

# Ontario

## Full Review

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### Aim and purpose

- What is the stated aim and purpose of this stage of education, e.g. linked to entry to higher education, the world of work; a broad aim of personal and societal enrichment etc.?
- What is the context to the development of the aims and purposes for this stage of education and what vision do they present for the future of this stage of education?
- Are these aims and purposes influenced by an overarching national plan for education or do they reflect the influence of international organisations such as the OECD?

*Ontario Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016a) provides the broad range of policies and programmes that govern education for students in schools in Ontario – from entry to school (in optional Kindergarten classes at age four) to high school graduation (at age 18). The document supersedes *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*, which outlined policy direction only for secondary schools / high schools. The consolidated (2016) document, which aims to reflect the continuity of education policy governing programmes for all students, states that secondary education is:

*designed to provide all students with the fundamental knowledge*

*and skills they will need in any area of endeavour as well as the opportunity to specialize in and / or explore areas related to their postsecondary goals and personal interests. This program keeps options open for students in the earlier grades and prepares them in senior grades for their postsecondary destinations, including apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016a, page 70).

In secondary / high school education (14- to 18-year-olds), the Government has introduced changes with a view to helping students to 'customise their learning' and, as a result, help more students to graduate. The Government's goal is to have 85 per cent of students graduating from high school within five years of beginning their

high school course (see the subheading 'Structure of the education system'). The changes focus on offering students more course options (inside and outside of the classroom) (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes'), and on providing more one-to-one support when students need extra help. They are detailed in Ontario's [Student Success Initiative](#). This [strategy](#) to improve high school student retention was developed following concerns that, in 2003-2004, nearly a third of students were not completing high school education. It also took account of the results of a Canadian Council on Learning report that highlighted the potential loss of income – over their lifetime - to students who don't complete the high school diploma; the cost on society of providing social assistance to such students;

and the fact that students who drop out are overly represented in the prison population (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

## Achieving Excellence

*Achieving Excellence* – the Ontario Government’s vision for education (Government of Ontario, 2014) - was developed by policymakers working with individuals and organisations across the province (parents and students, teachers, support staff, school and system leaders, individuals outside the education sector, businesses and non-profit organisations) to ‘renew’ the vision for education in Ontario and ensure that it is future-focused. The aim was to ensure that those leaving high school in Ontario are prepared for today’s increasingly competitive, globally connected and technologically engaged world.

The vision seeks to ensure the success and well-being of every student and child, and that learners in the province’s education system develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens. It is based on four interconnected goals for education which are:

- **Achieving excellence:** ensuring that children and students of all ages achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship.
- **Ensuring equity:** all children and students are inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting well-being:** all children and students develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing public confidence:** Ontarians continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

*Achieving Excellence* aims further to:

- uncover and develop the potential of all learners
- reveal learners’ hidden gifts and spark new passions for future careers
- develop compassionate and actively engaged citizens who graduate from high school equipped for the technology-driven, globalised world and who are well-rounded individuals with strong basic skills complemented by the critical thinking skills, imagination and resilience to excel in – and create – the new jobs of tomorrow.

In terms of secondary education in particular, the plan of action in *Achieving Excellence* proposes to:

- give students more flexibility and ownership in their learning, allowing them, for example, to determine whether they want to spend more time on e-learning or on learning outside of the classroom
- expand relevant new learning opportunities, including the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Program and the Dual Credit Program and increase participation in these programmes (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes')
- foster more young entrepreneurs in Ontario schools by increasing training in innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) students and ensuring that programmes meet student demand
- increase student engagement in mathematics, science and technology by expanding opportunities for students to explore the relevance of these areas to their future pathways
- promote the value of the arts, including the visual and performing arts, in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support success in school and in life
- expand learning opportunities outside school to include community-based, civic, humanitarian, scientific and artistic activities, as well as cross-cultural and international experiences
- explore different models of learning, such as project-based learning or learning across multiple subject areas
- explore opportunities to partner with community organisations and businesses to provide students with more experiential learning opportunities (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes').

## Structure of the education system

- How is upper secondary provision for students structured, e.g two-year / three-year / varied approach; around subjects or broad areas of learning; broad/comprehensive or specialised / narrow in focus?
- When does compulsory education end?
- What is the age profile of students in this stage of education?
- How well does the structure of the system reflect the stated aim as outlined above

Upper secondary education in Ontario is provided as secondary / high school education for students aged 14-18, in Grades 9-12, within the framework summarised in the table below. In line with the [Education Act](#), education is compulsory between the ages of 6 to 18 and most students follow a programme leading to the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) (the high school graduation diploma) on completion.

Publicly funded high schools in Ontario are of four main types – English-language high schools, Catholic English-language high schools, French-language high schools and French-language Catholic high schools. Canada’s two official languages, English and French, are the languages of instruction in English-language and French-language schools across Ontario.

Year	Age range	School Level
Junior Kindergarten	Age 4-5	Optional (non-compulsory) Kindergarten programme in elementary school
Senior Kindergarten	Age 5-6	Optional (non-compulsory) Kindergarten programme in elementary school
Grade 1	Age 6-7	Elementary school
Grade 2	Age 7-8	Elementary school
Grade 3	Age 8-9	Elementary school
Grade 4	Age 9-10	Elementary school
Grade 5	Age 10-11	Elementary school
Grade 6	Age 11-12	Elementary school
Grade 7	Age 12-13	Elementary school
Grade 8	Age 13-14	Elementary school
Grade 9	Age 14-15	Secondary school / high school
Grade 10	Age 15-16	Secondary school / high school
Grade 11	Age 16-17	Secondary school / high school
Grade 12	Age 17-18	Secondary school / high school

Although students usually complete high school and their OSSD in four years, some students take a fifth year or an additional semester. Extending their studies in this way allows them to take fewer credit courses towards their OSSD each year which can help them to achieve high school graduation. It can also allow them the flexibility / time to explore their interests in other school subjects and so ensure that they are adequately prepared for their future.

## Available pathways / programmes

- What pathways / programmes are available to students - academic / vocational / professional / flexible?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?
- At what stage are decisions about the student choice of pathway finalised and who has an input into these decisions?
- Where do these pathways lead - entry to higher education; accreditation for professional life; further training?
- What percentage of the overall cohort of students progress through each pathway?
- How many students progress to higher education / further education / workforce / apprenticeships?

