

1. Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework

A. Descriptions of Degree Categories

The following descriptions of degree categories are intended to capture the most salient general aspects of the three principal degree levels offered in Canada. They apply to a broad spectrum of disciplines, program types, and program lengths. The descriptors on the left-hand side are similar to the “Bologna Descriptors” used by many other jurisdictions, notably including the 25 countries in the European Union, the 20 countries that have formally associated with the European Union’s project to develop common standards and quality assurance procedures, and many quality assurance agencies

belonging to the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. The intent of such frameworks is to provide an agreed description of what each degree level is intended to achieve in general learning outcomes. This Canadian version is intended to provide a broad framework for each degree level, leaving to each province/territory the development of more detailed qualifications frameworks for degree credentials offered in its jurisdiction. Other credentials, such as associate degrees, special categories of applied degrees, and certificates and diplomas related to both undergraduate and postgraduate study will need to be articulated at the provincial/territorial level.

DESCRIPTION	BACHELOR’S DEGREE	MASTER’S DEGREE	DOCTORAL DEGREE
Program Design and Outcome Emphasis	<p>The credential awarded for the bachelor’s degree is designed to acquaint the student with the basic conceptual approaches and methodologies of the principal discipline or disciplines that constitute the program of study, to provide some specialized knowledge, and to nurture the capacity for independent work in the discipline/disciplines and field of practice.</p> <p>All bachelor’s programs are designed to provide graduates with knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work. That capacity may be demonstrated by the preparation, under supervision, of one or more essays, a terminal research paper, thesis, project, exhibition, or other research-based or performance-based exercise that demonstrates methodological competence and capacity for independent and ethical intellectual/creative work and, where relevant, the exercise of professional responsibility in a field of practice.</p> <p>Some bachelor’s-degree programs are intended to provide a wide exposure to several disciplines, others to provide an in-depth education in one or more disciplines (often as preparation for graduate study), and still others to provide a blend of theory and practice that equips students for entry into an occupation or profession. Despite that diversity, each bachelor’s-degree program must meet a substantial and common set of competency outcomes, as outlined below, to justify use of the bachelor’s-degree label. The range of bachelor’s programs includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Programs designed to provide a broad education</i> 	<p>A master’s degree program builds on knowledge and competencies acquired during related undergraduate study and requires more specialized knowledge and intellectual autonomy than a bachelor’s-degree program. Much of the study undertaken at the master’s level will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown some originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show independent capacity in addressing issues and problems.</p> <p>Research-oriented master’s programs are typically for graduates of related undergraduate or professional programs in the field or students who have taken bridging studies to equip them for graduate study in the field; the focus is on developing the research, analytical, methodological, interpretive, and expository skills necessary for doctoral studies or for leadership in society. Some programs are thesis-based and require the student to develop and demonstrate advanced research skills under supervision. Others are course-based and require students to demonstrate the necessary research, analytical, interpretative, methodological, and expository skills in course exercises.</p> <p>Examples: MA programs in the humanities and social sciences, MSc programs</p> <p>Profession-oriented master’s programs normally admit students holding baccalaureate degrees and provide them with a selection of courses and exercises intended to prepare them for a particular profession or field of practice or, if they are already involved in the profession or field, to extend their knowledge base and skills as professionals/practitioners.</p> <p>Example: MSW (Social Work)</p>	<p>A doctoral program builds on the knowledge and competencies in a field or discipline acquired during prior study, usually at the graduate level. Study at the doctoral level is at the forefront of an academic or professional discipline.</p> <p>Holders of the doctoral degree must have demonstrated a high degree of intellectual autonomy, an ability to conceptualize, design, and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding, and an ability to create and interpret knowledge that extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research or creative activity.</p> <p>Preparation for doctoral work may involve course work of varying lengths aimed at cultivating further conceptual depth or breadth. It may also involve written and oral examinations of knowledge and skills in aspects of the discipline prior to authorization to proceed to work on a dissertation.</p> <p>Research-oriented doctoral programs focus on the development of the conceptual and methodological knowledge and skills required to do original research and to make an original contribution to knowledge in the form of a dissertation. In some fields an internship or exhibition component may be required, but without diluting the significance of the dissertation as the primary demonstration of mastery.</p> <p>Such programs lead to the award of the PhD.</p>

