

Apprenticeship and Trades

FAQ for K-12 Educators



Apprenticeship Education

What is apprenticeship?

- Apprenticeship is a form of post-secondary education that blends on-the-job and classroom learning.
- Students spend approximately 80% of their time learning on the job and 20% of their time in the classroom.
- Apprentices are post-secondary students that graduate with an academic credential and certification as a journeyman.
- How many apprenticeship education programs are offered in Alberta?
- Apprenticeship education programs are available in 47 trades.
 - Each trade offers unique skills and career paths, ensuring there's a fit for different interests and talents.
 - Programs cover a wide range of industries and sectors, from construction to baking.

How does it work?

- Apprenticeship is partnership between an apprentice, an employer or sponsor, an educational institution, and AIT (part of the Government of Alberta.)
- Apprenticeship Education Programs are divided into periods, which are expected to take about 12 months to complete.
 - Full programs vary between one and four periods.
- To complete a period, an apprentice needs to:
 - Complete a set number of on-the-job hours under the mentorship of a qualified journeyman (~80%).
 - Attend and pass classes and labs at post-secondary institution (PSI) (~20%).
 - Pass a provincial exam with a mark of 70% or higher.

What are the benefits of apprenticeship?

- Gain on-the-job experience and a post-secondary education at the same time.
- Get paid during the on-the-job portion of their program and incur less debt than other post-secondary students while in the classroom.
- Open doors to leadership roles, entrepreneurship, and further education.
- Apprentices become experts at learning and adapting on the job—a competence that is invaluable in any workplace for any profession.
- Skills learned in apprenticeships are transferable across industries and regions.
- Apprenticeships provide a strong foundation in both soft skills (like problem-solving) and trade-specific technical skills.

What is AIT and what is its role in apprenticeship education?

- Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) is part of the Alberta Government and falls within the Ministry of Advanced Education.
- AIT serves as the registrar for apprenticeship education programs.
 - In post-secondary education, registrars are generally responsible for enrollment, record keeping, transcript management, course and exam scheduling, student advisement, academic policies, and credential issuance.
 - Most PSIs have an internal registrar for programs delivered by their academic departments.
 - In the case of apprenticeship education, AIT is the registrar, and programs are delivered by 11 institutions with the support of thousands of employers across Alberta.
- As Registrar, we:
 - Establish learning outcomes and examination criteria,
 - Register and monitor the progression of apprentices,
 - Issue credentials to graduates,
 - Provide PSIs with curriculum guides and funding to deliver classroom instruction,
 - Provide the apprentice and their sponsor/employer with a record book to guide and track on-the-job learning, and
 - Deliver period exams.

What is an apprenticeship education credential?

- Graduates receive an education credential recognized on the Alberta Credential Framework.
 - Some trades are more complex than others—and so are their associated apprenticeship programs, which is why not every program results in the same credential.
- Depending on your program, you could earn one of three types of apprenticeship education credentials.
 - Advanced Diploma
 - Diploma
 - Certificate
- Apprenticeship education credentials are recognized on Alberta's Credential Framework, which outlines all credentials in Alberta—certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees, etc.
 - Each credential level has set expectations for skills and knowledge, regardless of the field or the institution.
 - This makes it easy for employers to quickly understand someone's level of education.
 - Alberta's PSIs are working to enhance recognition of apprenticeship education for credit towards further education.

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Designated Trades

What is a designated trade?

- Designated trades are professions that are regulated by the *Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act*.
- Alberta has more than 50 designated trades, spanning many industries including mechanical, electrical, automotive, manufacturing, building, and service.
- Being designated means that there are regulated standards for journeyman certification in the trade. This means that:
 - employers across the province can trust that all individuals with a journeyman certificate have a high level of skill and knowledge in the field, and
 - Albertans have clear pathways to gaining skills and knowledge and establishing careers as journeymen.
- Trade designation also allows Alberta to regulate who can work within the trade. This means that:
 - workers' safety is protected: only those with training or supervision can perform potentially dangerous tasks that require technical knowledge and expertise, and
 - public and consumer safety is protected: Albertans can be assured that work within a designated trade has been performed by competent and qualified individuals.

What is journeyman certification?

- After completing an apprenticeship program in a designated trade, individuals receive an Alberta Journeyman Certificate.
 - The journeyman title is broadly recognized and respected across Canada.
 - Trades employers know that journeymen are highly skilled professionals who have the competencies they need for their business.
- If someone has significant trade-specific experience but hasn't completed an apprenticeship in Alberta, they can qualify for journeyman certification through the Trades Qualifier program instead of completing an apprenticeship program.

Are there restrictions on who can work in designated trades?

- 47 out of 59 designated trades include 'restricted activities'.
- Restricted activities are specific tasks and functions that may only be performed by tradespeople who meet certain criteria.
- To work in a trade with restricted activities, you must be:
 - a registered apprentice, or
 - a qualified tradesperson.
 - In some trades, journeyman certification is required to be considered qualified.
 - In other trades, employers may determine whether employees are qualified, regardless of certification.

