensuring you receive the necessary acceptance letter.

HEALTH INSURANCE



4

We help you find the most suitable health insurance policy according to your needs and assist with purchasing it.

LIFE IN CANADA SEMINAR



5

We offer an online seminar providing essential information about life in Canada.

ACCOMMODATION



6

We assist you in finding a suitable place to stay, helping with reservations and/or rental arrangements.

CUSTODIANSHIP



7

We help you find an affordable Canadian citizen custodian for students under the age of 18.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT CONSULTANCY



8

We ensure you follow the correct process when applying to official institutions and help with document tracking.



MONTHLY EVALUATION

We monitor your progress on a monthly basis, providing feedback to help you adapt better to your new life.

9

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

We provide quick support for urgent needs and guide you through dealing with unexpected issues.

10



11

POST-SERVICE SUPPORT

We continue to support you in taking the right steps for your career path, even after receiving your high school diploma.

INSTIGLARE VIP

Additionally, for a specific fee, you can take advantage of our VIP services. You can add these services individually to the INSTIGLARE BASIC package, or you can upgrade your consultancy level to the INSTIGLARE VIP package by opting for all VIP services together for greater benefits.



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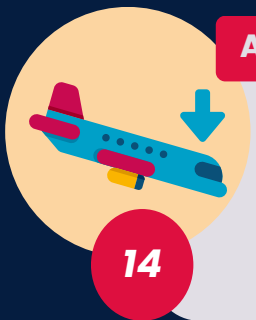
VISA CONSULTANCY

We ensure you complete your visa application correctly and thoroughly, guiding you through each step of the process.

FLIGHT AND HOTEL RESERVATION

We research the best flight and hotel options for you, simplifying the reservation and ticketing process.

13



14

AIRPORT MEET & GREET

We meet you at the airport in Canada and assist you in getting to your accommodation.

VIP ENGLISH COURSE

We provide you with private lessons with an English-speaking instructor, helping you practice extensively.

15



16

INTRO TO CANADIAN MATHEMATICS COURSE

We teach you the English terms for basic math concepts, quickly preparing you for the Canadian education system.

INSTIGLARE PLUS

In addition to these services, we also offer the following extra services to our clients. We plan everything individually for you. Please note that the prices for extra services are variable and depend on usage:



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TRANSLATION AND NOTARIZATION SERVICES

We have your documents translated into English by a certified translator and ensure they are notarized.

	INSTIGLARE	Other Consulting Agencies
Focus Area	INSTIGLARE specializes exclusively in sending students to Canada, offering expert, in-depth guidance.	These agencies try to send students everywhere, often lacking deep expertise in any single country.
Consulting Package	You can customize your own package by adding any VIP or PLUS services to the INSTIGLARE BASIC plan. Our model is flexible and tailored to your needs.	All services are bundled into a single price with no flexibility offered.
Offered Services	Benefit from 17 different services, including 11 BASIC, 5 VIP, and 1 PLUS service. INSTIGLARE stands out as a leader in this area.	Typically limited to 8–10 standard services.
Exclusive Services	We are the first consulting firm to offer a unique “Introduction to Canadian Math” course. You can take advantage of this special opportunity.	Only basic consulting services are offered—no specialized or value-added options.
Student Monitoring	We schedule monthly online or in-person check-ins to monitor your progress and provide feedback.	Regular and long-term student follow-up is usually not part of their service model.
Pricing Transparency	We clearly explain all costs upfront so you're never caught off guard by hidden fees.	General information is shared, but unexpected expenses may arise later in the process.

**GET YOUR
PASSPORT**




RECEIVE ADMISSION FROM A CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL

High school in Canada typically runs from Grade 9 through Grade 12. Public high schools offer a broad and inclusive curriculum, while private schools often focus more on preparing students for university. Public schools have more diverse student populations, whereas private schools primarily consist of international students.

The right choice depends on the student's academic goals and family budget.

At INSTIGLARE, we provide comprehensive educational consulting services to help you find the best-fit school for your child—whether it's public or private. Our expert team guides you through the school selection process to ensure a smooth and informed decision.

