

Planning
Series

Education and Training Planner

UPDATED 2007



Alberta
Government

This easy-to-read book is written for youth and adults. It will help you plan your career by increasing your learning and work exploration, and by improving your ability to make life and work decisions. It will help you:

- investigate education and training opportunities in Alberta
- explore and compare the advantages and disadvantages of education and training programs related to your preferred future
- plan and complete steps for registration
- plan strategies for covering costs related to education and training
- develop an action plan
- connect with further information and resources.

This publication is available on-line through the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website— Alberta’s leading on-line source for career, learning and employment information and services. To access this and additional publications, visit **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop**

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Related Topics: Where you can go for more information

The Planning Series consists of three books—*Career Planner: Choosing an occupation*, *Education and Training Planner* and *Adult Back to School Planner*. These easy-to-read books all contain information, exercises and resources to help you make career and training decisions.

The Table of Contents lists the topics covered in this planner. Are you interested in getting information on other topics related to planning your education and training? Or would you like more detailed information than we have here? Then, get a copy of the publications listed on the right or visit the websites. For ordering information, see Resources at the end of this book.

Topic	Resources
Career choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Career Planner: Choosing an occupation</i> • www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo
Workplace research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding Out: How to get the information you need to make the choices you want</i>
Education and training choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time to Choose: a post-secondary education program</i> • www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo
Going back to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adult Back to School Planner</i>
Budgeting for school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Money 101: Budgeting basics for further education</i> • <i>Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting basics</i> • www.alis.gov.ab.ca/studentsfinance • www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships
Job search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Job Seeker's Handbook</i>

P lanning to Learn

If you're reading this book, chances are you already know that you want to go back to school. You've looked at your life. You've done some research and thought about your options. You've made some decisions. Maybe you have a career goal in mind. Perhaps you've chosen a specific occupation.

Whatever is true for you, you've decided that you need to keep learning. But before you do that, you need answers. You have to look at your education and training options and make new decisions. This is going to take more thinking, research, and planning.

Is this book right for you? Look at these statements. How many of them do you agree with? Even if you agree with only one, you'll want to read through this planner.

This book is for you if...

- you've already done some career planning
- you have a career goal
- you would like to learn more about how to plan your education and training
- you are not sure what education options are available
- you would like to find a program to pursue
- you are eager to enter a program and begin learning new things.

How to use this planner

This planner is meant to give you the information you need to make the education and training choices that will work for you. You will have the opportunity to:

- read information and do exercises
- answer some important questions about your own needs
- look at the options, do some research and talk to people
- collect information from a variety of sources
- do some comparison shopping among education and training options
- think about your financial situation
- contemplate what steps you need to take to reach your career goals.

By completing the exercises and reading all the information, you can make a plan for pursuing your education and training. If at any point, you want to talk to someone, contact a career counsellor or call the Alberta Career Information Hotline. Throughout this planner, we talk about other places you can go for help. See the Resources section for more information.



What are my Education and Training Options?

Making a choice:

What do I *need* to learn?

What do I *want* to learn?

How do you decide on an education and training program? Do you pick a program that will help you do the kind of work you want to do? Do you pick what you *need* to learn? Or do you go with your heart and pick what you *want* to learn?

Actually, selecting education and training that works for you is a little bit of both. If you have already done some career planning and decided on an occupation, the path may be quite clear. Maybe you can go straight into the program because you already meet the entrance requirements. Your main task now is to look at the programs that will get you what you want and decide which one is best for you. If this is you, you can skip ahead to the section, *Be a Smart Shopper: Choosing the Right School or Program*.

Or, perhaps you may have to do some other things first. For example, if you haven't finished high school, you may have to take high school classes. Maybe you want to improve your reading and writing so you can

move in a new career direction. You may have to take some adult literacy classes or basic education classes.

Once you've decided what you *need* to learn, you can decide what you *want* to learn. This can be a little harder to do. Maybe there seem to be too many choices. Maybe you haven't even thought about what you want. If you're not sure about what you want to study, read this section for information on the variety of programs.

We are all individuals. Each of us has our own interests, abilities and values. Even if you don't already have a specific occupation in mind, you can still think about what field you want to go into. Do you want to go into the service industry? Maybe you like to work with people. Perhaps you like to work with numbers. Would you like to work in health care? There are probably occupations that didn't even exist when you first went to school. Talk to a counsellor about what choices you have. Attend a career planning workshop. You may be surprised by the options that are available!

For more information on occupational choices, read *Career Planner: Choosing an occupation*.

Your learning style

Before you choose your program, school and courses, think about your *learning style*. It's important to figure out how you learn best. We all have different ways of taking in and keeping information. Our learning style is based on lots of factors, like our experiences, how we grew up and the kind of people we are. Research shows that if we are able to match our learning with our *learning style*, we will probably do better in school.

Different kinds of learners

We all have our own way of learning. We all have our own strengths and abilities. Some of us learn best with other students and a teacher. Others learn best when they are alone at home. Other people like to learn by being on an actual work site where they learn the job by doing the job.

At different times in their lives and in different situations, people may have more than one learning style. But there's usually one that suits them best. Here are the basic learning styles:

Learning by seeing

Some people learn best by *seeing* how things are done. They need pictures and other visual images to learn. These students might like charts and models that they can actually look at. Their eyes are one of their most important learning tools.

Learning by listening

Other people prefer to *listen* without having to take notes. They might record their classes and listen to them later. Maybe they like talking over homework problems on the phone. Their ears are one of their most important learning tools.

Learning by doing

There are also people who like to learn by *doing*. They must take notes, even when an outline is given out. They might make things while they're studying, like a house of cards or a paper airplane. This might also be the sort of person who likes to tinker with things and take things apart to see how they work. Their hands and whole bodies are two of their most important learning tools.

With help from a school advisor or your teacher, you may be able to figure out what kind of learner you are. If they know more about how you learn, they can help you become a more successful student.

Your needs and wants

In order to be successful in your education or training, it's important that the program you choose fits into your life. Ask yourself these questions about your needs and wants. The answers will help you narrow down the choices.

1. What kind of education or training interests me?

2. What am I most interested in?

3. What am I least interested in?

4. What am I good at?

5. What do I enjoy doing? What is really important to me?

6. Do I want on-the-job training?

7. Do I want to learn in a classroom?

8. Do I want to make money while I learn?

9. When do I want to start my education or training? Why?

10. How much time can I spend on education or training?

11. How much time can I spend on homework? (Most courses need two hours of homework for every one hour of class.)

12. Do I want to study full-time or part-time? Why?

13. Do I want to take courses during the day or evening?

14. How long will it take to reach my educational goal?

15. What do I want to do right after I finish school? What kind of job do I want to do?

16. What do I want to do five years from now? In the future?

17. What are my values?

18. Do I have any health concerns that might affect my education or training?

If you want to take a closer look at your career-related needs and wants, get a copy of *Career Planner: Choosing an Occupation*.

Types of schools for education and training in Alberta

Once you decide on the education or training you want, you'll have to decide *where* you can get it. You can get education or training in a variety of ways. Here is a short description of the types of schools. You can get more information about each school by contacting them directly. Ask for a copy of their calendar. Most schools also have a website. You can connect to many of these websites through the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website. See Resources at the end of this book for more information.

Public Colleges

Alberta has publicly funded colleges that offer academic upgrading, job readiness training, apprenticeship, certificate, diploma, university transfer, applied degree and undergraduate degree programs.

Some colleges offer programs and services to help people who haven't been in school for a while. They can also help unemployed and underemployed people learn skills they need to get jobs. The courses at these colleges are short and often specialized. Many colleges have mature student status. This means that students are over 18 and have been out of high school for a year or more.