Most students in high school follow a programme leading to the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), but the specific courses they take and the pathways they follow towards achieving the OSSD vary depending on year of study and individual student choice. There is an increasing range of alternative study options / programmes which can contribute credits towards achievement of the OSSD.

In Grades 9 and 10 (ages 14-16), three types of courses are usually offered to students:

- Academic courses: which develop students' knowledge and skills through the study of theory and abstract problems. These courses focus on the essential concepts of a subject and explore related concepts. They incorporate practical applications as appropriate.
- Applied courses: which focus on the essential concepts of a subject and develop students' knowledge and skills through practical applications and concrete examples. Familiar situations are used to illustrate ideas, and students are given opportunities to experience hands-on applications of the concepts and theories they study.
- Open courses: which comprise a set of expectations that are appropriate for all students and are designed to broaden students' knowledge and skills in subjects that reflect their interests and prepare them for active and rewarding participation in society. They are not designed with the specific requirements of university, college, or the workplace in mind.

In Grades 9 and 10, students select an appropriate combination of academic, applied, and open courses in order to add to their knowledge and skills, explore their interests, and determine the type of educational programme they are best suited to undertake

in Grades 11 and 12. When selecting their courses in Grades 9 and 10, students are not expected to make binding decisions about a particular educational or career pathway. They are, however, expected to try to ensure that they have the prerequisites required for the future courses they plan to take (see below). In order to meet the needs of their student community, school boards must offer both academic and applied courses in the curriculum areas of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and French as a second language. (Note: in French-speaking schools, English is taught as a second language.)

In Grades 11 and 12, the upper secondary phase for 16- to 18-year-olds, five types of courses are offered to students:

- College preparation courses, which are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for most college programmes or for admission to specific apprenticeship or other training programmes.
- University preparation courses, which are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for university programmes.
- University / college preparation courses, which are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the entrance requirements for specific programmes offered at universities and colleges.
- Workplace preparation courses, which are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the expectations of employers if they plan to enter the workforce directly after graduation, or the requirements for admission to certain apprenticeship or other training programmes.
- Open courses, which comprise a set of expectations that are appropriate for all students, are designed to broaden students' knowledge and skills in subjects that reflect their interests, and prepare them for active and rewarding participation in society. They are not designed with the specific requirements of university, college, or the workplace in mind.

In Grades 11 and 12, students focus increasingly on their individual interests and identify and prepare for their post-secondary pathways. School boards are though required to ensure that students in Grades 11 and 12 have access to an appropriate destination-related course in at least

English, mathematics, and science, in accordance with the course types included in the curriculum policy documents for these disciplines.

Courses in Grades 10, 11, and 12 may have prerequisites for enrolment, e.g a prerequisite for a

Grade 10 mathematics course is usually a Grade 9 mathematics course; for a Grade 11 English university preparation course, it is a Grade 10 English academic course.

Experiential learning programmes may also be part of the delivery of the

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curriculum in all disciplines. Such programmes provide students with opportunities to see how their classroom learning applies in a workplace setting and allow them to explore a career of interest as they plan a pathway through secondary school to their post-secondary destination. Experiential learning programmes include job shadowing, which may start in Grades 7 and 8 (ages 12-14), and work experience and cooperative education, which are offered in secondary school (age 14+).

In Grades 11 and 12, there are increased opportunities for learning experiences beyond the school offered in specialist programmes. The main programmes / pathways available are Dual Credit Programs, cooperative education, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, and Specialist High Skills Major Programs.

**Dual Credit Programs** are Ministry-approved programmes that allow students, while they are still in secondary school, to take college or apprenticeship courses that count towards both their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

and a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, or a Certificate of Apprenticeship. Students may earn up to four optional OSSD credits for college-delivered dual credit courses. They may not though use college-delivered dual credits to meet compulsory credit requirements for the OSSD, and Dual Credit Programs must be developed and implemented in accordance with Ministry policy as outlined in *Dual Credit Programs: Policy and Program Requirements* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b) (see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' for more information on the credit-based curriculum for the OSSD). Dual Credit Programs are aimed at students who may need learning opportunities outside of high school and who would benefit from a college or apprenticeship experience to complete their OSSD. They can help students move from high school to college and apprenticeship programmes, by enabling them to contribute towards their OSSD at the same time as giving them exposure to the college or workplace / apprenticeship environment.

**Cooperative education programmes** (co-op programmes) allow students to earn OSSD credits while completing a work placement in the community. These programmes complement students' academic programmes and can be valuable for all students, whatever their post-secondary destination. A cooperative education programme comprises, at a minimum, one cooperative education course monitored by a cooperative education teacher, a related curriculum course in any subject from the Ontario Curriculum, and a work placement. Cooperative education (co-op) placements are arranged for students by their secondary school and must follow (provincial) Ministry of Education policy and guidelines. Students can earn a minimum of one and a maximum of two compulsory OSSD credits from co-op courses. They can also earn any number of optional credits. The classroom component of a cooperative education course includes pre-placement sessions and classroom integration sessions. The pre-placement sessions prepare students for the

workplace and include instruction in areas of key importance, such as health and safety. The classroom integration sessions provide opportunities for students to reflect on and reinforce their learning in the workplace as the programme progresses. Local school boards are expected to ensure that programmes are offered through a variety of delivery models, such as full-day or half-day programmes, programmes that allow for continuous intake, or summer school or night school programmes, in order to meet the range of needs of students and their local community. All Ontario school boards offer co-op programmes.

A personalised placement learning plan (PPLP) must be developed for all students in a cooperative education programme. A student's progress in achieving the programme expectations and in meeting the requirements identified in the PPLP must be assessed and evaluated by a teacher through regular workplace monitoring meetings with the student and the student's workplace supervisor.

### **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program**

**(OYAP)** courses are cooperative education programmes intended for young people who are at least 16 years old; have completed 16 credits towards the OSSD prior to starting the programme; and are enrolled as full-time students working towards the completion of all OSSD requirements. Through the programme, they have an opportunity to start training in a skilled trade while completing their secondary school graduation diploma. OYAP aims to enable students to make the school-to-work transition by possible direct entry into apprenticeship training on completion of the OSSD; provide employers with the opportunity to train the skilled workers they need; and to provide a solution to address the problem of skilled tradespeople shortages in general and, specifically, the lack of young people joining the trades. It also gives young people completing their OSSD a 'taste' of future working life in a specific skilled trade. Employers provide around 90 per cent of apprenticeship training in the workplace. The remaining 10 per cent involves classroom instruction delivered at an approved training college or training delivery agent. On successful completion of

the practical and in-school components, students have the opportunity to gain their OSSD, and to gain credits towards an apprenticeship and become a registered apprentice. Students can start OYAP courses in Grade 11 or Grade 12.

