



Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills
Development

Apprenticeship

A resource for Employment Ontario Service Providers

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Introduction

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) has developed this resource to help you, one of our valued Employment Ontario (EO) service providers, understand apprenticeship.

A client looking for work as an apprentice is no different from any other EO client: they need your help to find sustainable, fulfilling employment. However, apprenticeship and the skilled trades can, understandably, seem more complicated than other occupations. There are specific rules and legislation that govern apprenticeship and the trades, and there are a number of stakeholders, including MAESD and the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT), involved in the oversight and administration of trades programs.

This resource will help you become more familiar with the apprenticeship program and its legal requirements, so that you can feel confident serving clients who are looking for work as apprentices or looking to hire apprentices.

Part 1 describes OCOT, the industry-driven regulatory body for skilled trades in Ontario, and its role in apprenticeship.

Part 2 guides you through the apprenticeship process from application to completion, with important information about various kinds of apprenticeship programs.

Part 3 explains the difference between an apprenticeship program and a full-time skilled trades program at a college or private school.

Part 4 lists the financial supports and incentives that are available for apprentices and their sponsors and employers, and provides links where you can find more information.

Please take some time to review this resource. If you have any follow-up questions, please contact your Employment and Training Consultant.

Part I: The Ontario College of Trades (OCOT)

The **Ontario College of Trades (OCOT)** is an industry-driven, professional regulatory body that protects the public by regulating and promoting the skilled trades. OCOT establishes the requirements for each apprenticeship program by developing on-the-job training standards, in-school curriculum standards and certification examination standards for each trade. All apprentices and workers in compulsory trades in Ontario (more on compulsory trades in Part 2), must be members of OCOT.

For more information on OCOT, including their governance structure, membership fees and the benefits of membership, you can visit the [OCOT website](#).

OCOT Resources

As an EO provider, you are not responsible for ensuring that apprentices become members of OCOT. However, OCOT has many resources that could help you support clients looking for work as apprentices, or looking to hire an apprentice:

1. OCOT's [Earn While You Learn](#)¹ website has lots of valuable information about the apprenticeship program.
2. OCOT maintains a [public register](#)² of all OCOT-licenced skilled trades workers in Ontario (including apprentices) on their website.
3. OCOT is piloting an online skilled trades job board called [Hire With Confidence](#).³

OCOT's Role and the Ministry's Role

OCOT and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) deliver the apprenticeship program co-operatively, but each has a distinct role.

- **OCOT:** regulates the trades and sets the policies and standards for the apprenticeship program. If your client has a question about their training requirements or about their trade, they should contact OCOT.
- **MAESD:** provides administrative and program support, and offers end-to-end guidance for apprenticeship clients from registration to completion. If your client has questions about how to get started as an apprentice, or needs support in order to continue or complete their program, they should contact their local MAESD office.

¹ For those reading this in hard copy, the full link is: earnwhileyoulearn.ca

² Full link: collegeoftrades.ca

³ Full link: hirewithconfidence.ca

Part 2: What is Apprenticeship?

When you first mention postsecondary education, most people think of college and university. However, there is a third option that is equally vital to Ontario's economy: apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is a skilled trades training program wherein apprentices train on the job with qualified skilled workers for 85% to 90% of their program, and spend the remaining 10% to 15% of their program in classroom or online training. Apprentices are usually required to complete three to four levels of schooling over the course of a two to five year apprenticeship.

There are over 150 apprenticeship trades in Ontario, in four sectors: construction, industrial, motive power, and service. OCOT maintains a [list of all apprenticeship trades](#)⁴ in Ontario, along with important information about each trade.

A. Getting Started

Finding a Sponsor

To become an apprentice, your client must first find a **sponsor**. A sponsor is an individual or organization that agrees to provide training in all the skills in OCOT's **training standard** for their apprentice's trade. Training Standards are documents developed by industry experts that outline all the skills an apprentice must learn in order to complete an apprenticeship in a particular trade. Sponsors and trainers are responsible for deciding when and whether their apprentices have proven their competency in each required skill. Sponsors must also agree to allow their apprentices to attend the required in-school components of their apprenticeship program. Sponsors are often, but not necessarily, the apprentice's employer.