Public colleges in Alberta

Some of these colleges have campuses in a number of communities:

- Alberta College of Art & Design (Calgary)
- Bow Valley College (Southern Alberta — multiple locations including Calgary)
- Grande Prairie Regional College (Grande Prairie)
- Grant MacEwan College (Edmonton)
- Keyano College (Fort McMurray)
- Lakeland College (Vermilion)
- Lethbridge Community College (Lethbridge)
- Medicine Hat College (Medicine Hat)
- Mount Royal College (Calgary)
- NorQuest College (Edmonton)
- Northern Lakes College (North Central Alberta — multiple locations)
- Olds College (Olds)
- Portage College (Lac La Biche)
- Red Deer College (Red Deer)

Private Colleges - Authorized to offer Degree Programs

There are also private colleges that have approved programs leading to university-level degrees.

Private colleges in Alberta approved to offer degree programs

- Alliance University College (Calgary)
- Canadian Nazarene University College (Calgary)
- Canadian University College (Lacombe)
- Concordia University College of Alberta (Edmonton)
- DeVry Institute of Technology (Calgary)
- The King's University College (Edmonton)
- St. Mary's University College (Calgary)
- Taylor University College and Seminary (Edmonton)

Technical Institutes

Technical institutes offer technical training mainly through certificate and diploma programs as well as applied degrees. They also offer apprenticeship, academic upgrading and continuing education programs.

Technical institutes in Alberta

- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) (Edmonton)
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) (Calgary)

Universities

Universities offer students the opportunity to earn a degree. The degree can be in specific occupations or in areas of general interest. To go to university, students usually have to have completed certain high school subjects and attained certain grades. Some universities keep a few spots open for older or mature students who have not matriculated from high school. They can be admitted as long as they meet other academic requirements. Mature students at university are usually over 21.

Universities in Alberta

- Athabasca University (The university is based in Athabasca. However, it delivers most of its programs through distance or on-line learning.)
- University of Alberta (Edmonton)
- University of Calgary (Calgary)
- University of Lethbridge (Lethbridge)

The Banff Centre

The Banff Centre is a publicly funded institution that provides advanced continuing education opportunities in fine arts, management studies, language training and environmental training for people who already have academic credentials and/or professional experience in their discipline.

Private Institutions offering vocational training

There are over 150 private institutions in Alberta that offer vocational training programs licensed under the *Private Vocational Schools Act* (PVS Act) by Alberta Advanced Education. These private institutions offer training in areas such as information technology, hairstyling, health care and truck driving.

Private institutions in Alberta

For a listing of private institutions:

- Call the Private Institutions branch of Alberta Advanced Education at (780) 427-5609
- Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline. See Resources at the end of this book.
- Visit the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca Choose EDinfo from the Special Features section and click on the Search by School button.

Other types of “schools”

You can also learn through other kinds of organizations or groups. Some offer farm training. Others may have programs in arts or business management. There are also courses and training provided by trade unions and community groups. Private providers, instructors and employers may also provide education programs.

Other types of schools in Alberta

To find out what’s available from these groups, check the yellow pages of your phone book under *Schools, Associations, Labour Organizations, Government of...*, or *City of...*

You can also visit the public library to find the names and addresses of schools and groups. They should also have information on occupations and organizations.

Types of programs for education and training in Alberta

The next section will give you a general idea of the many types of education and training programs in Alberta. This is just a starting point for your research. The following types of programs will be described briefly:

Adult upgrading options

- Literacy programs
- Basic education (grades 1–9)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- General Educational Development (GED) preparation and test
- Academic upgrading (grades 10–12)
- University and College Entrance Program (UCEP)
- Pre-employment programs
- Academic Foundations and Bridging programs
- Technical Entrance Preparation
- Part-time and full-time programs.

Training options

- Workplace training
- Government-funded training programs
- Licensed vocational training programs
- Apprenticeship (trades) programs
- Designated occupations programs
- Alberta Green Certificate program

Post-secondary options

- Technical institute programs
- College programs
- Private college approved degree programs
- University degree programs
- Co-operative education programs
- Licensed vocational training

Other options

- Distance education
- Continuing education

For more details about adult learning programs and schools in Alberta, get a copy of the book *Time to Choose: a post-secondary education program*. See Resources at the end of this book for ordering information. You can also learn more about programs and schools by calling the Alberta Career Information Hotline or visiting the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca and click on EDinfo.

Adult upgrading options

Literacy programs

There are many reasons why people want to improve their reading and writing. Do you want to improve your reading and writing so you can get a better job? Maybe you want to understand the signs on the bulletin board at your current job. Perhaps you want to continue your education.

There may be an adult literacy and an English as a Second Language program at your local Community Adult Learning Council or the local college. You can also see if there is a volunteer tutor literacy project in your area. This program can match you up with someone who can tutor you. More and more communities and workplaces have special programs for employees and others who want to learn English as a Second Language. For more information on literacy programs in Alberta, call the Literacy Help Line at 1-800-767-3231 or the Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education at (780) 427-5624 for your local Community Adult Learning Council or volunteer tutor adult literacy program.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- community Adult Learning Councils
- community organizations.

Basic education (grades 1–9)

Did you leave school when you were very young? Many adults go back to school to learn what they missed as children. There may be an adult basic education program in your area. It may hold classes in reading, writing and math up to about the Grade 9 level. If you want to go on in school, basic education can help you to do well in your academic upgrading program.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- technical institutes
- private institutions.

English as a Second Language programs (ESL)

People who have moved to Canada can find it very hard to cope if they can't speak English. Sometimes, people who were born in Canada will also take ESL classes. They may have grown up learning a language other than English.

There are two main types of English as a Second Language programs. One is for people who want to go to university, college, technical school or private institutions offering vocational programs. These people may already know English quite well. However, they need to improve their skills to continue their education.

The other type of ESL program is for people who need to learn English in order to do a job. Some immigrants worked in trades or professions before they came to Canada. This kind of course can help them get ready to do a similar job here. These ESL courses can also help people get into job training programs.

Where these programs are offered:

- Community Adult Learning Councils
- public colleges
- private institutions that are licensed to offer vocational training
- universities.

General Educational Development (GED) preparation and test

If you didn't finish high school, you might be accepted into a college or other training program if you first take a General Educational Development (GED) test. The test is usually for people who are 18 and older and have been out of school for at least 10 months. The test allows you to obtain a high school equivalency diploma by writing a series of five exams. You're tested in math, reading (literature), writing, science and social studies. After you write the exams, you are given a record of your marks called a transcript.

Some college and licensed vocational programs, and employers will accept students who have passed a GED test. Others do not. If you want to go to a particular school, check with them first to see if they accept the results of your GED tests. You will also want to do some research to find out whether employers accept the GED.

Some schools and adult education centres hold classes to help students prepare for the GED test. These classes may be full-time or part-time and can run nearly any time of year. They usually run for several weeks.

Where this test is offered:

- public colleges
- private institutions.

Academic upgrading (grades 10–12)

Several schools have programs for adults who want to take courses at a high school level. These are usually called adult education or academic upgrading programs. They may fill up quickly so it's important to plan ahead. Before you enrol, do your research and plan exactly what courses you need to take. For example, maybe you need to take Science 14 instead of Science 10. Ask a student advisor exactly what courses you will need to get to where you want to go.

You may discover that you don't have to take a full load of high school subjects. You may only have to take the courses that relate to your education or career goal. You might even get some credits for some of your experiences out of school. This may include private study, community work or travel.

Most schools will give you a placement test before you start classes. The placement test is to help you and your advisor decide where you should begin with your studies.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- school boards
- adult education centres.

To get an idea of how long you'll be in academic upgrading, take the placement test at the school of your choice or look at your old high school transcript. Look at the course prerequisites for the training course you need to reach your career goal. Plan the shortest route from A to B.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs can do well in a regular course of study. Most post-secondary institutions have support services for students with special needs.

University and College Entrance Program (UCEP)

These programs are for students who need to take certain courses so they can get into a post-secondary program. UCEP usually runs for about eight to 12 months. It's usually full-time and fast-paced. Students have a demanding course load. You must be able to read at a Grade 10 level to get into this kind of program. UCEP is offered only at a few locations in Alberta.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- private colleges.

School Materials

You can read a post-secondary school calendar to learn about a school and its programs. Some schools have videos that introduce students to their campuses.