### **Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Programs**

are Ministry-approved, specialist, career-focused programmes that allow students to acquire technical knowledge and skills in specific economic sectors while meeting the requirements of the OSSD. School boards and schools may only offer SHSM Programs for which they have Ministry approval. They are aimed at Grade 11 and 12 students (aged 16-18) who want to identify, explore and refine their career goals and make informed choices about their next steps after secondary school. They enable students to gain important skills on the job with employers, in skills training centres and at school and to attain valuable industry certifications, including first aid qualifications, at the same time as their OSSD. They also support students' transition after high school graduation to apprenticeship training, college, university or

the workplace. They are available in the following sectors:

- agriculture
- arts and culture
- aviation / aerospace
- business
- construction
- energy
- environment
- food processing
- forestry
- health and wellness
- horticulture and landscaping
- hospitality and tourism
- information and communications technology
- justice, community safety, and emergency services
- manufacturing
- mining
- non-profit
- sports
- transportation.  
The SHSM Program helps students to:
  - customise their secondary school education to suit their interests and talents
  - develop specialist knowledge and skills
  - earn credits that post-secondary educational institutions and the sector recognise
  - gain sector-recognised certification and career-relevant training
- develop essential skills and work habits documented through the Ontario Skills Passport (see below)
- identify, explore and refine career goals and make informed decisions about their future
- remain flexible, with the option to shift between pathways, should their goals and plans change.

Note: some public schools in Ontario specialise in particular areas of the curriculum, such as the arts, entrepreneurship, technology, science, sports and athletics, business studies, or languages. They should not specialise to the extent that they cannot offer the full range of courses to enable students to obtain the OSSD. Some schools also offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme.

## Student choice

All schools in Ontario are expected to have in place an education and career / life planning programme (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017d) to help all students to achieve their personal goals and become competent, successful and contributing members of society. For students from Grade 7 (age 12, in elementary school) onwards this planning takes the form of a web-based Individual Pathways Plan (IPP) and involves preparation for key transitions, including the transition from elementary to secondary school (Grade 8 to Grade 9), from Grade 10 to Grade 11 (the upper secondary years, age 16+), and from secondary school to students' initial post-secondary destinations.

The Individual Pathways Plan (IPP) records a student's goals and learning and is the main planning tool as they move towards the next step after school. It also gives students a valuable archive of their learning and planning resources. Students are responsible for building and updating their IPP and schools must have a clear process in place to help students in Grades 7–12 create their plan. Schools are also encouraged to help students review and revise their plan at least twice a year. Students share the learning they record in their IPP with a teacher and / or guidance counsellor. They are also encouraged to share their learning with their parent or guardian. In developing their IPP, students may also use the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP). This provides clear descriptions of the essential skills and work habits important for success in work, learning and life. Learners can use the OSP tools and resources to assess, build, document and track their skills which may facilitate their decision-making on participation in, for example, cooperative education programmes, or other experiential learning opportunities, volunteer and extracurricular

activities.

Students and their parents make decisions about their choice of secondary school and their courses for Grades 9 and 10 in Grade 8 (the final year of elementary school, aged around 13). To facilitate this decision-making, local school boards distribute information on the programmes available in the secondary schools in their jurisdiction to each Grade 8 student and his or her parents. Boards must also inform Grade 8 students and their parents how to contact guidance personnel and / or other appropriate personnel in the secondary schools in their jurisdiction from whom they may seek additional information. Local school boards must also ensure that Grade 8 students and their parents have access to this information before decisions regarding programme and / or school selection have to be made.

The Ministry of Education publishes Grade 9-12 course descriptions and prerequisites to help students and their parents in their choices (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011a). The course descriptions are one-paragraph summaries of what students will learn in each course. A

prerequisite is a course deemed essential for the successful understanding and completion of a subsequent course. Not all Grade 9-12 courses have prerequisite courses.

Course selection for students under the age of 18 must be made with parental approval, except in the case of 16- or 17-year-old students who have withdrawn from parental control. Students are supported in making informed decisions about their secondary school programme through the development of their IPP.

All students who have successfully completed Grade 8 are promoted from elementary school and admitted to a secondary school. In exceptional circumstances, an individual student in Grade 8, with parental consent, may be given permission by the principal of a secondary school to 'reach ahead' to take secondary school courses, either during the school year or in the summer prior to entering Grade 9 (high school education).

Successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) is the stepping stone into the workplace or on to

further education in college courses, apprenticeship programmes, or university. University admission requirements vary by individual institution and dependent on course but admission is often highly competitive. The OSSD is the first, minimum requirement for admission but, in addition, universities will usually

require students to have passed a specific minimum number of OSSD courses at specific levels (and often at a minimum overall average grade). Individual programmes / courses will also usually stipulate specific prerequisite subject requirements – and grades – which can vary each year dependent on competition, and some universities

will not consider out-of-school secondary course components such as co-op programmes (see above) in their admissions criteria. There may also be ‘non-academic’ requirements for admission, such as the provision of a portfolio, or an admission essay, or the successful completion of an interview or audition.

## Statistics

In 2016:

- 86.5 per cent of students passed the OSSD, taking five years to do so
- 79.6 per cent passed the OSSD in four years.

In 2015:

- the percentage of students graduating within five years of starting high school in Grade 9 was 85.5 per cent
- the percentage of students graduating within four years was 78.3 per cent.

**Note:** Students usually take around eight credits each year towards their (30-credit) OSSD and complete secondary school in four years. Some students take a fifth year or an additional semester. Extending their studies in this way allows them to take fewer OSSD credit courses each year (or to explore their interests in other school subjects).

At the start of the 2015/16 academic year, more than 46,000 students were enrolled in 1,760 Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Programs in Ontario. In addition, 22,400 students were in over 570 Dual Credit Programs – the latter had grown from 2,865 in 2007/08 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). In total in 2015/16, there were 635,760 students enrolled in secondary education in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017f).

Over 22,000 students participated in OYAP in 2013/14.

In 2014/15, of 822,465 students enrolled in post-secondary education in Ontario, 516,672 were enrolled in university; 305,793 in college (Statistics Canada, 2016).

