

## POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS IN ATLANTIC CANADA



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
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*Qualifications: The Link Between Educational and Occupational Pathways and Labour Market Outcomes* is a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The four-year project investigates the nature of pathways within postsecondary education, and between postsecondary education and the labour market. As part of this project, the *Provincial Pathways* profile series lays the groundwork for further inquiry contrasting and comparing educational and occupational pathways in Canadian provinces and territories.

### Atlantic Canada: Overview

The Atlantic Canada provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island (PEI), and Newfoundland and Labrador generally work together to support student mobility. While each province's postsecondary system has distinct features, there are several mechanisms in place to facilitate movement and promising practices throughout the region.

### Post-Secondary System Descriptions

#### **New Brunswick Post-Secondary Institutions**

Postsecondary education in New Brunswick is delivered through:

- 4 publicly funded universities with seven campuses throughout the province;
- 2 community colleges constituted as Crown Corporations, with eleven campuses between them;
- 1 college of art and design (The New Brunswick College of Craft and Design);
- 1 specialized institute (the Maritime College of Forest Technology/Collège de technologie forestière des Maritimes);
- A number of small, private not-for-profit denominational universities/colleges;
- A number of for-profit private degree granting institutions; and

- Various institutions that offer career-oriented training and are registered under the Private Occupational Training Act (CICIC, n.d.).

### **Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Institutions**

Postsecondary education in Nova Scotia is delivered through:

- 10 publicly funded degree-granting institutions (6 English-language universities, 1 French-language university, 1 ecumenical school of theology, 1 college of art and design, and 1 agricultural college);
- 1 province-wide community college (Nova Scotia Community College) on 13 campuses; and
- Private career colleges (CICIC, n.d.).

### **Prince Edward Island Post-Secondary Institutions**

Postsecondary education in PEI is delivered through:

- 1 publicly funded university (University of Prince Edward Island);
- 2 community colleges (Holland College and Collège Acadie); and
- Private Training Schools (PTS), sometimes called “career colleges,” which offer postsecondary vocational training meant to prepare a person for employment (CICIC, n.d.).

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Post-Secondary Institutions**

Postsecondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador is delivered through:

- 1 university (Memorial University) on 6 campuses;
- 1 college (College of the North Atlantic); and
- Private training institutions (PTIs), which offer a wide variety of employment-oriented training programs (CICIC, n.d.).

The provinces of Atlantic Canada have education systems similar to the other provinces and territories of Canada except [Quebec](#). After 12 years of school, high school graduates can choose to study one to four years for apprenticeship, vocational or technical training, one to three years for a college diploma, or three to five years for a bachelor’s degree. Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, the largest university in Atlantic Canada, offers the only localized medicine and dentistry programs in the four provinces. The University of Prince Edward Island’s Atlantic Veterinary College also serves all the Atlantic Provinces (CICIC, n.d.).

## **Pathways in the Province**

Higher education pathways in Atlantic Canada have been strongly influenced by collaboration among the four provinces. Collaborative ventures include the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Atlantic Universities and the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) was established in 1974 by the Council of Maritime Premiers to assist institutions in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and PEI to establish and maintain collaborative arrangements (MPHEC, n.d.). The MPHEC guides higher educational institutions in regulating (a) the length and quality of programs, (b) Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) and credit transfer, (c) education-work transitions, (d) equity and access, and (e) teaching quality (MPHEC, n.d.). Since its foundation, the MPHEC has prioritized the expansion of applied post-secondary education, primarily through articulated programs between community colleges and universities (MPHEC, 2010). The MPHEC's endeavors have led to an increase in credit and block transfers throughout the Atlantic Provinces.

The Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC) is an inter-provincial body that seeks to collaborate, coordinate and share resources across colleges (APCCC, 2011). Because of the Consortium's commitment to student mobility, in 2000 the colleges of the four Atlantic Provinces signed a memorandum of understanding to "maximize the recognition and transfer of learning acquired through formal education, workplace training, and work and life experience" (APCCC, 2016, p. 10). This led to an agreement between member colleges to transfer all courses delivered by other members to suitable programs, and to implement the [Guide to Block Transfer Agreements](#). The Guide lists programs at colleges and corresponding institutions that will provide block transfer toward a new qualification (APCCC, 2016).

In 2009 the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) and the APCCC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to support student mobility among public colleges and universities without the repetition of previous learning (CMEC, 2012). This MOU has fostered higher education cooperation and development in Atlantic Canada.

New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador provide online transfer portals to help students navigate transfer policies and processes. In New Brunswick, the [Credit Transfer Portal](#) aids students in assessing transfer credit and prior learning (Province of New Brunswick, 2010). Nova Scotia's Council on Admission & Transfer (NSCAT) provides [MyNSFuture](#) (2017) as an online tool for students to navigate transfer processes. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills provides the [Credit and Program Transfer Online Database](#) to facilitate students' searches for transfer information in the province (Government of Newfoundland, n.d.). Atlantic Canada is rich in its collaboration and cooperation among the provinces to benefit students in higher education.

## Trades

In Atlantic Canada, various apprenticeship programs prepare students for work in the skilled trades. These programs require cooperation between the apprentice, the employer and the certification bodies. New Brunswick offers provincial certification for apprenticeships through the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. The apprenticeship training provides an 80/20 ratio of time spent in the workplace under the supervision of a certified journey-person and in training

blocks at a post-secondary institution (CICIC, n.d.). In Nova Scotia, the government-sponsored Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency oversees apprenticeship policies and practice under the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act (DLAE, 2014). The Nova Scotia Community College offers apprenticeship programs throughout the province. In PEI much of the trades training is offered through Private Training Schools in diploma or certificate programs as short as 40 hours or as long as two years (CICIC, n.d.). These institutions prepare students for work in a large number of practical professions through hands-on training that includes theoretical components. In Newfoundland and Labrador most apprenticeships require pre-work, on-the-job, and continued modular training connected to schools, Private Training Institutions, or the College of the North Atlantic (CICIC, n.d.). Each of the provinces in Atlantic Canada promotes The [Red Seal Program](#), which provides a Canada-wide standard of excellence for skilled trades through mutual recognition of trades credentials in Canada's provinces.

## Prior Learning Assessment Recognition

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) is practiced in each of the provinces of Atlantic Canada. According to Conrad (2008), PLAR guidelines were established in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1998, in PEI in 2002, and in Nova Scotia in 2005. Nova Scotia's PLAR was facilitated by the non-profit PLA Centre in Halifax, which guided students in assessing their own learning and experience and in creating a portfolio (CAPLA, 2010), but it is now closed. In New Brunswick, the Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL) department oversees the NBPLAR Action Group, which works to strengthen and increase awareness of PLAR in the province (CMEC, 2012; PETL NB, n.d.). Their goal is that "employers will better value the aptitudes of current and new workers, including Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, and newcomers, in order to rank them according to the true worth of their skills" (CMEC, 2012, p. 23). This goal is ultimately the aim of all PLAR endeavours.

## Summary

Student mobility in Atlantic Canada occurs both provincially and inter-provincially. The provinces have formed a concerted and cooperative system of transfer via formal memoranda of understanding. Through these various channels, credit transfer and qualification upgrading occurs via articulation agreements, joint programs, general policies, block credit, course-by-course equivalencies, and PLAR.

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