Submitting an Application

Once they have a sponsor, first-time apprentices must submit an [online application](#)⁵ for apprenticeship training. Clients who are under 18, have already been apprentices or have participated in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program cannot use the online application. You should advise these clients to print and submit a hard copy application form, available online in [English](#)⁶ and [French](#),⁷ to their local MAESD office. They can also contact their local MAESD office to request a hard copy of the form.

⁴ Full link: <http://www.earnwhileyoulearn.ca/156trades>

⁵ Full link: <https://www.eoisappriaa.edu.gov.on.ca/AOL/training/start?lang=en>.

⁶ Full link:

<http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca/mbs/ssb/forms/ssbforms.nsf/FormDetail?OpenForm&ENV=WE&NO=022-12-1661E>

⁷ Full link:

<http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca/mbs/ssb/forms/ssbforms.nsf/FormDetail?OpenForm&ACT=RD&TAB=PROFILE&SRCH=&ENV=WWF&TIT=1661&NO=022-12-1661F>

Signing a Training Agreement

If the apprentice's application is approved, MAESD staff arrange for the apprentice, their sponsor and a ministry representative to sign a **training agreement (TA)**. Sponsors who have never trained apprentices before must be assessed by MAESD staff to ensure that they have the necessary facilities, resources, and trainers to deliver apprenticeship training. Once MAESD staff approve the sponsor and inform all parties of their obligations under the TA, the sponsor and apprentice negotiate and sign the TA.

On-the-Job Training

Once MAESD approves and registers the TA, the apprentice begins their on-the-job training. If the apprentice is employed by their sponsor or the sponsor's trainer (as defined under the Employment Standards Act), the apprentice must be paid during their on-the-job training. Certain trades have specific wage rates that employers must follow for their apprentices.

Classroom Training

Apprentices also regularly attend school, either full-time for blocks of 8 to 12 weeks per level; part-time or in night classes; or online at their own pace. Apprentices' schooling is highly subsidized; MAESD covers around 80% to 90% of the costs of classroom training, and apprentices pay a classroom fee. Eligible apprentices can also collect Employment Insurance (EI) while they attend full-time in-school training, and the government offers financial support for those who are not eligible for EI.

B. A Note on Ratios

Some trades have **ratios**, meaning that, for every apprentice in a workplace, OCOT requires there to be a certain number of licenced journeypersons. As an EO service provider, you are not responsible for verifying ratios for sponsors, however, you may find that a sponsor cannot take on another apprentice because there are not enough journeypersons at their organization.

C. Types of Apprenticeship Trades

There are two main categories of apprenticeship trades: **compulsory trades** and **voluntary trades**. To find out which category a particular trade falls into, you can check out OCOT's [trades list](#).⁸

Compulsory Trades

In order to legally work in a compulsory trade in Ontario, you must be an OCOT member in the apprentice class, journeyperson candidate class, or journeyperson class. These classes are all

⁸ Full link: <http://www.earnwhileyoulearn.ca/156trades>

professional designations regulated by OCOT—there is more information on these designations in section E.

Voluntary Trades

You do not need to be an OCOT member in order to legally work in a voluntary trade in Ontario, unless you are an apprentice. In order to work as an apprentice in any trade, compulsory or voluntary, you must be an OCOT member. Particular industries or employers in voluntary trades may also require or prefer that their employees be OCOT members. All trades that are not compulsory are, by default, voluntary.

D. Apprenticeship Certification

Apprentices who successfully complete their program will receive one or both of the following certifications:

Certificate of Apprenticeship

MAESD issues a Certificate of Apprenticeship (C of A) to all apprentices who have completed the requirements of their training program, meaning: they have passed all required levels of classroom training and their sponsors have signed-off on their training standard to confirm that they are competent in all the required skills of the trade.

Some trades in the construction sector, referred to as hours-based trades, also require apprentices to work in their trade for a specific number of hours in order to earn their C of A. If your client is wondering whether a trade is hours-based, they can contact OCOT.

Certificate of Qualification

OCOT issues a Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) to individuals who pass a trade-specific certification exam. C of A holders are automatically eligible to write this exam with no further testing or assessment.⁹ All compulsory trades and some voluntary trades have C of Q exams. Apprentices in compulsory trades must pass their C of Q exam within 12 months of completing their apprenticeship in order to continue working legally in their trade.