## Specified curriculum within pathways

- How is the curriculum within these pathways organised? Is it broad / comprehensive / specialised / narrow?
- Are there core subjects that are central to the curriculum?
- What degree of choice is afforded to students within each pathway?
- Is the curriculum presented in subject specifications / syllabi / learning outcomes?
- Is there differentiation of learning outcomes in terms of stage and / or ability?
- What degree of autonomy do teachers / schools have in shaping and implementing the curriculum?
- What is the place of wellbeing / social, personal and health education (SPHE) / citizenship education within the curriculum?
- What competences / key skills are promoted in the curriculum?
- To what extent are skills and competences central to the curriculum structure? How do they feature i.e. are they embedded in learning outcomes?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?

The curriculum (high school programme) in secondary education is determined by the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), which is a credit-based system. All schools offer a sufficient number of courses - and courses of appropriate types - to students to allow them to acquire the credits required to meet the diploma requirements (see below). Secondary school courses in the [Ontario Curriculum](#) are organised by discipline, grade, and course type. Course types

offered in Grades 9 and 10 - academic courses, applied courses, and open courses, differ from those offered in Grades 11 and 12 - destination-related courses and open courses (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes').

Students select their courses from those available to enable them to achieve the OSSD. Schools are not expected to offer all courses in all course types, but must provide a range of choices appropriate to the needs and interests

of their students. School boards are though required to ensure that, in Grades 9-10 (ages 14-16), they offer students both academic and applied courses in the curriculum areas of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and French as a second language and that, in Grades 11 and 12, students have access to an appropriate destination-related course in at least English, mathematics, and science.

Curriculum policy documents identify what students must know and be able to do at the end of every grade or course in every subject in Ontario publicly funded schools and are made up of three components:

- Front matter providing critical foundational information about the curriculum itself and about how learning connects to Ministry of Education policies, programmes, and priorities.
- Curriculum expectations (overall and specific expectations), which are the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate in each subject at each grade level by the end of the grade.
- Additional supports, glossaries and overviews which provide further guidance and information to support the implementation of the curriculum.

Courses that integrate more than one subject / discipline may also be developed. Schools may also offer locally developed courses, dual credit courses (see below), and alternative (non-credit) courses, which are not outlined in the curriculum policy documents (but must be Ministry-approved).

## High school graduation requirements

To graduate from high school and receive an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) students must:

- earn a minimum of 30 credits - 18 of which are compulsory
- pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) (or Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC)) and so meet the secondary school literacy requirement
- complete 40 hours of community involvement activities (volunteer work).

Students receive one credit for every 110-hour course completed.

Students select their 18 compulsory credit courses from a list of required subjects. The required (compulsory) credit subjects are:

Subject	Credits
English	4 credits (one in each year of high school)
Mathematics	3 credits (one must be gained in Grade 11 or 12)
Science	1 credit
Canadian history	1 credit
Canadian geography	1 credit
The arts	1 credit
Health and physical education	1 credit
French as a second language	1 credit*
Career studies	0.5 credit
Civics	0.5 credit

\*French is an official language in Canada.

In addition, students must select a further one compulsory credit course from the following three subject groups:

Group 1
English or French as a second language**
A native language
A classical or international language
Social sciences and the humanities
Canadian and world studies
Guidance and career education
Cooperative education (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes') ***
Group 2
Health and physical education
The arts
Business studies
French as a second language**
Cooperative education (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes') ***

Group 3
Science (Grade 11 or 12)
Technological education
French as a second language**
Computer studies
Cooperative education (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes') ***

\*\*In Groups 1, 2, and 3, a maximum of 2 credits in French as a second language can count as compulsory credits, one from Group 1 and one from either Group 2 or Group 3.

\*\*\*A maximum of 2 credits in cooperative education can count as compulsory credits. Cooperative education courses combine school (curriculum-based courses) and a work placement.

In order to provide the flexibility to tailor an individual student's programme to his or her needs and to support his / her progress through secondary school, principals may substitute up to three compulsory credits with courses from other subject areas specified in the list of compulsory credit requirements (including Groups 1, 2 and 3). Substitutions should be made to promote and enhance student learning or to respond to special needs and interests.

The remaining 12 credits are optional. Students choose their optional courses from the full range of courses that their school offers. This may include locally developed courses. These are courses developed by a school board for students in a particular school or region. They accommodate educational and / or career preparation

needs that are not met through courses within the Ontario Curriculum policy documents. Such courses require the approval of the Ministry, with the exception of religious education courses developed by Roman Catholic schools. Note: Ministry-approved locally developed courses in Grade 9 English, mathematics, science and French as a second language, and Grade 10 English, mathematics, science and Canadian history can also count as compulsory credits in that discipline. A student may count no more than seven such locally developed courses as compulsory credits, and some post-secondary institutions or employers may not recognise locally developed courses.

A student's 12 optional credits may include credits earned through alternative programmes

such as co-op programmes and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). Up to 4 optional credits can also be earned through courses approved under the Dual Credit Program (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes').

Students usually take around eight credits each year and complete secondary school in four years. Some students take a fifth year or an additional semester. Extending their studies in this way allows them to take fewer OSSD credit courses each year (or to explore their interests in other school subjects). Some students also take more courses than necessary or take courses during the summer and finish faster.

In addition to achieving their 30 credits, students must meet the secondary school literacy requirement

by passing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), and complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement activities. The subheading 'Assessment and reporting' provides further information on the OSSLT and OSSLC. The purpose of the community involvement requirement is to encourage students to develop an awareness

and understanding of civic responsibility and of the role they can play and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities. Students plan and select their community involvement activities in consultation with their parents and as part of the Individual Pathways Plan (IPP) process (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes').  
Community involvement

activities can include, for example, volunteering at a local church, library, hospital or with a wide range of registered agencies and organisations, and students begin accumulating their hours in the summer before they enter high school (in Grade 9, age 14). Each school board is responsible for developing a list of community involvement activities that the board considers acceptable.

The curriculum for students following the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Program consists of five components:

- a defined package of credits consisting of eight to ten Grade 11 and Grade 12 credits, including two cooperative education credits (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes')
- certification and training recognised within the sector of study
- experiential learning and career exploration activities appropriate to the sector
- 'reach-ahead' experiences connected to the student's post-secondary plans
- essential skills and work habits required in the sector and recorded in the [Ontario Skills Passport](#).

(Further information on the SHSM Program is provided under the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes'.)