	<p><i>as an end in itself.</i> They may also prepare graduates for employment in a variety of fields and/or for admission to second-entry professional programs.</p> <p>Examples: BHum (Humanities), General BA and General BSc degrees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Programs designed to provide in-depth study in academic disciplines.</i> They normally prepare students for graduate study in the discipline(s) and for employment in a variety of fields. • <i>Programs with an applied focus.</i> They blend theory and practice, with content selected to ensure mastery of the field of practice rather than to deepen knowledge in the discipline/disciplines for their own sake or as preparation for further study in the discipline. Even so, they may prepare students for further study depending upon the field and length and depth of the program; graduates may or may not require preparatory studies before entering graduate programs. While professional associations or accrediting bodies may set entry-to-practice standards for such programs, those standards are not normally obligatory for the institution offering the program. • <i>Programs with a professional focus.</i> They are designed to prepare graduates to meet admission requirements and to be competent practitioners in the profession. Some of them are first-entry programs, others are second-entry programs (that is, they require some prior degree-level study or even a degree). They normally require periods of practical experience (apprenticeship, internship, articling, clinical, etc.). The capacity for independent professional work is demonstrated by academic and practical exercises, under supervision, followed by admission tests to the profession. Though considered to be bachelor's programs in academic standing, some professional programs yield degrees with other nomenclature. <p>Examples: DDS (Dental Surgery), MD (Medicine), LLB, or JD (Juris Doctor)</p>		<p>Examples: PhD (Psychology), PhD (Education), PhD (Music)</p> <p>Practice-oriented doctoral programs are of a more applied nature, relate to a professional or creative activity and, where there is an internship or exhibition requirement, may also require a dissertation. Doctoral programs with an orientation to practice typically involve more course work than doctoral programs with a more theoretical or disciplinary focus. Such programs lead to the award of a degree designation reflecting the field or discipline.</p> <p>Examples: EdD (Education), MusDoc (Music), PsyD (Psychology).</p>
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Preparation for Employment and Further Study	In addition to providing personal and intellectual growth, bachelor's programs, in varying degrees, may prepare students for entry into graduate study in the field, second-entry professional degree programs, or employment in one or more fields.	Graduates will have the qualities needed for either further study in the discipline or for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgment, personal responsibility and initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments.	Holders of doctorates will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, and innovation in tackling and solving problems.
Length of Program	Owing primarily to variations in pre-university studies among the provinces/territories, classroom instruction is typically six to eight semesters or more in duration (normally 90-120 credits, or the equivalent) and may be supplemented by required professional experience (e.g., supervised practica, internships, and work terms).	Master's programs vary typically from two to six semesters in duration, depending on the field and the speed at which individuals progress through requirements.	A doctoral program is typically three to six years in length, depending on the field and the speed at which individuals progress through requirements.
Admission Requirements	Admission normally requires, at a minimum, a secondary school or CEGEP diploma and/or university preparatory courses, a minimum grade-point average, and other program-specific requirements. Students lacking these credentials may be admitted on a part-time or probationary basis, with continuation subject to acceptable academic achievement. Second-entry programs normally require at least two or three years of completed degree-level studies or in some cases the prior or concurrent completion of another undergraduate degree.	Normally, an undergraduate degree with an appropriate specialization or an undergraduate degree with relevant bridging studies.	Normally, a master's degree with an appropriate specialization or a master's degree with appropriate bridging studies.

B. Degree-Level Standards

The focus of the following degree-level standards is on the expectations of graduates at each degree. The standards stipulate the demonstrable transferable learning skills and level of mastery of a body of specialized knowledge in six dimensions: 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge, 2. Knowledge of Methodologies, 3. Application of Knowledge, 4. Communication Skills, 5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge, and 6. Professional Capacity/Autonomy. The shades of distinction between degrees are determined by the capacity of the graduate at each level to act competently, creatively and independently, and by their proximity to the forefront of a discipline and/or profession. Among other things, the degree-level standards are intended (a) to facilitate the assessment of credentials for broad purposes of credit transfer and credential recognition, (b) to provide clear learning-outcome standards to instructional and program designers, (c) as a broad framework for quality assurance purposes. The standards are intended to be cumulative — each degree level presupposes the accomplishment of an earlier one.

	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	MASTER'S DEGREE	DOCTORAL DEGREE
EXPECTATIONS	<i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i>	<i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i>	<i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i>
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	(a) Knowledge and critical understanding in a field of study that builds upon their secondary education and includes the key assumptions, methodologies, and applications of the discipline and/or field of practice (b) Basic understanding of the range of fields within the discipline/field of practice and of how the discipline may intersect with fields in related disciplines (c) The ability to gather, review, evaluate, and interpret information, including new information relevant to the discipline, and to compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline (d) The capacity to engage in independent research or practice in a supervised context (e) Critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline (f) The ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline	A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice.	A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice.

2. Knowledge of Methodologies and Research	<p>(a) An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to (i) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques, (ii) devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods, and (iii) describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship in the discipline and on their relevance to the evolution of the discipline</p> <p>(b) The ability to review, present, and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to (i) develop lines of argument; (ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts, and methods of the subject(s) of study; (iii) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline; and (iv), where appropriate, use this knowledge in the creative process</p>	<p>A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that enables the graduate to</p> <p>(a) Have a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline</p> <p>(b) Have a capacity to evaluate critically current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence, and on the basis of that competence, have shown at least one of the following: (i) the development and support of a sustained argument in written form or (ii) originality in the application of knowledge.</p>	<p>A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that provides the graduate with the ability to</p> <p>(a) Conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems</p> <p>(b) Make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods</p> <p>(c) Produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication</p>
3. Application of Knowledge	<p>(a) The ability to use a range of established techniques to (i) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts, and information; (ii) propose solutions; (iii) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem; (iv) solve a problem or create a new work</p> <p>(b) The ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>	<p>The capacity to (i) address complex issues and judgments based on established principles and techniques and (ii) apply an existing body of knowledge in the research and critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.</p>	<p>The capacity to (i) undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level and (ii) contribute to the development of academic or professional skill, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.</p>
4. Communication Skills	<p>The ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, using structured and coherent arguments, and, where appropriate, informed by key concepts and techniques of the discipline.</p>	<p>The ability to communicate ideas, issues, and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.</p>	<p>The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues, and conclusions clearly and effectively.</p>
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	<p>An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability; an appreciation of the uncertainty and ambiguity of and limits to knowledge, and an appreciation of how this might influence analyses and interpretations.</p>	<p>A cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.</p>	<p>An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.</p>

6. Professional Capacity/ Autonomy	Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring (i) the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts, (ii) working effectively with others, and (iii) behaviour consistent with academic integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring (i) the exercise of initiative and of personal responsibility and accountability and (ii) decision-making in complex situations, such as employment (b) The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development (c) The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations (b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current (c) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts
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