Many schools have their calendar and other useful information on the Internet. The ALIS website has links to many post-secondary schools in Alberta. Go to www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Choose EDinfo from the Special Features section. You can also contact the post-secondary schools directly for more information.

Many adult learning programs fill up quickly. So it is important for you to plan. Once you have selected a program, you will want to find out exactly what courses you need to take. Courses sometimes have to be taken in a certain order. Ask a student advisor what courses you will need to reach your goals. What do you take in the first term? What do you take in the second term? How about next year?

Pre-employment programs

In pre-employment programs, students are trained in basic job skills, life skills and basic education. They often get on-the-job experience. A student may receive training in a variety of areas such as office worker, custodian, or warehouse worker.

Pre-employment programs may place people who are looking for work with employers who will train them. They also teach students job-search skills so they can go out and find work.

These programs usually last less than a year.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- technical institutes
- private institutions.

Academic Foundations and Bridging programs

These programs are offered at technical institutes to prepare students to take programs at their schools. Courses are tailored to people who need a specific course or courses to be accepted into the school's programs.

Where these programs are offered:

- Academic Foundations: Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) (Calgary)
- Academic Foundations and Bridging (College Preparation, Pre-Business, Pre-Engineering, Pre-Technology, Accelerated Pre-Technology, Aboriginal Pre-Technology): Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) (Edmonton)

If you don't have enough money or time to go to school full-time, you may have other options. Have you thought about taking classes part-time while you work full-time or part-time? Have you thought about e-learning or distance learning courses? Do you qualify for any training programs where you work? You may discover that there is more than one way to reach your career goal.

Training options

Workplace training

Most types of work involve on-the-job training. This training helps people do their jobs better. They may learn job skills such as how to work on computers or how to operate specific machinery. They may learn about safety and first aid.

Sometimes employers want their workers to learn more skills so they can carry out a variety of tasks. Employers may pay for work-related courses. Some unions may also offer courses for their employees.

Are you working now? Would you like to receive on-the-job training? Talk to your supervisor or human resources department about the types of training that may be available. If you belong to a union, talk to someone in your union.

Where these programs are offered:

- employers (both for profit and not for profit)
- unions
- professional organizations
- private institutions.

Government-funded training programs

There are a number of training programs to help people prepare for employment. Individuals must meet certain requirements. Programs are available in the following areas:

Work Foundations

- basic skills (grades 1–9)
- academic upgrading (grades 10–12)
- English as a Second Language
- general employability training

Training for Work

Job skills training

- integrated training
- occupational training
- workplace training

Self-Employment Training

Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)

- employment supports for persons with disabilities

Where these programs are offered:

- public training facilities
- private training facilities.

For more information, contact an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline for the one nearest you.

Licensed vocational training programs

There are over 150 private institutions in Alberta offering vocational programs licensed under the *Private Vocational Schools Act* (PVS Act) by Alberta Advanced Education. The programs train people in specific occupations such as information technology, hairstyling, health care, and truck driving. The licence issued by Alberta Advanced Education for these programs will be posted in a place where it can easily be seen inside the institution. Programs vary in length from institution to institution and may be full-time and part-time.

For more information contact:

- the institution directly
- the Private Institutions branch of Alberta Advanced Education at (780) 427–5609
- the Alberta Career Information Hotline, or
- go to www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Choose EDInfo from the Special Features section and click on the Search by School button.

Where these programs are offered:

- private institutions that offer licensed vocational training programs.

Apprenticeship (trades) programs

Apprenticeship starts with choosing a trade and finding an employer willing to hire an apprentice. There are over 50 designated trades in Alberta that are available through the apprenticeship program. Some examples of apprenticeship trades are: baker, boilermaker, communication technician, gasfitter, bricklayer, instrument technician, landscape gardener, locksmith, millwright, plumber, recreation vehicle service technician, roofer, steamfitter-pipefitter, tilesetter, crane and hoisting equipment operator, rig technician and welder.

Apprenticeship programs last from one to four years, depending on the trade. As an apprentice, you are paid while you learn on the job. You go to school for part of each year (from four to 12 weeks per year). You also take written exams and practical tests at each level of your apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a program that has on-the-job training and technical (classroom) learning. Maybe you would like to become an apprentice and work in a particular trade but haven't finished high school. Most employers prefer their apprentices to have at least Grade 12. Check with employers who hire people in that trade on whether or not you have to complete Grade 12 before they will consider your application. Ask if they will hire people who have upgraded in certain subjects.

Apprenticeship technical training is offered at technical institutes and colleges. When you have finished your technical training, passed your examinations and completed your on-the-job training, you will have earned your Alberta Journeyman Certificate. It is proof that you have achieved all of the requirements of the specific trade.

If you want to enter an apprenticeship program, you have to find an employer who will hire and train you on the job. You need at least Grade 12 for many trades programs. Some trades don't require Grade 12 but many employers prefer to hire high school graduates. Check with employers to see what grade level or other skills they expect from their tradespeople. You may wish to see if there is a pre-trades or pre-employment program in the apprenticeship program that interests you. If there is, it may include academic upgrading and job-skills training in that trade. If you have extra job skills, an employer may be more willing to hire you as an apprentice.

For more information on apprenticeship in Alberta, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline and ask for the nearest Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit the apprenticeship website at www.tradesecrets.org

Where these programs are offered:

- technical institutes
- public colleges
- in the hairstylist trade, at private institutions that offer licensed vocational training.

Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)

High school students can become apprentices through the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). Students can earn hours toward their apprenticeship program and credits toward a high school diploma at the same time. If you are a high school student and would like more information, contact the RAP co-ordinator at your high school. You can also call the Alberta Career Information Hotline and ask for the nearest Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training office.

Designated occupations programs

Programs for designated occupations have on-the-job training and may include formal (classroom) training. Designated occupations programs include gas utility operator, warehousing, steel detailer, construction craft labourer, oil and gas transportation services, and well testing services supervisor. While a person does not need a certificate to work in the occupation, having a certificate shows that the worker demonstrates the standards of competence set by the industry. If you want to be certified in an occupation but haven't finished high school, check with employers in that occupation. Ask if they will hire people who have upgraded certain subjects.

For more information on designated occupations in Alberta, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline and ask for the nearest Apprenticeship and Industry Training office or visit the apprenticeship website at **www.tradesecrets.org**

Where these programs are offered:

- employers
- unions
- technical institutes
- public colleges.

Alberta Green Certificate program

This is an applied farm technology training program. It is run by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. In this program, you would apprentice with a trainer-farmer. You would receive training on the job and also do off-farm and individual study. Once you successfully complete the program, you would receive an Alberta Green Certificate. There are three levels of certification: technician, supervisor, and manager. For more information, see Resources at the end of this book.

Where this program is offered:

- individual farmers provide the training.

This planner is intended to provide general information only. If you are interested in a particular program or school, get detailed information directly from the school. Or check out Resources at the end of this book.

Post-secondary options

Technical institute programs

Most technical programs prepare students for work in specific occupations. Students learn theory, but they also get hands-on experience with the kinds of equipment and systems used in their occupational areas. Some examples include: engineering technologies (civil, mechanical, electrical, computer, petroleum, chemical); environmental technologies; health sciences technologies (dental, paramedic, health records, medical lab, medical radiologic, animal health); architectural technologies, and business (accounting, finance, management, marketing).

Technical institutes offer one-year certificate, two-year diploma, applied degree, apprenticeship technical training, and continuing education programs.

Where these programs are offered:

- technical institutes
- private institutions that offer licensed vocational training.

The competition to get into programs can be stiff. Each program has its own minimum grade and subject requirements. A high school education is often required. If there are more applicants than a program can accept, schools tend to choose those with the best qualifications.

College programs

Many colleges and private institutions offer programs that train people in the how-to skills they need in the workplace. Students go to some types of colleges for training in accounting, clerical skills, practical nursing, forestry work, building maintenance, or work as an ambulance worker or residential aide. Students go to other types of colleges to be trained in the areas of social work, public relations, corrections, and early childhood development.

Some colleges offer general programs that may not lead directly into specific occupations. Several colleges have general studies programs in the arts and sciences. These can help prepare students for entering university programs. Most colleges offer academic upgrading. Some colleges offer apprenticeship technical training.

Some colleges offer degree programs, including applied degrees and undergraduate degrees.

Some colleges also offer the first and second year of a number of university bachelor degree programs. These university-level courses may be offered in the arts, computing, education, engineering, science, commerce, management, nursing, social work, or physical education. Many students take these courses so they can study at smaller college campuses for the first year or two of their university education. Then they move to larger universities to complete their studies.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- private colleges.

Are you thinking of taking your first university-level courses at a college? Be sure the university program you plan to attend will accept the courses you take at college. Double-check with the university. You may want to get this in writing. This will ensure that you don't lose credits when you transfer. The *Alberta Transfer Guide* has information on transferring credits among schools in Alberta. See Resources at the end of this book for more information.

Approved degree programs offered by private colleges

At some private colleges, students can study for baccalaureate degrees in music, the humanities, religious studies, education, arts and sciences, and other areas. Ensure the degree program is approved by checking the Recommendations page of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) website at www.caqc.gov.ab.ca

Where these programs are offered:

- private colleges.

University degree programs

Some people attend university to pursue a specific occupation such as teacher, doctor, engineer and lawyer. Other university students take general academic programs that are not geared to specific occupations.

Generally speaking, the more years you study at university, the higher the degree you can earn, as long as you meet the requirements. To earn a bachelor's degree, you would study full-time for three, four or five years, depending on the program. Or you might study part-time until you've completed your program. Masters degrees and doctoral programs take longer.

Where these programs are offered:

- colleges
- private colleges
- universities.

People generally need specific 30-level high school courses to apply to university. Some universities keep a few spots open for older or mature students who have not graduated from high school. They can be admitted as long as they meet other academic requirements. Mature students at university are usually over 21.

Co-operative education programs

Several colleges, universities, and technical institutes in Alberta have co-operative education or work study programs. Students in these co-op programs are on the job for up to half of their study time. They experience how their classroom studies are put to use in the world of work.

Co-operative education programs are offered in areas such as: public administration, business, applied arts, computing sciences, engineering, applied sciences, hospitality and tourism. Students are placed in work settings in business, industry, government and social services.

Where these programs are offered:

- public colleges
- universities
- technical institutes

You can get information on the programs in Alberta by calling the Alberta Career Information Hotline or by visiting an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. Pick up a copy of *Time to Choose: a post-secondary education program*. You can also visit the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca and click on EDinfo.

Other options

Distance education

Some people would rather take their classes in a regular classroom. But that doesn't mean it is the only option.

There is also correspondence school and distance education. Students can also take classes through a cyber school or by independent study. All of these words mean pretty much the same thing. They are ways to learn that don't take place in a regular classroom. People learn by using print information and computers. They may also be hooked up to the school through special television sets. Students in cyber schools often go to school on the Internet.

Distance learning programs are available in a range of subject and program areas. Students can take grades 1 to 12 through correspondence school. They can earn a high school diploma. The Alberta Distance Learning Centre offers courses from grades 1 to 12 and some upgrading courses. Many post-secondary schools in Alberta and Canada also offer distance learning programs for university and college programs.

To learn more about distance education programs, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline. The number is in Resources at the end of this book. Visit the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Choose EDinfo from the Special Features section and click on the Distance Learning button to find information on distance learning programs and schools.

Where these programs are offered:

- Alberta Distance Learning Centre
- public colleges
- technical institutes
- universities.

Most post-secondary schools have special admission status for people who have been out of school for a year or more. They may look favourably on your personal or work experience. If you didn't finish high school, you may still be able to enter a post-secondary program. You may need to study certain subjects first. As you do your research about a program, ask for all the details about its admission requirements for adults.

Continuing education

Personal interest

Many people like to take short courses just for their own enjoyment. They might want to learn subjects ranging from photography to ballroom dancing, from woodcarving to birdwatching. Several schools offer personal interest courses in their continuing education programs. These may be evening or weekend courses, short courses, workshops or seminars.

Skills or academic upgrading

Other types of continuing education courses are meant for people who want to improve their skills or take academic upgrading. For example, a worker who hopes to become a supervisor might take evening courses in management. An automotive service technician might take a weekend workshop to learn about the latest technology on a certain car.

Where these programs are offered:

- local school boards
- colleges, universities
- technical institutes.

Many of these organizations send out free program calendars to area residents in the fall and spring. You can also talk with the community adult learning council in your area.

Be a Smart Shopper: Choosing the Right School or Program

Choosing the right school or program is like buying a car. You want to get the best value for your dollar. You want to get a car you can afford. You want to get a car that works for you with the right options.

Do you buy the first car you see? Of course not! Be careful! Look at lots of models and start early.

It's the same thing with choosing a school or program. Plan your return to school well ahead of time. Take the time to look around and you'll be happier with your final decision.

The best way to get the information you need is to ask questions. Lots of them. Go to the school you're thinking about and ask them what you need to know. If the school has an open house, see what it has to offer. Many schools have their open houses in late winter or early spring. Take a look around. Do you feel comfortable? Do you want to go there?

Questions to ask the school

EXERCISE

Getting the information you need

Here are some questions to have with you when you visit a school. Talk to an advisor at each school that you're interested in. Don't be shy about asking the questions. You have a right to get answers! You need them to help you make your decisions.

Make several copies of these sheets so you can use a fresh one for each school you visit.

The occupational field that I am interested in is : _____

So far, the schools and programs that interest me are : _____

Make a plan *before* you visit each school and talk to an advisor or other person. Write down this information for each school that you visit:

Name of School: _____

Address of School: _____

Who I'm talking to:

Name and position: _____

Phone number: _____

Date and time of our meeting: _____

Sample questions to ask schools

What courses or programs do you offer in my chosen occupational field?

Are there jobs in this field? Which companies or organizations have recently hired some of your graduates? (If you're going back to school so you can get a job, this is a BIG question.)

What are your graduate survey results for the last three years?

Does your school have a work experience program? (If so, ask who is responsible for finding the work placement. Students? The school?)

How do I get in? What are the admission requirements?

Do I have them? Yes _____ No _____

How can I get them? _____

What are the language requirements?

Do I have them? Yes _____ No _____

How can I get them? _____

What are the other requirements?

Do I have them? Yes _____ No _____

How can I get them? _____

How long does the program take? How many months? How many years?

How many courses do I need to take?

Can I go full-time? Can I go part-time?

How many hours a week are spent in class? In labs? How many hours a week do you recommend I study for each class?

How much does it cost? (Costs include tuition, books and fees. There may be other costs too.)

Do you help students apply for financial assistance?

Will I get my fees back if I change my mind after I apply to enter the program?

When is the application deadline?

How large is the school? How large are the classes? How many students attend this school?

Can I sit in on a class or two before I decide?

Can I talk to some instructors? (Do the instructors seem knowledgeable?)

What kind of credential do I get when I graduate? Do employers recognize it? Do they think it gives the right kind of training I need to reach my employment goal?

I learn best by _____ (reading from books, using visual aids, doing things with my hands, etc.) Does your school deliver courses the way I learn best?

Will I use up-to-date equipment, machinery or processes? (Look at equipment and facilities. Are the equipment and facilities up-to-date? Is the equipment similar to equipment you will be using on the job?)

Does the program focus on theory or practical work?

Do your courses transfer to other schools? If I start taking classes here, will they be recognized if I move to another school?

How much money do graduates of this program usually make? Starting off? In five years?

Are there any graduates that I can talk to? (Ask them about their training. Did they find the work they wanted when they finished school?)

Can I team up with a student for a day? (As you research programs and schools, talk to some students who are in the program you are considering.) Here are some questions you can ask:

- How long have they been in the school?
- Do they like the program?
- Are they learning what they need to know to get work?
- What is their opinion of the instructors?
- Do the instructors spend time with the students to be sure that they understand the material?
- Have they had any problems with the school, the instructors or the classes?
- What do they like most about the school and program?
- What do they like least about the school and program?