## Well-being

Promoting well-being is one of the four goals of the Ontario Ministry of Education outlined in *Achieving Excellence* – the Ontario vision for education (Government of Ontario, 2014) (see the subheading 'Aim and purpose' in addition). The goal is based on the principle that the education system needs to help students to build the knowledge and skills associated with well-being so that they can become healthy, active and engaged citizens. The action plan for well-being outlined in *Achieving Excellence* aims to help:

- children and young people to have more interest in being physically active and to be motivated to live healthy, active lives
- parents, guardians and caregivers to be engaged and involved in their children's learning
- students and staff to find ways to be leaders and contributors to the school and broader community
- education sector initiatives to contribute towards Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions strategy
- children, young people and families to have access to services and ongoing health supports (through the combined working of education and health organisations).

The principle behind the vision for well-being in education is that well-being is fundamental to overall student success and that:

- Students are better able to learn when they feel safe and welcome at school, and have the tools and the motivation to make healthy, active choices, whenever they can.
- Children and students who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self are most likely to reach their full potential and thrive, and to develop into confident, capable and caring citizens.

To promote well-being in schools, the Ministry of Education is focusing on four key areas: Equity and inclusive education:

- identifying and removing discriminatory biases and barriers in the system with a view to supporting student achievement and well-being by demonstrating respect for diverse identities and strengths.
- Safe and accepting schools: all school boards provide safe, inclusive and accepting learning environments that support the achievement and well-being of every student. These expectations include addressing and preventing bullying and creating a positive school climate.
- Healthy schools: establishing the learning conditions necessary to help students to reach their full potential.
- The Mental Health Strategy: which aims to help school boards to develop and implement mental health and addiction strategies, and to work with staff to support positive mental health for all students, including supporting those with mental health needs or addictions.

Promoting student well-being and achievement centres around fostering learning environments that develop students' self or spirit by connecting physical, cognitive, emotional and social elements:

- Physical elements focus on the growth and development of the body, physical activity, healthy eating, and healthy life choices.
- Cognitive elements highlight the development of abilities and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and the ability to be flexible and innovative.
- Emotional elements focus on the ability to learn about and experience emotions and understand how to recognise, manage and cope with them, and include developing a sense of empathy, confidence, purpose and resilience.
- Social elements highlight the development of self-awareness, including the sense of belonging, collaboration, relationships with others and communication skills.

Skills and competences are embedded in the curriculum expectations for all subjects / courses in the [Grade 9-12 curriculum](#). Each curriculum document sets out – in an 'achievement chart' - the required knowledge and understanding in the particular subject area, along with the thinking skills (the use of critical and creative thinking skills and / or processes); communications skills; and application skills (the use of knowledge and skills to make connections within and between contexts) to be acquired.

The individual subject curriculum documents also highlight expectations for curriculum planning which include making links with financial literacy; numeracy; literacy, critical literacy and research / inquiry skills; information and communications technology; environmental education; equity and inclusive education; ethics; health and safety; and education and career life planning.

## Inclusion

- How is inclusion addressed?
- How are the learning needs of all students catered for, including students who have completed a reduced curriculum at lower secondary school, students with challenging behaviour patterns who find it difficult to function in larger classes, international learners for whom the language of instruction is not their first language, students with special educational needs?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?

Inclusion is a focus in *Achieving Excellence* – Ontario's vision for education (Government of Ontario, 2014), one of the four strands of which is ensuring equity, i.e. that all students are inspired to reach their full potential (see the subheading 'Aim and purpose' for more information on *Achieving Excellence*).

The *Policy and Program Requirements* for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016a) state that all schools must:

- intervene in a timely and effective way to help children and students who are struggling
- support the accurate and up-to-date identification of young people with special needs
- increase the integration of education services with services delivered by other ministries and community partners for young people with special needs
- increase academic support and provide engaging programmes for young people in care.

The requirements state also that schools must:

- support and respect the cultural and linguistic needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, and francophone communities
- increase knowledge and understanding of First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures and histories to enhance the learning experience of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
- provide greater support for First Nation students when they transition from on-reserve schools to provincially funded schools
- monitor graduation rates and achievement gaps for groups of students such as First Nation, Métis and Inuit students\*, children and young people in care, and students with special education needs

- set measures of student engagement for all students, especially those who may be at risk of lower achievement.

\*The *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (Ontario Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Office, 2007) and the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) focus on improving student achievement and well-being among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

Students with special educational needs resulting, for example, from physical, intellectual, behavioural, communication or multiple challenges, may require the provision of special education programmes or services, such as an educational programme that is modified above or below the age-appropriate grade-level expectations for a particular subject or course, or the use of assistive technology. Some students have their special educational needs formally recognised through an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and recorded in an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Where students' special needs are recorded in this way, they are formally known as 'exceptional students'.

School boards also have the discretion to develop an IEP for students who have not been formally identified as exceptional but who are receiving special education programmes and / or special education services.

The IEP is a written plan describing the special education programme and / or services required by a particular student, and is based on an assessment of the student's strengths and needs that affect his / her ability to learn and demonstrate learning. It must be developed with input from a student's parent(s) / guardian(s) and from the student if he or she is 16 years of age or older. Students identified as gifted will have an IEP. A student's IEP typically has a direct progress reporting link to the Provincial Report Card (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting'), and the IEP for an exceptional student who is 14 years of age or older, and who is not identified solely as gifted, must also contain a plan for his / her transition to post-secondary education, or the workplace, or to help the student live as independently as possible in the community.

Learners with special educational needs

may be provided with alternative (non-credit) courses or programmes. These are individualised courses, documented in a student's IEP, that comprise alternative expectations to those of the Ontario Curriculum (see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways'), such as social skills, communication, and behaviour management, and are usually designed to prepare students for daily living, including employment (supported or independent) and / or community living.

Regulations governing the identification and placement of exceptional students require the IPRC to consider the integration of such students in regular classes before considering the option of placing a student in a special education class. For students whose needs cannot be met entirely in the regular classroom, a range of placement options is available, including:

- a regular class with indirect support, where the student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialist consultative services
- a regular class with resource assistance, where the student is placed in a regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialist instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher
- a regular class with withdrawal assistance, where the student is placed in a regular class and receives instruction outside the classroom, for less than 50 per cent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher
- a special class with partial integration, where the student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class for at least 50 per cent of the school day, but is integrated with a regular class for at least one instructional period daily
- a full-time special education class for the entire school day.