Now, let's take a closer look at the general differences between private and public high schools in Canada:

 Private High Schools	Public High Schools
Smaller class sizes (typically around 15 students) allow teachers to provide more one-on-one support and customized learning.	Class sizes are larger (around 25 students), making it more challenging for teachers to provide individual attention. Lessons are designed for the general student body.
Most students are international, primarily from Asian countries. Discipline issues are rare. Since native English speakers are few, students often feel more comfortable practicing English without fear of accent-based bullying. However, less exposure to native-level English conversations can be a drawback.	The majority of students are domestic, mainly white and Black Canadians. While some schools face discipline issues, the high number of native English speakers creates more opportunities for language immersion. However, international students may face challenges related to accent-based bullying.
Strong university preparation programs are offered, along with individualized academic counseling. Nearly all students attend with the goal of entering university.	Students have mixed goals—some aim for university, others for college, and some just want a high school diploma. This leads to a more generalized curriculum.

Private High Schools	Public High Schools
The curriculum is highly focused on university readiness. Students can complete prerequisite courses quickly and earn credits efficiently. Some schools operate on a trimester system, allowing students to earn up to 9 credits per year.	The curriculum is broader, covering both college and university paths. If specific university prep courses aren't offered, students may have to take less relevant subjects. Public schools usually operate on a semester system, with students earning up to 8 credits per year.
Students are often prepared for national-level math and computing competitions, improving scholarship opportunities and boosting university applications. Some schools serve as official exam centers, and students may also earn Advanced Placement (AP) credits, covering first-year university courses while still in high school.	Only a limited number of competitions are hosted in public schools. Students often need to find external exam centers themselves. AP-level courses are generally not offered.
Students who haven't taken the IELTS or scored below 6 are required to take ESL courses. These can be taken online before arriving in Canada, allowing them to complete one credit in advance. This helps students finish Grade 12 in 9–10 months and transition to university without delay.	ESL courses are only offered in-person in Canada. Students can't start them online before arrival, which may extend Grade 12 completion time to 9–15 months.

Please note: The above differences can vary slightly between individual schools, but they reflect the general trends across Canada. Use this comparison as a guideline to inform your school selection process.

Also, keep in mind that both private and public schools come in many forms. Let's now explore examples of specific schools in each category.

Private High Schools

Canada offers a variety of private high schools, each providing distinct academic programs and unique life experiences. Here are the main types of private high schools in Canada and their key features:

SMART
CHOICE

University Preparatory Schools	Boarding Schools	IB (International Baccalaureate) Schools
These schools are primarily focused on preparing students for higher education. They place a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects. Many offer university-level courses such as Advanced Placement (AP). Students also benefit from strong academic advising services tailored to university applications. These schools grant the OSSD diploma.	These schools provide a residential experience, where students live on campus in a structured and academically driven environment. They offer a multicultural setting with students from around the world. Extracurriculars, sports, and arts programs are typically well-developed. Many boarding schools also offer AP courses and university prep programs. Graduates receive the OSSD diploma.	The International Baccalaureate (IB) program is globally recognized for its academic rigor and prestige. The curriculum is distinct from other schools and generally more challenging. IB schools use unique grading methods and prepare students to think critically on an international level. Graduates earn the prestigious IB Diploma.

Public High Schools

Public high schools in Canada also come in different types, each with its own focus and environment. Here are the two main categories and their key characteristics:

Secular Public Schools	Catholic Public Schools
Funded by the government, these schools are open to all students and welcome cultural and religious diversity. They follow the standard provincial curriculum and accept international students.	These schools also follow the standard curriculum but include religious education based on Catholic values. Practices may include prayer-based openings and the celebration of religious holidays. International students are also welcome.

Choose the type of high school you want to attend. Once you've made your choice, INSTIGLARE will research suitable schools on your behalf and initiate the application process.

To officially complete your enrollment, the following steps must be followed in order:





III. A New Life Begins: The Process in Canada

*Our INSTIGLARE representative in Canada
will be waiting for you at Pearson International Airport.*



WHAT TO DO UPON ARRIVAL IN CANADA

First of all, welcome to Canada!

At INSTIGLARE, we wish you great success in this exciting new chapter and are here to support you every step of the way.

Let's start with what needs to be done at the airport:

