

High School and Graduation

Nova Scotia's high school program provides a wide range of courses to help prepare students for life after high school.

High school in Nova Scotia

- includes courses from grades 10, 11, and 12
- has two semesters—the first semester is September to January, and the second semester is February to June
- is government-funded so there is no direct cost to participate
- is open to all students until they reach 21 years of age

The courses available to high schools are listed on the [Nova Scotia Curriculum](#) website. Individual schools may offer additional courses.

Life at high school

How classes are organized: Students usually study four courses from September to January, and then a different set of four courses from February to June.

- Each student is given a personal timetable of classes at the beginning of each school year or semester.
- Schools divide the day into blocks of time called periods. In many schools, students move from classroom to classroom throughout the day as the period and their courses change. Depending on the student's course load, they may have a free period without instruction.

Attendance: To earn a course credit in high school, students are expected to be present for at least 80% of class time. See the [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#) for more information.

Student-Parent Portal: Student information is managed in an electronic system called PowerSchool, which includes a Student-Parent Portal that provides information such as class schedule, assignments, grades, attendance, teacher comments, and school notices.

- Both students and parents/guardians can access the portal.
- School office staff can provide a username and password.
- To access the portal, visit: www.ednet.ns.ca/inschool/students_parents.

Planning for the future

When students begin high school, they are presented with a range of course options. The courses that students select can impact post-secondary and career options.

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to

- talk together about the student's interests, strengths, and assets
- talk with the school counsellor about course options and life after high school
- research course options that align with post-secondary and/or career goals
- attend school presentations and information sessions about course selection
- review plans regularly and adjust as needed

School counsellors: School counsellors are skilled at providing a broad range of collaborative, on-site, services for students, families, and schools. Their services include proactive and responsive approaches that support student mental health, well-being, and development, student learning and achievement, and life transition and career planning.

MyBlueprint: My Blueprint is a student-friendly, education and career/life planning resource that allows students to explore labour market information, their strengths, interests, and future education and career pathways. Students can log in to reflect on their learning, showcase their growth, and share their achievements. Family members can also create a MyBlueprint account to assist with a student's education and career planning. To provide access, the student can approve a link request from their family member.

Nova Scotia Works School Liaisons: Nova Scotia Works School Liaisons are assigned to schools around the province to provide labour market information, access to opportunities for students, workshops for students and families related to career planning, and more.

Visit: [Nova Scotia Works Schools Liaisons \(NSWSLs\) & Let's Talk Careers](#) to find a NSWSL near you.

Course options for graduation

A High School Graduation Diploma is awarded to students who have successfully completed a minimum of 18 high school program course credits. Successful completion of a course means that the student achieved a grade of 50% or higher in the course. Each course is usually worth 1 credit.

- **The 18 course credits needed for graduation must include:**
 - no more than 7 credits at the grade 10 level
 - and
 - at least 5 credits at the grade 12 level
- **13 (of their 18 credits) will be completed from each of the following areas:**
 - 3 language arts credits (1 at each grade level)
 - 3 mathematics credits (1 at each grade level)
 - 3 science and technology credits
 - 3 personal development and society credits
 - 1 arts credit
- **the remaining 5 (of their 18 credits) will be from elective courses:**
 - A range of elective courses are offered in Nova Scotia schools.
 - Students engaged in a community program, or other extracurricular activity, may be able to receive a credit if it is offered by an approved provider.

Each school year, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development publishes an [“Approved Provider and Course List”](#)
 - Students may complete additional courses (beyond the 18 credits needed to graduate) to suit their interests and goals.

Prior Learning

If possible, provide records of previous education, past transcripts, or report cards so the school can confirm how many high school credits can be given for previous learning. It may be beneficial to have these documents translated into English or French by a certified translator.

To make sure they meet graduation requirements, students are encouraged to reach out to the school counsellor to review course selection options.

Visit your school website for additional information about selecting courses.

Other high school courses and programs

While working towards their high school graduation diploma, students may also complete the following courses or certificate programs, which are designed to focus on specific career paths and interests. Students should check with their school to confirm which of the following courses or programs are available to them.

Co-operative Education

[Co-operative Education](#) is an academic course where students develop skills and explore career pathways. Students are placed in workplace environments where they gain on-the-job experiences, learn to understand the workplace, and gain real-world knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to succeed in their career. Students must be 16 years of age; or if they are 15 years of age, they must at least have started their grade 11 year. Students must submit an application to their school's co-op teacher to enroll in this course.

High Skills Major Certificate

The [High Skills Major](#) certificate program enables students to earn credits toward their high school diploma while completing courses and experiencing real-world opportunities related to their career interests. Depending on program offerings at their school, students can earn one of five certificates: Arts, Digital Innovation and Technology, Early Childhood Education, Health and Wellness, and Skilled Trades.