The IPRC may also consider referring the student to a provincial committee for consideration of his / her eligibility for admission to one of the provincial schools for blind, deaf or deaf-blind students, or to one of the provincial 'demonstration schools' for students with severe learning disabilities.

Students with special educational needs must have a fair and equal opportunity to successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). This may necessitate schools making accommodations to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) – the literacy requirement to pass the OSSD (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' below).

Accommodations change only the way in which the OSSLT is administered or the OSSLC is taught, or the way in which the student responds to the components of the test or the course. They do not alter the content of the test or the expectations of the course or affect the validity or reliability of the test or the evaluation of student learning in the course. To qualify for accommodations during the test or the course, a student must have an IEP that outlines accommodations to be provided. A student whose IEP indicates that he or she is not working towards the attainment of the OSSD may, with parental consent and the approval of the principal, be exempted from taking the OSSLT or OSSLC.

Schools may also make special provisions for the OSSLT for English language learners (students who do not speak English as their first language, or who speak a dialect of English that is different from that used in Ontario schools), or provide such students with English as a second language (ESL) classes in Ontario secondary schools. Schools (or newcomer reception centres for immigrant students) assess a student's language skills to establish if they require ESL classes

Schools and school boards may also develop specialist programmes to address the needs of groups of students with a particular curriculum or career interest. Such programmes assist students in making the transition to post-secondary destinations

(apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace). Specialist programmes are intended primarily for students in Grades 11 and 12 (ages 16-18), but may also be designed to meet the needs of students in Grades 9 and 10 (ages 14-16). These programmes may be helpful for meeting the needs outlined in students' IEPs and related transition plans and may, for example, focus on the development of students' particular strengths with a view to helping them to achieve their educational and career goals. School boards must provide specialist programmes for students intending to go directly into the workforce after secondary school in order

to assist them with this transition.

The *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (Ontario Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Office, 2007) and the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) focus on improving student achievement and well-being among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students; closing the achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students; and ensuring that all

students in Ontario have a knowledge and appreciation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, traditions, and perspectives.

As French is an official language in Canada (alongside English), some schools in Ontario offer French immersion for students who want to learn and be educated in the French language. These French-language schools teach the entire curriculum in French, except for English language courses and have a mandate to protect, enhance and transmit the French language and culture.

## Assessment and reporting

- How is the curriculum assessed?
- What variety of assessment modes and methods are in evidence? For example, external assessment / internal assessment / online assessment / portfolios / formative / summative / synoptic etc.?
- How does the system recognise varied learning / skills / competences?
- How does assessment link to certification / qualifications / a qualifications framework / selection for further and higher education?
- How is vocational / technical education assessed and accredited?
- How is achievement reported? What is reported?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?

Assessment in secondary education in Ontario links to the awarding of credits for the successful completion of courses for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). In addition, students must complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) to meet the literacy requirements for the OSSD.

A credit is granted in recognition of the successful completion (that is, completion with a final percentage mark of 50 per cent or higher) of a course that has been scheduled for a minimum of 110 hours. Credits are granted by a principal on behalf of the

Minister of Education for courses that have been developed or authorised by the Ministry. A half-credit may be granted for each 55-hour part of a 110-hour Ministry-developed course. Most courses are offered as single-credit courses, although civics, for example, is a half-credit course and others, such as courses in technological education, interdisciplinary studies, and cooperative education courses, may be offered as multiple-credit courses (see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' for further information on the range and variety of available courses / pathways). For the purpose of granting a credit, scheduled time is

defined as the time during which students participate in planned learning activities designed to lead to the achievement of the curriculum expectations of a course. Planned learning activities include interaction between the teacher and the student and assigned individual or group work (other than homework) related to the achievement of the learning expectations in the course. Planned learning activities are delivered through classroom or e-learning instruction and activities and / or through community placements related to work experience and cooperative education (see the subheading 'Available pathways /

programmes').

The final percentage grade for each course in Grades 9–12 is determined in relation to the learning expectations of the course, as follows:

- 70 per cent of the grade is based on evaluations conducted throughout the course. This portion of the grade reflects the student's most consistent level of achievement throughout the course, although special consideration is given to the most recent evidence of achievement.
- 30 per cent of the grade is based on a final evaluation in the form of an examination, performance, essay, and / or other method of evaluation suitable to the course content and administered towards the end of the course.

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is the usual method for assessing the literacy skills of students in Ontario for the purpose of determining whether they meet the provincial secondary school literacy requirement for high school graduation. The test, which measures basic levels of literacy and is based on literacy

expectations up until the end of Grade 9 (age 15), identifies students who have demonstrated the required skills in literacy as well as those who have not demonstrated the required skills and will need to do further work; it identifies the specific areas in which these latter students need remediation. The OSSLT is scheduled by and administered through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) once each year, usually in the spring (March / April), and all students across the province take it on the same day, receiving their results in June of the same year – in a form similar to this example Individual Student Report (ISR). Students usually take the OSSLT in the school year following the school year in which they enter Grade 9 (Grade 10), unless a deferral is granted by the principal. Deferrals are intended for students who are working towards an OSSD but who have not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English that would allow them to successfully complete the test. Such students could include students with special educational needs; students who are English language learners and have not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English sufficient for participation

in the test; students who have not been successful in acquiring the reading and writing skills appropriate to Grade 9; or students who are unable to write the test at the scheduled time owing to illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstances. Students who do not successfully complete the OSSLT have opportunities to retake the test in subsequent years, on dates scheduled by the EQAO. Once students have successfully completed the OSSLT, they may not retake it, e.g. to achieve a better mark. Note: the OSSLT takes place in the language of instruction of the school in which the student is enrolled (which may be English or French). It is based on two question papers and includes reading comprehension tests with multiple-choice answers (there are machine-scored,) and writing tasks which are externally marked by subject specialist markers employed by the EQAO.

School boards are required to provide remedial assistance for students who do not complete the OSSLT successfully. This remedial assistance should be designed to help students improve their skills so that they are better prepared to retake the literacy test,

which they can do the next year. For example, a board could offer a credit course on learning strategies, or one on literacy skills for these students.

If a student has had two opportunities to take the OSSLT and has failed it at least once, he / she is eligible to enrol in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). Principals also have the discretion to allow a student to enrol in the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to take the OSSLT, if the principal determines that this is in the best educational interest of the student. The OSSLC aims to provide students who have been unsuccessful on the OSSLT with an alternative means of demonstrating their literacy skills. It is a Grade 12 course offered as part of the English programme in Ontario secondary schools and includes the required reading and writing

competencies for students who successfully complete it to have met the provincial literacy requirement for graduation. They earn one credit for the course.