⁹ Experienced workers who have not completed an Ontario apprenticeship can also apply to OCOT to write their Certificate of Qualification exam and become a member of OCOT's journeyman class. For more information, visit OCOT's website.

E. Completing an Apprenticeship and Launching a Career

For a visual representation of these completion processes, you can check out OCOT's [Pathways to Certification Map](#).¹⁰

Compulsory Trade

1. To complete an apprenticeship in a compulsory trade, an apprentice must complete their mandatory schooling, and have their sponsor sign-off on their training standard to affirm that they have mastered all the skills required for their trade.
2. Once MAESD confirms that these requirements have been met, MAESD will issue the apprentice their C of A.
3. Once the apprentice has their C of A, OCOT will change their membership status from apprentice to journeyman candidate. This will allow them to legally work in their trade for 12 months while they prepare to write their C of Q exam.
4. Once the apprentice passes their exam, OCOT will issue them a C of Q. Once they have their C of Q, they must update their OCOT membership status from journeyman candidate to journeyman.
5. Journeymen in compulsory trades can continue to work legally in their trade as long as they maintain their membership in OCOT's journeyman class.

Voluntary Trade with no C of Q exam

1. To complete an apprenticeship in a voluntary trade with no C of Q exam, an apprentice must complete all mandatory levels of schooling, and have their sponsor sign-off on their training standard to affirm that they have mastered all the skills required for their trade.
2. Once MAESD confirms that these requirements have been met, MAESD will issue the apprentice their C of A.
3. If the apprentice's OCOT membership has not expired by the time they earn their C of A, OCOT will place them automatically in the journeyman class for remaining duration of their membership i.e.: if the apprentice has six months left on their OCOT membership when they earn their C of A, they will automatically be placed in the journeyman category for six months.
4. Once their OCOT membership expires, the apprentice may then choose to renew their OCOT membership as a journeyman. However, they are not required to become an OCOT member in order to legally work in their trade.

¹⁰ Full link: <http://www.collegeoftrades.ca/wp-content/uploads/Classes-of-Membership-Pathways-to-Certification.pdf>

Voluntary Trade with a C of Q exam

1. To complete an apprenticeship in a voluntary trade with a C of Q, an apprentice must complete all mandatory levels of schooling, and have their sponsor sign-off on their training standard to affirm that they have mastered all the skills required for their trade.
2. Once MAESD confirms that these requirements have been met, MAESD will issue the apprentice their C of A.
3. Once the client has their C of A, they have 3 options:
 - a. Write and pass the C of Q exam, and become an OCOT member as a journeyperson.
 - b. Forgo a C of Q, and become an OCOT member as a tradesperson.
 - c. Continue working in their trade without becoming an OCOT member.

F. Advising Clients in Voluntary Trades

If a client in a voluntary trade asks you about their OCOT membership and certification options, you can refer them to OCOT or their local MAESD office for information about how these options could affect their career. You could also advise them to do some research and speak to other people who work in their trade. While becoming an OCOT member and writing a C of Q is not legally required for non-apprentices working in voluntary trades, there are some industries and employers with strong preferences, and even requirements, regarding their employees' trade certification.

G. Red Seal Trades

Red Seal Trades are trades with nationally standardized C of Q exams. This means that once an apprentice in a Red Seal Trade passes their C of Q, they are legally entitled to work in their trade anywhere in Canada. OCOT's [list of apprenticeship trades](#)¹¹ indicates which trades are Red Seal.

¹¹ Full link: <http://www.earnwhileyoulearn.ca/156trades>

Part 3: Comparing Apprenticeship and College Trade Programs

If you've reviewed the list of all the apprenticeship trades in Ontario, you may have noticed that most colleges offer full-time programs for many of these trades. These full-time post-secondary trade programs are called **fee-payer programs**, and they are not the same as an apprenticeship.