Services and support

EXERCISE

It's important to find out what the school offers besides classes. Different schools have different services. Use this checklist to help you decide if the school has the services and support you need.

- ___ **Assessment services.** Some students need to have tests before they are placed in a program. For example, some adults have a problem with learning they may not know about. Maybe they have a learning disability. An assessment can help them get the help they need to learn.
- ___ **Childcare or day care.** A day care exists on the campus.
- ___ **Clubs to join.** There are activities for students to get involved in.
- ___ **Computer labs or technology centre.** There are computers for students to use while on campus. You can also ask whether students can use the Internet while at school.
- ___ **Counselling services.** The school provides personal or career counselling to students.
- ___ **Food services.** There are cafeterias or other eating places on campus.
- ___ **Health services.** There is a health services facility with a qualified registered nurse or medical doctor present.
- ___ **Housing.** There are on-campus residences for students, or the school operates a registry of off-campus housing.
- ___ **Job search or work placement service.** The school provides one or more of these services: job search advice, resumé writing workshops, employment listings for on and off campus and interviewing by employers from off campus.
- ___ **Library or study centre.** The school has a library that can be used by all students. The school has quiet places where students can study.
- ___ **Orientation program.** The school has campus tours, an open house, or a student for a day program. It may also have a buddy system or orientation classes for new students.
- ___ **Parking or bus service.** There is student parking on campus or nearby. Most schools have very limited parking at the school. Many students take the bus, so ask if there is a bus stop nearby.
- ___ **Recreation/fitness facilities.** The school has recreation and fitness options for students. There are also sports teams to join.
- ___ **Services for students with disabilities.** The school provides assistance and support to students with disabilities.
- ___ **Tutoring services.** The school has its own tutors to help students with their work. They can also refer you to a tutor if you need one.

Finding a Place to Live

You will need a new place to live if you go to school away from home. You will want to look for housing a few months before school starts. Places for rent, especially in certain communities, are usually full by the time classes begin. You will also want to know what rents are like so that you can put that amount in your budget. How will you find housing? You could:

- ask if your school has student housing or a residence
 - ask if your school has a list of places to rent
 - ask friends if they can help you
 - check the school bulletin boards for ads for housing
 - check the local newspaper for places to rent.
-

Getting to School

How you get to school depends on how close you live to school. You could:

- take the bus
 - walk
 - ride your bike
 - drive your car
 - get rides with other students and share the cost (check school bulletin boards for notices from students who want to carpool or share travel costs).
-

If you choose to take your education by distance learning, you don't have to worry about transportation. Your home is your school!

Checking out the job market

Think about the school/work connection. While you're looking at schools and programs, take some time to look at what jobs there are. This will help you be practical about your education and training choices. After all, you want to find work when you're done.

Some industries are growing. Others are getting smaller. There are now jobs that didn't even exist when you were a child. Other jobs have disappeared almost completely. How many people now work delivering milk door-to-door? Not very many. But how many people now work with computers? Lots. Maybe using computers isn't their whole job. But, chances are, there's a computer nearby!

Maybe you want to go into the health care field. Are people in health care getting work? Maybe you're leaning toward the trades. Will there be work in your trade when you're finished school? Talk to some potential employers. Ask them what they're looking for in a worker. Ask them if they've hired people lately.

To learn more about the job market in Alberta, call the Alberta Career Information Hotline. The number is listed in Resources at the end of this book. You can also go to the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Click on OCCinfo in the Special Features section. You will find information on over 500 occupations in Alberta.

Your Student Skills can be Great Work Skills

Many of the things you learn as a student can help you a lot in the world of work. As you progress through your education and training, you are picking up skills that employers want. Here is a short description of these skills¹:

Fundamental skills

These are the basic skills that people need to do well in the workplace. They include:

- knowing how to communicate
- knowing how to manage information
- using numbers
- solving problems.

Personal skills

These are the personal skills and attitudes that help people to develop their own potential. They include:

- having a positive attitude and behaving positively
- being responsible
- being flexible
- learning all the time
- working safely.

Teamwork skills

These are skills a person needs to make a positive contribution in the workplace. They include:

- working with others
- working on projects and tasks.

If you work on these skills, you will probably find it easier to get work once you're finished school.

¹Employability Skills 2000+, Conference Board of Canada

Talking to employers

As you look at education and training options, be sure that you also talk to some employers. Think about the places where you would like to work. Do they hire graduates from the program you're thinking about? What training do they require?

Make a plan *before* you visit each employer. Then phone the employers on your list. Explain why you are calling, and ask them if they have a few moments to answer your questions.

EXERCISE

Write down this information for each employer that you call or visit.

Make several copies of this sheet so you can use a fresh one for each employer you visit.

Name of Company or Organization: _____

Address: _____

Who I'm talking to:

Name and position: _____

Phone number: _____

Date and time of our meeting or talk: _____

Sample questions to ask employers

I am researching the job market. Does your company hire _____
_____ (name of occupation)?

What are the qualifications you look for when you hire?

I am considering taking the _____ program
at _____.

Do you hire graduates of this program? _____

If not, what training would you recommend?

Are there jobs in this field now? _____

Will there be jobs in this field in the future? _____

How much money do people in this field make?

Starting off _____ In five years _____

Is there anything else that I need to know?

Thank the employer for talking to you. (Thank them at the time and send a thank you note shortly after.)

You can find employers to talk to by asking people you know or by looking in the yellow pages of your phone book, business directories (available at libraries) or job ads in the paper or on the Internet.

What's your best choice for now?

How do you know what program or school is best for you? Well, by the time you've come this far, you're probably quite close to the answer. Many people reading this planner will have already done some career planning. Maybe you went to a workshop. Perhaps you talked to a career counsellor. In other words, by now, you have a pretty good idea of where you're going. You have thought about what you need and want from an education or training program. You've researched the schools and looked at the options. You've talked to advisors and employers. So far, what program or school is the best choice for you?

For now, my best choice of school or program is

Don't worry about whether this is the right program for your entire life. The point is to have a training goal in mind and select something that works for you NOW.

One Life, Many Occupations

Did you know that over time, most of us work at more than one occupation? It used to be that people would get a job and do it for most of their lives. Now, the world of work is changing almost constantly. People are learning new things all the time. They also change jobs more often than ever.

What does this mean to you?

Try to keep your options open. As you plan, think about what you might want to do five years from now. Or 10 years from now. There could be some very interesting possibilities waiting for you!

Have a Back-Up Plan

There are many schools and programs in Alberta. But, you may not be accepted into the program of your choice. How much choice you have depends on many things:

- your level of education
- the program requirements
- your training goal
- how much time you have
- your financial support
- where you live
- your life situation
- whether or not the school has a waiting list.

Sometimes, people meet the requirements but they still don't get into the program they have chosen. Some programs have long waiting lists. There may be more applicants than spaces for students. A school may take applicants with the highest grades first and there may not be enough room for people with lower grades.

Have a back-up plan in case you don't get into the program you want. If you can afford it, apply to several schools with similar programs. (Many schools charge an application fee so this may not be an option.) If one school doesn't admit you, then you still have a chance at the others. Or you could work and take part-time courses to improve your qualifications. You may also want to consider applying for a different education or training choice.

What do you do next?

After you decide on a school or program, you will want to make some plans. You probably need to register or make an application. You may need to take academic upgrading or other steps to meet the program requirements.

You also need to think about money. Then you need to get a lot of other things in place before you begin your education or training program.

The next sections will help you make plans and act on them.

You've Picked a School or Program. Now What?

There are still a number of steps you must take before you actually go to school.

To go to the school you want, you have to plan ahead. Some schools may have limited enrollments. Others may need students to apply for admission many months ahead of time. Call the school and ask about their deadlines. You can also check out the school's website. Or better yet, go to the school yourself and visit the Registrar's office.

Applying for admission

The sooner you apply, the sooner the school can deal with your application.