School boards may also establish adjudication panels at the end of the school year to provide students with an additional opportunity to meet the literacy graduation requirement. The process is designed for students who, through no fault of their own, have not been able to take advantage of the normal opportunities to take the OSSLT and / or students who have not been able to enrol in or complete the OSSLC because of unforeseen circumstances.

Successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) is the stepping stone into the workplace or on to further education in college courses, apprenticeship

programmes, or university. The OSSD is the first, minimum requirement for university admission but, in addition, universities will usually require students to have passed a specific minimum number of OSSD courses at specific levels (and often at a minimum overall average grade). Individual programmes / courses will also usually stipulate specific prerequisite subject requirements – and grades – which can vary each year dependent on competition, and some universities will not consider out-of-school secondary course components such as co-op programmes (see the subheading ‘Available pathways / programmes’) in their admissions criteria. There may also be ‘non-academic’ requirements for admission, such as the provision of a portfolio, or an admission essay, or the successful completion of an interview or audition.

## Reporting

In Grades 9-12, student achievement must be communicated formally to students and their parents by means of the Provincial Report Card. The Report Card provides a record of the student’s

achievement of the curriculum expectations in every course, at particular points in the school year or semester, in the form of a percentage grade. The percentage grade represents the

quality of the student’s overall achievement of the expectations for the course and reflects the corresponding level of achievement as described in the achievement chart for the discipline. Achievement

charts are included as part of the curriculum expectations for all subjects in the [Ontario Curriculum](#) documents for Grades 9-12. A final grade is recorded for every course, and a credit is granted and recorded for every course in which the student's grade is 50 per cent or higher.

In addition, all schools must produce an Ontario Student Record (OSR) for all students enrolled in the school. This Record, which goes with a student when he / she transfers to a different school, is the formal record of a student's educational progress through schools in Ontario. Students' report cards throughout compulsory education – including the Provincial Report Card for Grades 9-12 – form part of the OSR, along with the Ontario Student Transcript (OST), which is a cumulative and continuous record of a student's successful completion of Grade 9 and 10 courses, successful and unsuccessful attempts at completing Grade 11 and 12 courses, and completion of other diploma requirements.

Students meeting the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requirements (30 credits; successful completion of

the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) (or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC); and 40 hours of community involvement activities receive the diploma.

Students who complete the requirements for the OSSD and for the Specialist High School Major (SHSM) Program (see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes') receive an OSSD embossed with a red Specialist High Skills Major seal. Credits earned towards an SHSM are also indicated on the Provincial Report Card, and completion of an SHSM Program is recorded on the Ontario Student Transcript, OST. In addition, students receive an SHSM Record outlining their achievement with respect to the five required components (eight to ten Grade 11 and 12 credits; sector training and certification; sector experiential learning and career exploration activities; 'reach-ahead' experiences; and essential skills and work habits required in the sector), and a copy of the SHSM Record is filed in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR). Students who do not complete all the requirements for an SHSM or who transfer to another school before completing

the SHSM Program receive a copy of their SHSM Record with the notation 'Partially Completed'. A copy is also filed in the student's OSR.

On request, students who reach the age of 18 without having met the OSSD requirements and are leaving secondary school, can receive the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC). To receive the OSSC, a student must have earned a minimum of 14 credits, including:

- 7 compulsory credits (2 credits in English, 1 credit in mathematics, 1 credit in science, 1 credit in Canadian history or Canadian geography, 1 credit in health and physical education, 1 credit in the arts, computer studies, or technological education)
- 7 optional credits selected by the student from available courses.

Students who are leaving secondary school at age 18 without having met the requirements for the OSSD or the OSSC may be granted a Certificate of Accomplishment. This can be a useful means of recognising achievement for students who plan

to take certain kinds of further training, or who plan to find employment directly after leaving school. The Certificate of Accomplishment is accompanied by the student's Ontario Student Transcript (OST). For students with special educational needs who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a copy of the IEP may be included with the Certificate of Accomplishment. Students who return to school to complete additional credit and non-credit courses (including courses with modified or alternative expectations in special

education programmes) have their transcript updated accordingly, but are not issued with a new Certificate of Accomplishment. Students who return to school to complete additional credit courses are granted the Ontario Secondary School Diploma or Ontario Secondary School Certificate when they have fulfilled the appropriate requirements.

On the recommendation of the principal, the Minister of Education grants diplomas and certificates at any time during the year to students who have successfully

completed the necessary requirements.

The Ontario Scholar Program recognises students who have earned an Ontario Secondary School Diploma in the current or previous school year and who have attained an aggregate of at least 480 marks in any combination of Ministry-approved courses that provide a total of 6 credits. Upon the recommendation of their principal, these graduating students receive a certificate from the Minister of Education.

## Flexibility and transfer options

- What flexibility is inherent in the system for movement between or within pathways?
- What are the student transfer options?
- Can students combine study across schools / institutions?
- Can credits / certification be transferred?

Some students may change their educational goals as they proceed through secondary school. The essential principle behind the organisation of secondary level education and the various pathways which can offer credit towards high school graduation is that options for students remain flexible, so that they can shift between pathways, should their goals and plans change.

Should students decide to embark on a new pathway, they may find that they have not completed all of the prerequisite courses they need. Schools must make provisions to allow students to make such changes of direction and must clearly describe these provisions in their school programme / course calendar. In most cases, a student may enrol in a different type of course in a given subject in Grade 10 than the type he or she completed

in Grade 9, although doing so may require additional preparation, as recommended by the principal.

In Grades 10 to 12, a student may change to a different type of course in a given subject provided that he / she has taken any course specified as a prerequisite for that course. If the student has not done so, he or she may take one of the specified prerequisite courses through summer school, night school, e-learning, the Independent Learning Centre (Ontario's designated provider of distance education), or independent study. If the principal believes that a student can be successful in a particular course without having taken the specified prerequisite course, he / she may waive the prerequisite. Note: the Ministry of Education publishes Grade 9-12 course descriptions and prerequisites (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011a).

Secondary school students who transfer from one Ontario secondary school to another have their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) credits (as recorded on their Ontario Student Transcript, OST) transferred with them, along with information on their progress towards meeting graduation requirements (i.e. whether they have met the literacy graduation requirement; their accumulated community involvement hours). The principal of the receiving school may award credit for work started in the previous school but completed in the receiving school.

