

A Brief Special Education Guide for Students Transitioning to Post Secondary Institutions and their Parents/Guardians:

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are almost finished your secondary school years, and you are looking to transition to a post-secondary Institution. This is a significant milestone - and one that you should be proud of achieving. Although exciting, this transition can also bring some anxiety with it. This is natural, as any change can make us nervous, but it is also what makes us more resilient and makes us better learners.

A TEAM APPROACH

Do not worry! You are not alone in your transition to post-secondary education. You have a whole team to help you. Members of that team will include your friends and family, secondary school staff, community agencies, and Niagara Catholic board staff, as all of these people know you well and can offer insight about you as a learner. As you explore programs at the post-secondary institution, you will also have support from Admissions Offices, Accessibility Centers, and the myriad of supports already put in place for all first-year students. You may also want to reach out to some of your community members for transition programs. For example, LDANR (Learning Disabilities Association Niagara Region) in association with Niagara Catholic, offers a post-secondary SOAR transition program.

THE TRANSITION PLAN:

A key component of your IEP is your transition plan. As you leave secondary school, you will take over ownership of your plan since we do not send your IEP to your post-secondary school. However, you are encouraged to share it with the Accessibility Office of your new school once you accept your offer. As you go through life, having a plan with goals, action items and time for reflection will help you stay on track. Some additional reasons for having a plan include:

- A plan will allow you to navigate life's changes in a meaningful and positive way.
- A plan will enable you to spend time reflecting on where your passions and interests lie and set a pathway for you.
- A plan will help you look to the future.
- A plan will help identify the supports you can access and keep you on track in your post-secondary education.

YOUR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS:

Grade 11 marks the time where you get to choose many of the courses you want and where you get to explore some possible pathways. You should also be well on your way to meeting the OSSD requirements including appropriate credits, the literacy requirement, and Christian Community Service hours. If you have any questions, please make sure to talk to Student Services staff, including Special Education and Guidance. As a Catholic Secondary School student, you should also work towards achieving excellence of the [Catholic Graduate Expectations](#).

Be sure to complete the interests and career exploration surveys in MyBlueprint via [NCVLE](#). It would be also a good idea to you to check out mywayto.niagaracatholic.ca for some information on programs such as SHSM (Specialist High Skills Major), Dual Credit options, Co-Op, OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship





Program) , and the SCWI (School College Work Initiative). Meet regularly with your team to discuss your interests, goals, and possible career options. Guidance will be an important resource for you and can help you navigate your search when you run into roadblocks. This is particularly important when you are thinking of program requirements and required courses. Do not forget to talk to your family, friends, and teachers, who may have some useful insight for your career search.

PROGRAM NAVIGATION

A major focus for your Grade 12 year will be determining next steps in your transition plan. Niagara Catholic Guidance counsellors will offer a series of events throughout the year that will be extremely important. Make sure to visit the Student Services NCVLE classroom for all the latest information. The two most important sites for your research are ontariocolleges.ca and ontariouniversitiesinfo.ca.

Making decisions is difficult, and the important thing is to keep as many doors open as possible while determining which pathway is best suited for you. Some students are not sure of their final destination, so take advantage of the many bridge programs between Colleges and Universities. Plan to attend as many specific post-secondary fairs and special presentations as you need. This step is sometimes rushed, and if you rush, you may find yourself in a program that you really are not interested in - and then you may need to backtrack because you didn't follow through with a well-developed plan.

In addition to fairs and presentations, you should plan to make a couple of visits to post-secondary institutions. This step will allow you to see your program up close. You will see the post-secondary institution and experience student life. When there, you should be able to envision what the next few years will look like.

APPLICATION PROCESS

It is important to follow information posted in your school [NCVLE](#) Student Services classroom and other places where your school posts information for you. Ultimately, it is up to you to take charge of the application process. Below is a summary of information but specific deadlines change per year and vary depending on the program that you are interested in. Due diligence is extremely important.

University	College
Requires 6 12U or M level courses plus any specific requirements for the program.	Almost all programs require 12C English. Many programs have specific requirements as well.
ontariouniversitiesinfo.ca is an excellent site to research programs and schools	ontariocolleges.ca is an excellent site to start your search and follow online.
ouac.on.ca contains additional information on schools and is the central application center for applying to university.	You will apply to programs through ontariocolleges.ca directly.
OUAC will send PINs (personal identification number) in early November to the high school which you will need when applying	Applications open in early October. You are encouraged to apply early, particularly for competitive programs.
Deadline to apply is in mid-January. Mark the specific date for your year in your personal calendar.	Deadline for competitive programs is in late January although non-competitive programs are open.