Options and Opportunities (O₂)

[Options and Opportunities \(O₂\)](#) is a three-year program that offers students a variety of experiences in the community and workplaces. The program includes field trips, guest speakers, service learning, community-based projects, mentorship, and multiple credits in co-operative education. As a result, students are able to connect school to a career path and make more informed decisions about what they want to do after high school, including university, college, apprenticeship, or going directly to work.

- **Students interested in O₂ must apply in grade 9.** There are only 20 seats each year at each school offering this program.

Skilled Trades

[Skilled Trades](#) courses replicate the job site, tools, equipment, and practices used in industry. Students can learn in a safe and relevant hands-on way. Students develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge they will need to meet ongoing demands of life, work, and learning in trades-related careers. Students who are taught by a certified journeyman, or are supervised by a certified journeyman at a co-op placement, are eligible to earn hours toward trade certification.

Youth Apprenticeship

In Nova Scotia, a youth may register as a youth apprentice if they are 16 to 19 years of age and work part- or full-time in one of Nova Scotia's designated trades. There is no fee to register. Youth apprentices are paid to learn and get a head start in a career in the trades.

Youth apprenticeship gives students the opportunity to get hands-on experience learning a trade while staying in the public school system. Youth who are employed in a designated skilled trade under the supervision of a certified journeyman may accumulate hours toward trade certification.

For additional information, go to the [Youth Apprenticeship](#) website.

French Language Programs

Students attending anglophone schools can achieve the following certificates upon successful completion of the required courses:

- [French Immersion Certificate](#)
- [Integrated French Certificate](#)

International Baccalaureate (IB)

The [International Baccalaureate \(IB\) Diploma Program](#) is an internationally recognized comprehensive program of study delivered in grades 11 and 12 in 156 countries around the world. There are currently 13 IB Diploma schools in Nova Scotia. Contact the school counsellor to confirm if IB is offered at your school.

The IB program is recognized and respected by universities across the globe and students may gain university credit for IB course(s).

Distributed Learning (Online Learning)

Students in grades 10 to 12 who need or want to take a high school level course that is not offered at their local school, or does not fit into their schedule, can take a course through an online Distributed Learning program.

- Distributed Learning programs are free for students enrolled in public schools.
- Students are held to the same standards as in-person courses.
- This pathway works best for students who are comfortable with technology and online learning and are capable of self-directing learning.

Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) / l'École virtuelle au CSAP (ÉVCSAP)

[NSVS](#) and [ÉVCSAP](#) courses are taught by Nova Scotia public school teachers during the school day. Students must have space in their daily class schedule to work on these online courses and meet with their virtual teacher and classmates online while they are at school.

Nova Scotia Independent Online Learning (NSIOL)

Students in [NSIOL](#) courses study independently online at their own pace. A course mentor, who is a licensed teacher, meets with students online, in the evenings or on weekends, 8 to 10 times during the course. The mentor helps students plan their study schedule and guides them through the course but does not teach or tutor them.

Students have up to 18 months to complete a 1-credit course, up to 24 months to complete a 2-credit course, and up to 6 months to complete a module. The [NSIOL website](#) has additional information, including a list of current and upcoming courses.

- [NSVS](#) and [NSIOL](#) courses are available for English and French Immersion programs in any Regional Centre for Education (RCE).
- [ÉVCSAP](#) courses are available in French for students attending schools in the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP).

For additional information, go to the [Distributed Learning website](#) or talk to the school counsellor about whether Distributed Learning would be a good fit. Students can register for online courses during the course selection process at their school.

Provincial Examinations

Nova Scotia administers provincial examinations in the following courses:

- English 10
- Français 10 (CSAP)
- Mathematics 10
- Mathématiques 10

Provincial examinations count as 20% of the final course mark.

- Students enrolled in these courses write the corresponding provincial examinations.
- Students who have an **Individual Program Plan (IPP)** in English 10, Français 10, or Mathematics 10 do not write these provincial examinations.
- Students **learning English or French as an additional language** may not be required to write these examinations. The principal, in consultation with teachers, parents/guardians and the student, will determine which examinations will be required given the student's current language skills.
- Additional language students will be allowed to use an **electronic translator and/or a bilingual dictionary**. They will also be given extra time, if needed.

The [Student Assessment](#) section of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website has additional information about Nova Scotia Examinations.

Contact information

For more information, contact your Regional Centre for Education (RCE) or Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP).

- **Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education (AVRCE)**
- **Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education (CBVRCE)**
- **Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE)**
- **Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)**
- **Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE)**
- **South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE)**
- **Strait Regional Centre for Education (SRCE)**
- **Tri-County Regional Centre for Education (TCRCE)**
- **SchoolsPlus** brings a range of services and supports, and is available in every school in Nova Scotia

For support in your community, contact:

- **YMCA School Settlement** – available province-wide
- **YREACH** – available outside of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)
- **Immigration Francophone** – available through your School Settlement Worker