If a student transfers from a French-language to an English-language secondary school, he or she must successfully complete at least one compulsory Grade 12 English course in order to meet graduation requirements. If a student transfers from an English-language to a French-language secondary school,

he or she must successfully complete at least one compulsory Grade 12 French course. A student who transfers before having met the literacy graduation requirement will have to meet the requirement in the language of instruction of the new school.

Where a student does not achieve the curriculum expectations of a course, the principal and teaching staff, in consultation with the parents and the student, determine what type of programme would best enable the student to meet the expectations and earn credit for the course. Schools are expected to make 'credit recovery programmes' available to their students. These programmes are designed to help students to successfully demonstrate any unmet expectations of courses they have completed but for which they have received a failing grade. Students should be allowed to repeat only the material relating to the expectations not achieved, providing that the eligibility requirements for credit recovery are met. Alternatively, the student may repeat the entire course. A credit (or credits) for a course must be recovered within two years from the time the

student fails the course. Students may work on recovering more than one credit at a time through the credit recovery process, and there is no limit on the number of credits a student may recover. Credit recovery may be delivered as part of the regular day school programme and / or at summer school and instruction must be delivered by a qualified teacher. Credit recovery programmes may also accommodate continuous intake and be delivered through e-learning. Schools are similarly expected to enable students who fail to achieve the OSSD literacy requirement through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) to complete a Grade 12 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) to achieve this requirement.

Students who have successfully completed Grade 8 (elementary school, aged 13/14) are admitted to a secondary school (high school). Under exceptional circumstances, an individual student in Grade 8, with parental consent, may be given permission by the principal of a secondary school to 'reach ahead' to take secondary school courses, either during the school year or in the summer prior to entering

Grade 9. This is aimed at motivating, engaging and encouraging individual students about to embark on their high school career. Similarly, some students in Grade 8 can start accumulating community involvement hours towards the OSSD requirement.

In addition to having the flexibility to combine credits from a range of alternative study programmes (e.g. Dual Credit Programs; cooperative education programmes; career-focused Specialist High School Major (SHSM) Programs, see the subheading 'Available pathways / programmes'), students completing their OSSD also have the flexibility to complete the diploma in four or five years. Students usually take around eight credits each year towards their OSSD and complete secondary school in four years. Some, however, take a fifth year or an additional semester. Extending their studies in this way allows them to take fewer credit courses towards their OSSD each year which can help them to achieve high school graduation. It can also allow them the flexibility / time to explore their interests in other school subjects and so ensure that they are adequately prepared for

their future.

A formal evaluation and accreditation process, known as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), also allows students to have knowledge and skills gained in both formal and informal ways, outside Ontario secondary school classrooms, evaluated against the overall

expectations outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents and recognised as credits towards the OSSD. PLAR procedures are carried out under the direction of the school principal, who grants credits.

Adults who have not completed their high school diploma and are no longer enrolled in high school can

also gain credits towards OSSD completion while in employment through adult cooperative education programmes. Students submit assignments that cover the academic component of the programme and, combined with their employment experience, this can earn high school credits.

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## Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Certificate of Accomplishment		Students who are leaving secondary school at age 18 without having met the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) may be granted a Certificate of Accomplishment.
cooperative education programmes	co-op programmes	Programmes that allow secondary students to gain a maximum of two compulsory credits (and any number of optional credits) towards their high school graduation requirements through courses combining school (curriculum-based) courses and a work placement.
Dual Credit Programs		Programmes that allow students, while they are still in secondary school, to take college or apprenticeship courses that count towards both their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, or a Certificate of Apprenticeship. Students may earn up to four optional OSSD credits for college-delivered dual credit courses.
EQAO	Education Quality Accountability Office	The independent agency that creates and administers the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) (and other large-scale assessments) in Ontario.
ESL	English as a second language	
exceptional students		Students whose special educational needs are formally recognised through an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and recorded in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are formally known as exceptional students.
experiential learning		Learning based on experience and observation and on students being directly involved in the learning experience.
high school		Secondary school in Ontario providing compulsory phase education for students aged 14-18 in Grades 9-12.
IEP	Individual Education Plan	A written plan describing the special education programme and / or services required by a particular student. It is based on an assessment of the student's strengths and needs that affect his / her ability to learn and demonstrate learning.
IPP	Individual Pathways Plan	A web-based plan developed by all students from Grade 7 (age 12, in elementary school) onwards. This records their goals and learning and is the main planning tool for students as they move towards the next step after school.
IPRC	Identification Placement and Review Committee	The Committee which formally recognises a student's special educational needs and requires that they are provided with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
ISR	Individual Student Record	The report from the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) recording a student's results in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

locally developed courses		Courses developed by a school board for students in a particular school or region. They accommodate educational and / or career preparation needs that are not met through courses within the Ontario Curriculum policy documents.
OSP	Ontario Skills Passport	The OSP provides descriptions of the essential skills and work habits important for success in work, learning and life. Learners can use the OSP to assess, document and track their skills and help make decisions on their learning.
OSR	Ontario Student Record	The formal record of a student's educational progress through schools in Ontario. All students have one and it is transferred with them when they move school.
OSSC	Ontario Secondary School Certificate	Students who reach the age of 18 without having met the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), and are leaving secondary school, can receive the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC).
OSSD	Ontario Secondary School Diploma	The high school graduation certificate usually achieved at around age 18.
OSSLC	Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course	Students must pass this course (or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, OSSLT) as part of the requirements for the successful completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).
OSSLT	Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test	Students must pass this test (or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course, OSSLC) as part of the requirements for the successful achievement of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).
OST	Ontario Student Transcript	A cumulative and continuous record of a student's successful and / or unsuccessful completion of secondary school courses (in Grades 9-12, ages 14-18), and of his / her completion of other diploma requirements.
OYAP	Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program	A programme for students in Grades 11 and 12 (ages 16-18) which enables them to have the opportunity to start training in a skilled trade while completing their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition	Allows students to have knowledge and skills gained in both formal and informal ways, outside Ontario secondary school classrooms, evaluated against the overall expectations outlined in the Ontario Curriculum documents and recognised as credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).
PPLP	Personalised Placement Learning Plan	This must be developed for all students participating in a cooperative education programme.
SHSM Programs	Specialist High Skills Major Programs	Ministry-approved specialist, career-focused programmes that allow senior secondary students to acquire technical knowledge and skills in specific economic sectors while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).