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Your fee to apply will cover three programs but you can apply to more with a slight additional fee. You are encouraged to apply to more than the minimum number of programs.	Your fee covers 5 programs with a limit of 3 at any college.
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POST SECONDARY SUPPORTS

Post-secondary institutions offer a variety of supports for students who meet the criteria. A good place to start your research is by visiting [Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities - Transition to Post-Secondary Education](#). This resource contains a list of supports and contact information for all post secondary institutions in Ontario. In order to access full supports, you will most likely require an initial or an updated psycho educational assessment which has been done in the past few years. If you don't have a recent assessment, you have some options. The post-secondary institution may be able to complete one for you, and if you qualify for OSAP, then the Bursary of Students with a Disability can cover the cost of your assessment. The second option is to have one completed privately in your grade 12 year. Your parents may have employee benefits that may cover the cost. Another option is to connect with the [Regional Assessment and Resource Centre](#) run out of Queen's University. While waiting for a formal assessment, the post-secondary institution may put in place some temporary accommodations.

The following chart outlines some of the key differences between accommodations at the elementary/secondary vs post-secondary level.

Key Differences with Accommodations

Elementary/High school	College/University
Support transfers when a student switches schools and is arranged by the schools.	A student must self-identify. No information is transferred from the high school directly to the post-secondary school.
An IEP is easily created when concerns are brought to the school team.	Supports are student initiated by contacting the Accessibility Centre.
An assessment is not required before the addition of accommodations	Accommodations are generally only provided based on a recent Psycho Educational assessment. OSAP funding through the Bursary for Students with a Disability could cover the cost. Another source of funding is through employer benefits of parents.
Parents have direct input into the process	Only students (not parents) have direct input into the process
An Individual Education Plan is created which includes a review of any assessments, strengths, needs, accommodations, transition plans and additional required supports.	A letter of accommodations is provided to professors with no additional information provided. Students should share their individual specific needs directly as required.





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An Educational Resource teacher monitors and supports both the student and his/her teachers.	A variety of supports such as counsellors, accessibility consultants, assistive technologists and learning strategists can be accessed as needed and only when they are sought out by the student.
A wide variety of accommodations (environmental, instructional and assessment) and some modifications can be utilized.	Most common accommodations include a reduced course load, access to computers, extended time, permission to record lectures, short breaks, time extensions, a note taker or assistive technology.

Like secondary schools, post-secondary institutions offer a variety of additional supports for students which may include:

- Anxiety and depression
- Resolving academic difficulties
- Time and stress management
- Relationship difficulties
- Mental health and wellness
- Finances
- Personal crisis
- Substance use/abuse
- Career exploration
- Test taking
- Educational planning
- Crisis intervention
- Reading/writing/math
- Healthy sexuality, body image issues
- Doctor's clinics
- Lifestyle choices

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The cost of a post-secondary education can be expensive, but you can look at a number of possible sources of income to help you out. You may be eligible for OSAP. Guidance will offer presentations on how to apply to OSAP and recommend that you apply once you accept your position. For more information, please go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-apply-osap#section->. There are also numerous scholarships (based on academic merit/skills) and bursaries/grants that you can apply for. Many of these are through the post-secondary school while others are through websites. Guidance also advertises regularly about financial assistance opportunities. You can also go to <https://mywayto.niagaracatholic.ca/graduate-scholarships.html>





for additional opportunities.

SELECTING YOUR PROGRAM AND NEXT STEPS

Once you accept your program, it is now important for you to do three things:

1. Make an appointment with the accessibility center to discuss your letter of accommodations. Bring all of your paperwork with you including your most recent IEP and psycho educational assessment.
2. Be prepared to advocate for yourself. If you do not ask for supports, you won't have them.
3. Take advantage of the post-secondary transition programs. Many of these programs happen in the weeks leading up to your first year and are wonderful ways to get to know the school and supports in advance. For example, Brock University runs a [SMART Start Orientation](#) for all students. You can request to meet with their [Student Accessibility Office](#) at that time if you like. Brock University also runs a two day Start with Strategies program designed to support students with documented disabilities. For those attending Niagara College, you might want to start with their [Accessibility Services Support Guide](#).

Make the most of your post-secondary school years: Set goals, develop a plan for success, and above all else, enjoy the process! All of us at Niagara Catholic are proud of what you accomplished so far and wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