A student in a fee-payer program:

- applies to a college for admission
- pays the college tuition
- completes a classroom-based education program (aside from co-op programs, which may offer on-the-job training)
- receives a college diploma

In comparison, an apprentice:

- finds a sponsor
- applies for an apprenticeship program and registers a training agreement with MAESD
- becomes an OCOT member
- completes most of their training on the job (85-90% of the program)
- attends part-time or evening classes, or takes periodic breaks from work to attend full-time classes for the in-school component of their training (10-15% of the program)
- has most of their classroom training costs covered by MAESD, and pays their college or training institution a classroom fee
- receives a Certificate of Apprenticeship (C of A)

Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship (CODA)

Some colleges offer a program called the Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship (CODA). This program allows participants to earn a college diploma in a fee-payer program while completing apprenticeship in-class training that counts towards a C of A in their trade. Program participants also receive a minimum of four months on-the-job training in the program. However, unless it is a ministry-approved CODA program, classes and co-op placements in fee-payer programs will not necessarily count towards a C of A.

Advising Clients

Clients who are interested in the trades can take either approach: complete an apprenticeship and receive a C of A, or complete a fee-payer program and receive a diploma. However, certain industries may favor one approach over the other. Moreover, anyone wishing to work in a compulsory trade must pass their C of Q exam and become a member of OCOT, regardless of whether they have a C of A or a college diploma. There are many advantages to the

apprenticeship route, including: gaining work experience, learning on the job while earning money, and saving on schooling costs. However, you should encourage any clients who are considering a career in the trades to research both options to determine which one is right for them.

Part 4: Financial Incentives

The Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada both provide a number of financial supports and incentives for apprentices and employers who are also their apprentice's sponsor.

Provincially Administered Incentives

Apprenticeship Scholarship

The Apprenticeship Scholarship, available through Employment Service providers, provides up to \$1,000 to support individuals who require academic upgrading to meet the eligibility requirements for their chosen trade.

Loans for tools

The Loans for Tools program provides loans for apprentices to purchase essential tools or equipment for their training program.

Support for Non-EI Eligible Apprentices during In-School Training

This initiative provides up to \$1,500 of taxable financial supports for apprentices who attend full-time in-school apprenticeship training and are not eligible for Employment Insurance (EI).

Apprenticeship Completion Bonus in Non-Red Seal Trades

This bonus is a taxable cash grant of \$2,000 available to apprentices after they complete their apprenticeship training and obtain their C of A and, where applicable, their C of Q, in any Ontario non-Red Seal trade.

Apprenticeship Employer Signing Bonus

The \$2,000 Apprenticeship Employer Signing Bonus is available to employers who hire, register, and train an apprentice as part of their participation in the Employment Service program.

Employer Completion Bonus

The Employer Completion Bonus is a \$1000 taxable cash grant for employers for each apprentice they employ and train who completes their apprenticeship, receives a C of A and, where applicable, a C of Q.

Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit (for some trades)

The Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit (ATTC) is a refundable tax credit for corporations and unincorporated businesses employing apprentices in certain skilled trades during the first 36 months of an apprenticeship program.

For more Information on these financial supports, visit the [Employment Ontario website](https://www.employmentontario.com/).¹²

¹² Full link: <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/training/financial.html>.

Federally Administered Incentives

Canada Apprenticeship Loan¹³

Starting in January 2015, apprentices in Red Seal trades can apply for up to \$4,000 in interest-free loans per period of technical training to: help pay for tuition, tools, equipment and living expenses; cover forgone wages; or to help support their family.

Apprenticeship Incentive Grant

The [Apprenticeship Incentive Grant](#)¹⁴ (AIG) is a taxable cash grant of \$1,000 per year (up to a maximum of \$2,000 per person) that is available to apprentices once they have completed their first or second level (or equivalent) of an apprenticeship program in a Red Seal trade.

Apprenticeship Completion Grant¹⁵

The Apprenticeship Completion Grant is a one-time taxable cash grant of up to \$2,000 available to registered apprentices who have successfully earned their C of Q in a designated Red Seal trade.

¹³ For more information, you can visit the [Canada Apprenticeship Loan website](https://www.pca-cal.ca/en/home) (full link: <https://www.pca-cal.ca/en/home>)

¹⁴Full link:
<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/apprenticeship/incentivegrant/program.shtml>

¹⁵ For more information, you can visit the [Service Canada website](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/apprenticeship/completiongrant/program.shtml) (full link: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/apprenticeship/completiongrant/program.shtml>)