Every school is different. But each one has a Registrar or someone responsible for admitting students. Here are some things to inquire about when you're applying for admission:

- **Where can I get an application form?**
- **What other forms do I need?** If you don't understand something, contact the Registrar's office again and ask. If they don't have the answers to your specific questions, ask who does.
- **What are the application deadlines?** Some schools may want to interview potential students. Others may test students first to decide what classes they should take. The Registrar can tell you the best time to apply for your program.

- **What do I need to include with my application form?** Schools may want a medical form, a processing fee or reference letters. They may also want a list of your marks from your previous schools. Most schools need to have a list of your marks sent to them directly. This list is called an official transcript. If you went to high school in Alberta, Alberta Education will send your transcript to the school. You have to ask them to do this. There is a small fee for this service. You may want to have them send you a copy too. Transcripts can be ordered on-line through the ALIS website. See Resources at the back of this book for more information.
- **When will I hear if I've been accepted?** Ask for a specific date. If you don't hear by that date, contact the Registrar's office and ask about your application.

Choosing the right classes

Earlier in this planner, we talked about choosing your *program*. Well, choosing your actual classes can be a little tricky. The most important thing about picking classes is to be sure you are taking the right ones and in the right order.

These are some things to think about when you're picking classes:

- How well do you have to do to advance in the program?
- What are your best subjects?
- What is the school policy on grades? What if you fail something? Will you have another chance? How many chances?

Most importantly, take the classes you need to take. That may sound obvious. But sometimes, we might limit our future options by the decisions we make now. Keep your options open. Don't close any doors by skipping courses that seem too hard or boring. They can lead to bigger and better things. Make sure the school is able to get you into the classes you need to successfully complete your program. If the class you need is full, beware of accepting a substitute course. All your courses should lead to successful completion of your program.

Registering for classes

You've picked your classes. Now you have to register for them. Before you do that, you need to ask some questions.

- **When do I register?** The Registrar's office will tell you well in advance. If the time is inconvenient, find out if you can pre-register by mail, phone or on-line.
- **Where do I register?** If you have to register in person, be ready for line-ups!
- **How do I register?** Carefully read all the information you have been given. If there is something you don't understand, ask about it.

At many colleges and other schools, your classes may be offered at more than one time. You will want to:

- **Check the timetables.** Are these times good for you?
- **Find out how long each class will take.** This should include study time.

Ask how many classes you need for a full course load and what the deadlines are. You can drop or withdraw from a course that you don't have to take. You may also be able to switch classes. But you usually have to do this at the beginning of the term. When you register, find out if you're allowed to withdraw from or switch classes. Ask if there are refunds if you withdraw from classes.

NOTE: If you are getting financial help to go to school, you may **not** be allowed to withdraw from classes. Ask your student advisor what the rules are.

Working with your student advisor

Many schools have student advisors. These are trained people who are there to help you. If you are getting financial help, a student advisor will help you choose your program and classes. A student advisor may help you figure out a budget or even help you find a good babysitter.

A student advisor can be a great support to you. But, in order to help you, the advisor will need accurate and honest information from you. You will have to be clear about your goals. You may have to talk about any big changes in your life that might affect your life as a student.

The student advisor will need some information from you. But you should also be prepared to ask questions. This will help you get the information you need to make your decision. As a student, you are shopping for and buying an education. Your student advisor knows what the school has to offer you. He or she knows what the school is trying to sell. Be a smart shopper. Find out everything you need to know before you buy anything!

I got a government grant to go to school. I meet with an advisor every semester and talk about my career goals and my school progress. My school has an attendance policy too. There are some real parallels with the world of work.

(George, 25, an academic high school upgrading student.)

Being a responsible student

Remember school when you were younger? There seemed to be so many rules and regulations. No chewing gum in class. No running in the halls. Raise your hand if you have a question.

Schools for adults also have rules to help make it easier for everyone to learn. Students are expected to treat each other with respect and may be asked to leave if they come to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Think of your school as a small community. You, your classmates and instructors are citizens of that community. If everyone is a good citizen, life is more pleasant for everyone.

Doing well in school

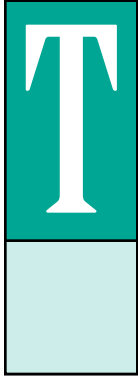
More than anything, school is about learning. If you are getting financial help to go to school full-time, you may have some rules to follow. These rules may include:

- you must attend full-time
- you must attend class regularly
- you must make acceptable academic progress
- you must report changes in personal information.

Most schools will talk about their rules and regulations during orientation sessions. They may also have their rules written in a student handbook. The handbooks are usually given to every student when he or she first arrives. If you don't get a student handbook, ask for one.

Find out what the rules are at the school you'll be attending. Be a good student citizen.

Take your studies seriously. Make a commitment to do well. Work to be successful for yourself, your school and the people who may have helped pay for your education. Students make acceptable progress in school when they attend classes regularly, when they pass their courses and when they follow the rules.



Thinking About Money

Looking at your situation

Going back to school means thinking about money. How will you support yourself and your family if you go back to school? Will you work full-time or part-time? Can you borrow money from your family? Can you get student funding? Are you eligible for a scholarship or bursary?

You will want to know how much money you need to live on as a student. You have to know how much money you need to take home every month. And you need to know how much money you will spend each month. That includes your regular monthly expenses like your rent and the money you need to set aside for yearly expenses like insurance.

This all means that you have to make a budget.

Think of going back to school as an investment. It's going to cost you time and effort. It's also going to cost money. But in the long run, you will see the benefits of your education and training. You'll have more options for work. You'll be better able to earn money. By investing in your learning, you and your family can have a bright and positive future.

Making a budget

The following exercise will help you get started. The Monthly Take Home Income and One-Time Income sections is to show what money you will have coming in once you're a student. The income could include grants, wages, employment insurance or savings. The Upfront, One-Time Expenses section is to show the things you spend money on at the beginning of your education and training. This includes tuition, fees, books and supplies, as well as living expenses such as a damage deposit and moving costs. The Monthly Expenses section is for the items you spend money on every month. This includes food, housing, utilities, transportation, medical and dental expenses, and childcare.

Once you've filled these in, you'll have a better idea of where you sit financially. Do you have enough income to get by? There should always be a little extra money for unexpected emergencies.

If there isn't quite enough money, are there ways to increase your income or cut costs? Ask your family for suggestions. Make a list. Listen to everyone's ideas. Then, together, decide what you can do to make it happen.

If your family offers to help out financially, think about it. Maybe you have a brother or sister who would like to help. Maybe your parents are willing to kick in a few dollars. If you are living at home and applying for government student assistance, your parents may be expected to contribute based on their annual income. If you are married, your spouse may be expected to contribute.

Check at your school for possible sources of income. Some schools have job opportunities for students right on campus. You probably don't want a job that takes a lot of hours. But even a few hours can put more money in your pocket. Plan to work during school holidays and get a full-time job in the summer. Make sure you check out all the possibilities.

If you plan your budget and look ahead, you will know if you can afford to go back to school. If the time isn't right, you can wait until you've saved more money or have fewer expenses. If you were planning to attend school full-time, maybe a part-time program is better for you. The important thing is to have the right information and to make a plan.

I've always lived like a student on a very limited budget. Students should know there are places right at the school to earn money.

(Rose, 35, is an adult learner.)

My budget

EXERCISE

Monthly Take Home Income

List the income you expect to have when you go back to school. List only money you will get regularly. Do not list things like overtime pay or gifts of money. Put down your “take-home” income. This is the money you have left after other things have been deducted.

Source of Income	Planned Amount	Actual Amount
Part-time job		
Savings/summer job		
Family support		
Grant		
Other regular monthly income		
Other		
Total monthly take home income		

One-Time Income

List other income you expect to have when you go back to school. This money is normally paid once or twice a year.

Source of Income	Planned Amount	Actual Amount
Student loan		
Scholarship, bursary		
Tax refund		
Other one-time income		
Other		
Total one-time income		

Upfront, One-Time Expenses

These are expenses that you have at the beginning of your education and training. They can also include yearly expenses such as tuition fees and books.

