

Pros and Cons of Applying to College in Canada

Autumn is coming, which means cooler weather, colorful leaves, and, for high school seniors, college applications. Many students, though they may consider applying to school on a different coast, may never consider applying north. Recently, this has begun to change. In fact, some Canadian schools saw up to a 70% jump in American applications at the end of 2016, something many associate with the changing political climate in the states.

Canada, our physical and cultural neighbor, has a lot to offer college students. If you're thinking about applying to schools in Canada, here are some things to consider.

The pros:

- **It's often cheaper.** Different universities have different tuition fees but studying at a Canadian school is usually cheaper than attending both out-of-state public universities and private institutions. Because the US currency is stronger than the Canadian one, your dollar also goes further. Finally, most Canadian schools accept American loans and many also offer scholarship opportunities.
- **Strong academics.** With three Canadian universities ranked within the Top 50 universities in the world according to US News, you're sure to be challenged, stimulated, and to learn a ton.
- **An international experience wrapped in familiarity.** Though Canada shares a lot in common with the US, you would still be in a country with different history, culture, cuisine, and people. You can experience all this without needing to learn another language – unless you are interested in exploring francophone Canada.
- **It's often easier to apply.** Though application processes differ, most universities do not have as lengthy and complicated a process as most American schools.

The cons:

- **It's unfamiliar.** You'd be entering this new, pivotal stage of your life in a place where you might feel like a stranger. You'll have to learn to navigate new currency, new cultural norms, new ways of seeing the world – while also beginning a new academic phase.
- **The weather.** Canada is geographically diverse but, unless you are interested in moving to British Columbia, you're likely going to have to contend with snow, snow, and more snow.
- **A lack of name recognition.** Though there are institutions, like McGill, whose names carry weight internationally, few schools have the instant name recognition of the bigger American schools. That said, some schools have very strong networks of alumni both in Canada and across the world.
- **Bureaucracy and logistics.** Though the application process may be easier, you'll need to apply for a study permit. It's not unduly difficult but is an additional step. On the bright side, your study permit doubles as a work permit, allowing you to work 20 hours a week during your studies. Furthermore, many Canadian schools are in urban centers and many

students live more independent lives than those of their American counterparts, involving living in their own apartments, signing a lease, and the like.

For those interested in the diversity of Canadian university options, here are some of Canada's top-rated universities:

- **University of Toronto:** The U of T, as it's affectionately known, is the country's premiere university, located in Canada's cultural capital. It has more than 60,000 enrolled students enrolled in 900 programs of study
- **University of British Columbia:** UBC, with campuses in Vancouver and Okanagan on Canada's west coast, boasts of being the most international university in North America. You would be joining over 50,000 students enrolled in over 200 study programs.
- **McGill University:** Located in the heart of Quebec, Montreal, McGill is a slightly smaller university, with around 30,000 students in over a thousand programs of study. Though English is the main language of instruction, McGill's and the wider Montreal community reflect the francophone nature of Quebec – basically, it'd probably wise to brush up on your survival French!

And, if you're thinking of applying, here's some more information about the application process:

- **It's less streamlined.** Unlike in the US, there is no national common app system, though there are schools that participate in province-wide application systems. Generally, you'll have to apply to each school individually.
- **But they generally don't require as much as US schools.** Here's what you'll usually need:
 - Proof of English language proficiency (this is usually shown through your coursework or through having attended an American high school)
 - Your high school transcripts
 - ACT or SAT scores (writing portion may be requested), and sometimes SAT II Subject Tests.
 - Within the department you apply to, you might need to provide supplemental documents, such as a personal statement or proof of certain coursework.

And that's it! You generally won't need to provide counsellor or teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities, or do an interview.

- **Application deadlines are convenient.** For fall entrance, most deadlines are in January, so you can align your Canadian school applications with your American school ones.

So, if you're looking to expand your horizons and add to your options take a look at our northern neighbor – you might find something you like!