Do you need to become an apprentice to learn a designated trade?

- Learning a designated trade **on-the-job** generally requires someone be a registered apprentice working under the mentorship of a certified journeyman.
- Many PSIs offer pre-apprenticeship programs where students can learn trade skills in classrooms and labs prior to employment.

What is the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades?

- The Alberta Board of Skilled Trades (ABST) is responsible for advising the Minister of Advanced Education on the direction of Alberta's designated trades certification system.
- The board is responsible for:
 - **promoting** the designated trades
 - **consulting** with industry on the standards and requirements for certification and restricted activities.
 - **making recommendations** to government on trade designations,
 - **establishing details** of designated trades, including:
 - the undertakings and activities that fall within a trade, and
 - the standards and requirements for certification,

What is AIT's role in designated trades?

- AIT serves as the administrator of skilled trades.
- As Administrator, we:
 - Determine individuals' eligibility for journeyman certification based on requirements set by the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades,
 - Issue journeyman certificates to qualified individuals,
 - Maintain records of journeyman certificates issued,
 - Administer the Red Seal program,
 - Ensure businesses and workers comply with regulations relating to working in designated trades, and
 - Provide secretariat support to the ABST.

What is Red Seal Endorsement?

- The Red Seal Endorsement recognises journeymen who have passed an exam demonstrating they have the knowledge and skills necessary to practice their trade across Canada.
- 45 trades in Alberta are designated for Red Seal endorsement.
- Apprentices in Red Seal trades can write the Red Seal exam at the end of their final period to earn their endorsement at the same time as their journeyman certification.
- Journeymen without the Red Seal can also apply to write the exam at any time post-certification.

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Counselling Students

How can teachers help students explore apprenticeship options?

- Being open to changing the perception of apprenticeship and the skilled trades goes a long way towards showing students all the options for their future.
- Educators are encouraged to understand that apprenticeship is a form of post-secondary education that leads to any number of rewarding careers and opportunities; however, students interested in pursuing skilled trades are often discouraged by parents or peers.
- The idea of that apprenticeship education and the skilled trades are for a specific 'type' of learner is not at all true, and all students should be encouraged to be involved in some form of career education.

How can a student start an apprenticeship or skilled trades education in high school?

- Registered Apprenticeship Program:
 - See RAP Brochure.
- CTS:
 - Alberta high school students who successfully complete all courses in a Career and Technology Studies (CTS) Apprenticeship Pathway may receive advanced standing in the first period of classroom instruction for that apprenticeship program.
 - The CTS Apprenticeship Pathway must be taught in an Alberta Education-approved facility.

Is apprenticeship considered post-secondary education?

- Yes, apprenticeship education programs are a form of post-secondary education.
- They combine on-the-job learning through mentorship and classroom learning at post-secondary institutions over one to four years.
- Apprentices learn from experts in their chosen field, both on-the-job and in the classroom.
- Graduates receive academic credentials that are recognized on the Alberta Credential Framework, like any other post-secondary program.
- An apprenticeship is a long-term commitment to learning and skill development—it's not just a job.

What opportunities are available after completing an apprenticeship?

- Apprenticeship graduates are certified journeypersons with an already-established a career and industry connections, ready for any number of roles in their trade.
 - This could include using their expertise in the trade to work as skilled technicians, supervisors, project managers, safety managers, quality control inspectors, business owners, instructors or trainers, sales representatives, consultants, or more.
 - Journeypersons often take on mentorship roles, ensuring the transfer of skills to the next generation.
- Many apprenticeship graduates go on to become business owners or entrepreneurs.
- Many trades have pathways to advanced certifications, allowing journeypersons to specialize or expand the scope of their skills.
- Skills learned in apprenticeships are transferable across industries and regions.
 - Apprenticeships provide a strong foundation in soft skills (like problem-solving) and trade-specific technical skills.
 - Apprentices become experts at learning and adapting on the job—a competence that is invaluable in any workplace for any profession.

How does tuition work for apprenticeship education programs?

- Each of Alberta's post-secondary institutions that offers apprenticeship classroom instruction has the authority to set its own apprentice tuition and materials fees rates.
- Apprentices also pay for books, parking, student association fees, facility fees, materials, and consumables during their classroom instruction.
- Apprentices can apply for help with costs and living expenses through:
 - Canada Employment Insurance Benefits
 - Employer Job Creation Tax Credit
 - Canada Apprenticeship Incentive & Completion Grants
 - Canada Tradespersons Tools Deduction
 - Alberta Apprenticeship Scholarships & Awards- Alberta Apprenticeship offers annual scholarships of \$1,000 to regular apprentices, high school (RAP) apprentices, pre-apprentices and occupational trainees.

Where can I find more information?

- [Tradesecrets.alberta.ca](https://tradesecrets.alberta.ca)
- STAE.Act@gov.ab.ca