Expense	Planned Amount	Actual Amount
Tuition and fees		
Books and supplies		
Damage deposit		
Utilities hook-up		
Moving expenses		
Furniture, linen, etc.		
Other		
Total upfront, one-time expenses		

Monthly Expenses

Everything you write on this list should be what you spend every month.

Expense	Planned Amount	Actual Amount
Rent & Utilities		
Food (plus other items bought at grocery store)		
Miscellaneous		
Clothing		
Laundry		
Telephone		
Medical/Dental		
Drugstore supplies		
Recreation & entertainment		
Transportation		
Emergency fund		
Childcare		
Insurance		
Other		
Total monthly expenses		

How much money is left?

When you have filled in the sheets, subtract **Total monthly expenses** from **Total monthly income**. Also consider your **Total upfront, one-time expenses** and your **Total upfront, one-time income**. How do your numbers work out? If the number is a minus, can you find ways to lower your expenses? You could also find ways to increase your income.

Budget your money carefully so you don't run out before your training ends. Keep a bank account and only withdraw money as you need it. You are responsible for any lost or stolen money.

Financial help

In the next pages, we will outline some sources of financial help for students. **As you read the information, mark the types of financial assistance that you think you might be eligible for. Underline the ones that you want to find out more about.**

Students Finance

The Government of Alberta has a very broad and flexible Students Finance system. There is a range of help available, depending on the needs and interests of the learner. You can get help to select the financing option that is right for you. Here is some information about the types of assistance available.

Loans and grants

Government loans and grants may be available for people who are studying full-time or part-time for their degrees, diplomas or certificates. Loans and grants may also be available to students in shorter training programs.

Students in financial need who are taking some type of upgrading programs may be eligible to receive grants. These programs include academic upgrading, literacy programs, basic education or English as a Second Language. A grant is money that usually doesn't need to be paid back.

A student loan is money that you must pay back after you finish school. You don't pay interest on the loan while you are in school.

Loans and grants are based on financial need. Government loans and grants are meant to supplement your resources. If you apply for a loan or grant, you will still be expected to contribute financially to your education and training. Your parents or your spouse may be expected to help support you too.

To be eligible, you must:

- be a resident of Alberta (You may qualify for funding from the last province/territory you were in if you don't meet Alberta residency requirements)
- prove that you need the money
- be a full-time student (taking at least 60% of a full course load or 40% of a full course load for a student with permanent disabilities)
- attend all your regularly scheduled classes
- maintain passing grades in at least 60% of a full course load.

Scholarships and bursaries

Ask your career or high school counsellor if you might be eligible for any Alberta scholarships or special bursaries.

Scholarships are usually awarded for good grades or for other achievements. Bursaries are typically based on a student's need. Scholarships and bursaries are different from loans. They do not have to be paid back.

Ask about:

- scholarships offered by Alberta Scholarship Programs
- bursaries available from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Other awards and scholarships

Businesses, private groups, associations, companies and unions may give awards to selected students. Some awards are based on need. Others are based on marks. Post-secondary schools may offer awards in various fields of study.

For more information on awards and scholarships, contact any of the following:

- the student awards office or counsellor at your high school
- the student awards office at the post-secondary school you want to attend
- Alberta Scholarship Programs (see Resources at the back of this book)
- the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships

Need more information?

You can start by reading a series of booklets called *Study Your Options*. They're published by Students Finance. You can pick up copies of the booklets and financial assistance application forms at most schools. If you use the Internet, you can find all of the booklets in the *Study Your Options* series on the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Using the left hand navigation bar, click on Students Finance and then Guides and Publications. The ALIS website features lots of information as well as on-line application forms. There is also an on-line video, called *Street Cents*, on how to save for school.

For more information about the financial help that is available through Students Finance, contact any of the following:

- the student awards office at your high school or post-secondary institution
- the continuing education office of your local school board(s)
- the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca
- the Student Funding Contact Centre
- a Youth Connections office
- an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre.

See the Resources section at the back of this book for contact information.

Student Loans: A Serious Responsibility

A student loan is similar to any other kind of loan. You must repay it after you finish school and you pay interest on the money you have borrowed. If you don't pay your loan back, you may never get another one or your credit rating may be affected. A student loan agreement is a legal document—know your responsibilities.

Students With Permanent Disabilities

Loans, grants and other assistance may be available to help people with permanent disabilities while in school. Contact your nearest Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre for more information. Or check out the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca

Part-Time Students

Financial help may be available for students who attend school part-time. The rules and application procedures are different than those for full-time students. Contact the student awards office at the school you plan to attend, your nearest Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre or call the Student Funding Contact Centre for more information. Or check out the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca

Working to support your studies: What's best for you?

If you are already working, you may want to keep on working and study part-time. If you aren't working, you may want to find a part-time job and study full-time. There are advantages and disadvantages to both ways of doing it.

Part-time study and full-time work

If you study part-time, it will take longer to finish your program. And it can mean that you don't have as much choice in programs and courses. On the other hand, you will probably have fewer money problems. It will also probably mean that you will be very busy, fitting in work and studies.

Full-time study and part-time work

If you study full-time, you can finish your program sooner. You may have more choice in courses and programs. You can also take part in other school activities. However, you may not earn enough money from a part-time job to support yourself and your family. And you may be very busy, fitting in studies and work.

Talking about financial assistance: Questions to ask

Finding out about financial help for students can be confusing. But it can be easier if you plan what you're going to ask. Here are some questions you can ask a financial awards officer at the school you plan to attend, a consultant at the Student Funding Contact Centre or a counsellor at an Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. Many of these questions are about loans and grants. You can add your own questions to this list.

1. Who do I contact to see if I'm eligible for a grant?

2. Who do I contact to see if I'm eligible for a loan?

3. How do I apply for a student loan?

4. How much money can I borrow?

5. When can I apply?

6. How will I find out if I've qualified for a loan?

7. How long will it take to find out if I've qualified?

8. If I qualify, how will I get the money?

9. When will I get the money?

10. How much of the loan will I have to pay back?

11. How much will it cost me to take out a student loan? (What is the interest rate?)

12. Are there any other ways to get financial help for my studies?

13. What happens to my funding eligibility if I don't finish my education or training?

14. Where can I find information on scholarships that may be available to me?

15. Who do I contact if I am having problems with my student funding?

Additional questions

Other sources of financial help

Students Finance is one way to get help for going back to school. You may qualify for other possible sources of help.

Aboriginal students

Aboriginal students may qualify for financial assistance from a variety of sources. Contact your Band for more information. You can also check with the Aboriginal student services office at your school.

You can also contact the Freehorse Family Wellness Society (FFWS.) The Society is a not-for-profit First Nations organization that administers a post-secondary funding program on behalf of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Sponsorship is provided to eligible First Nations and Inuit Status post-secondary students. For more information about Society services and eligibility, contact:

Freehorse Family Wellness Society (FWSS)
Suite 750
10707-100 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3M1
Phone: (780) 944-0172 or
1-800-411-9658 toll-free Canada-wide
Fax: (780) 944-0176
Website: www.freehorse.org

Métis students

Non-status Aboriginal students may also qualify for various types of financial assistance. For more information, contact your local Métis Nation of Alberta zone office as listed in the yellow pages of your telephone book. Look under Associations. You can also check with Aboriginal student services office at your school.

Canadian Forces

People who join the Canadian Forces receive various kinds of training. If you are eligible, Canadian Forces may even pay for your post-secondary education. Contact a Canadian Forces Recruiting Centre. Look under Recruiting—Canadian Forces Recruiting in the yellow pages of your telephone book or call 1-800-856-8488. If you use the Internet, visit the Canadian Forces website at

www.dnd.ca

Wrapping it Up

Four things left to do

Now, it's time to make sure you have done everything you need to do before you start school. For most students, there are four main things they have to do before they start school. We have already talked about some of these topics. Some are covered in the Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry books listed under Resources.

1. Apply to the school

Apply to the school or program well before the deadline. Then you will know as soon as possible if you have been accepted. Courses and programs fill up quickly so the sooner you apply the better. You may also find out about any problems with your application in time to correct them. Make sure you have a back up plan in case you're not accepted.

2. Apply for money

Many students need money to go to school. If you are applying for a student loan or other kinds of financial help, apply well before the deadline. You can apply for financial assistance at any time of year. However, the sooner you apply the better. Apply in May or June for programs that start in September. Call the Student Funding Contact Centre for general information on student funding or visit

the nearest Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. You may also be eligible to apply for funding on-line. Visit the ALIS website at www.alis.gov.ab.ca. Click on the Students Finance link on the left side of the page and then choose Electronic Application services and forms.

3. Find a place to live

Some people need to move to other communities to go to school or take training. Have your housing arranged before you go to school. Some schools have student residences on or near campus. Others provide information on housing to prospective students.

4. Find childcare

If you have young children, you will need to arrange for childcare for the times that you are in school and perhaps when you are studying. Have your childcare plans in place before you begin classes. For more information on childcare, refer to the *Adult Back to School Planner*. See Resources at the back of this book for information on how to get your copy.

R esources

If you live in Alberta, check out the resources listed here for helpful information and services.

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

AEII service centres

Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry (AEII) has service centres all across Alberta. They have career, education and skills training information and resources to help you. Call the Alberta Career Information Hotline for the office nearest you.

Youth Connections

Youth Connections is a career and employment service for people between the ages of 16 and 24. There are offices in communities across Alberta. Youth Connections is supported by AEII. For the office nearest you, contact the Alberta Career Information Hotline. You can also check out the Youth Connections website at www.youthconnections.gov.ab.ca

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Call the Hotline for answers to your questions about:

- career planning
- educational planning
- occupations
- work search skills
- the workplace.

Phone:

1-800-661-3753 toll-free

780-422-4266 in Edmonton

Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

1-800-232-7215 for message relay service

780-422-5283 for TDD service

Hours:

8:15 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Thursday

8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday

E-mail: hotline@alis.gov.ab.ca

Website: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline

Student Funding Contact Centre

For information about post-secondary loans and grants as well as skills investment programs call the Student Funding Contact Centre.

Phone:

1-800-222-6485 toll-free in Canada

(780) 427-3722 in Edmonton

Fax: (780) 422-4516

E-mail: use the secure e-Contact service available on www.alis.gov.ab.ca.

Other Alberta Government Services

Distance learning

The Alberta Distance Learning Centre offers courses from grades 1 to 12 and some upgrading courses. For more information, contact:

Alberta Distance Learning Centre
Box 4000
Barrhead, Alberta
T7N 1P4
Phone: (780) 674-5333
Fax: (780) 674-7593
Website: www.adlc.ca

Private Institutions Branch

Adult Learning Division
Alberta Advanced Education
10th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4L5
Phone: (780) 427-5609
Fax: (780) 427-5920

Alberta Green Certificate program

Alberta Agriculture and Food manage an apprenticeship style, skill training program in co-operation with the farming industry. For more information, contact:

Alberta Green Certificate Program
Room 201, 7000-113 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 5T6
Phone: (780) 427-4309
(Call the Alberta government toll-free number 310-0000 to be connected.)
Fax: (780) 422-7755
Website: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/greencertificate

High school transcripts

A transcript is an official record of school marks. If you attended high school in Alberta, you can get your transcript from Alberta Education. There are several ways to do this.

- Through the Internet at www.education.gov.ab.ca/learning/studentervices/transcripts
- In **person**, or by **mail** or **fax**:
Transcript Unit
Alberta Education
2nd Floor, 44 Capital Boulevard
10044-108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 5E6
Fax: (780) 422-2137

You **cannot** order transcripts by phone. However, it's a good idea to call the Transcript Unit's automated telephone line at (780) 427-5732. This way, you can make sure that you include all the right information in your request. If you are calling from outside the Edmonton area but within Alberta, you can call toll free by dialing 310-0000, then (780) 427-5732. There is a fee for each official transcript.

Alberta Scholarship Programs

For information on scholarships and bursaries and how to apply for them, as well as application forms, contact:

Alberta Scholarship Programs
Box 28000 STN MAIN
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4R4
Phone: (780) 427-8640
(Call the Alberta government toll-free number 310-0000 to be connected.)
Fax: (780) 427-1288
Website: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships

Service Alberta

Call **Service Alberta** toll-free at **310-0000** (anywhere in Alberta) for general inquiries on Alberta Government programs and services. Phone lines are open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday; voicemail is available after hours. Outside of Alberta, call long distance (780) 427-2711. You can also visit the website at **www.gov.ab.ca**

Other Services

Libraries and bookstores

Before you finalize your education and training plans, gather all the information you can. Ask other people what books have helped them. Learn more about the library system. If you can't find what you're looking for, ask for help. Librarians help people find what they need. They may also help you use the Internet.

Student awards offices

Post-secondary institutions have student awards offices that can give you information on student assistance, and scholarship and bursary programs. They have student loan applications.

Websites

If you know how to use the Internet, there are lots of websites with information on career development topics. If you can't use the Internet at home, go to your local Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry service centre. You can also often use computers at the public library or an employment agency.

Here are some helpful websites.

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

This address will get you to information about careers, learning and employment. For direct access to specific sections of the ALIS website, use these addresses:

- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/edinfo**
This will get you to a site called EDInfo. It has information on education and training programs in Alberta.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo**
This will get you to a site called OCCInfo where you can get information on over 500 occupations. You can also get connected to information about where to get training for occupations.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/learning**
There are links to post-secondary institutions. You also can register in programs and courses right on the computer.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/studentsfinance**
This will get you to information on student financial assistance. You can even fill out a student loan application on-line, if you are eligible. You will also get to a series of *Study Your Options* booklets published by Alberta Advanced Education. They will help you look at your options for financing your post-secondary education.
- **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships**
This will get you to information on scholarships and bursaries and how to apply for them. You can also find some applications on this site.

www.acat.gov.ab.ca

The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT) publishes the *Alberta Transfer Guide* to help students plan their post-secondary education. By using the guide, students who are moving from one school to another can find out whether they can receive credit for the courses they are planning to take or have already taken. You can also search a database of transfer agreements that have been made among post-secondary institutions.

www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca

This address will get you to information about apprenticeship and industry training in Alberta.

www.canlearn.ca

This is a national website for the Canada Student Loan Program. It has information on learning and education opportunities outside of Alberta.

Books from Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

We talked about several books in this planner. Here is a list of books and planners that you can order by calling the Alberta Career Information Hotline. (See Alberta Career Information Hotline earlier in this section for a list of phone numbers.) Or, go to **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop** to order online.

If you live in Alberta, these books are free.

Adult Back to School Planner

This book helps you answer lots of questions about going back to school as an adult. It covers topics such as childcare and studying and suggests ways to cope with typical concerns of adult students.

Career Planner: Choosing an occupation

This workbook is for people who have done little or no career planning. By doing exercises, conducting research and making decisions, you can move closer to selecting a specific occupation. The planner includes information on various occupations and lists other sources of information.

Change and Transitions

This is a workbook for people who are experiencing change. It combines information, exercises, practical tips and ways to help make the most of change.

The Investigator

This publication lists contact information for the many places you can go to for information on education, career planning, and searching for work.

Time to Choose: a post-secondary education program

This book has information on education programs at Alberta colleges, technical institutes and universities.

Job Seeker's Handbook

This step-by-step guide gives information on how to find work. It is written for people who do not have much work experience.

Money 101: Budgeting basics for further education

This book talks about financing your education. It covers setting personal goals, figuring out how much your education will cost, suggestions on how to pay for it, student loans and budgeting.

Stretch Your Dollars:

This workbook offers suggestions on how to budget, cut your expenses, boost your income and access useful information, services and programs.

FEEDBACK

We'd Like to Hear From You ...

Date _____

Education and Training Planner

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Send to People, Skills and Workplace Resources
Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

Mail: 12th Floor, South Tower, Capital Health Centre,
10030–107 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4

or

Fax: (780) 422–5319

or

E-mail: your catalogue request and/or comments to info@alis.gov.ab.ca

