

International Student Handbook

**Graduate Program in Education
York University, Toronto, Canada**

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Introduction

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Education!

This booklet has been designed to help you prepare new international students in the Graduate Program in Education upon arrival become oriented throughout your program and your time in Toronto. This booklet also reflects the feedback from people who have previously studied with us in the Faculty of Education.

Please note: This booklet is intended to be used *in combination* with the [Graduate Program's Student Guidebook](#) and the resources found for [current students](#) and from the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#).

Background on York University

Founded in 1959, York University is now Canada's third-largest university and world-renowned for top-ranked programs. York has a student population of approximately 51,000, as well as 7,000 staff, and 200,000 alumni worldwide. York's faculty members are noted for excellent teaching and groundbreaking research. York is renowned for its innovative programming and international curriculum.

York offers full- and part-time graduate and undergraduate degree programs through ten faculties: Our [Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies](#) is the largest in Canada. [Glendon College](#) offers bilingual education with instruction in French and English. The [Faculty of Environmental Studies](#) is celebrated for one of the best individualized, interdisciplinary Masters program in the world. The [Faculty of Fine Arts](#) is the largest—and one of the most renowned—in Ontario. York's [Faculty of Science](#) is one of Canada's leading teaching and research areas, including in aerospace. The new [Lassonde School of Engineering](#) has just moved into a new building and will develop new pathways for "Renaissance Engineers." The [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) is Ontario's second-largest graduate school, and it offers both traditional and non-traditional interdisciplinary areas of study. York has four professional faculties including the [Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies](#), [Osgoode Hall Law School](#), the [Schulich School of Business](#) and the [Faculty of Education](#), each one of which is ranked highly in their fields.

Background on the Faculty of Education

York University's [Faculty of Education](#) is committed to intellectual and professional excellence, and to providing a rigorous and provocative learning experience for teacher candidates, graduate students, practicing teachers and school administrators. The Faculty has offered programs, including those for school and post-secondary administrators, since its inception over 30 years ago. The programs provide a supportive environment for conducting innovative scholarly research on a wide range of educational issues. The Faculty offers the following programs: Bachelor of Education (BEd); Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies; Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing Teacher Education; a Masters and Doctoral program in Language, Culture and Teaching; Graduate Diplomas in Early Childhood Education, Environmental/Sustainability Education, Mathematics Education; Post-Secondary Education and the New Urban Environment; and professional learning courses and programs for local and international teachers and administrators through the Professional Learning Office.

The Faculty values a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to education, as evidenced by the innovative staffing model in which tenure-stream faculty work together with educators from school boards and with colleagues from other academic disciplines across the university.

Introduction to “Canadian Culture”

- York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinsabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Métis. It is now home to many Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the current treaty holders and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. This territory is subject to the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceable share and care for the Great Lakes region.
- Toronto is one of the most multicultural cities in the world, where people speak many languages and have many different religions and cultural backgrounds.
- As the capital city of Ontario, Toronto is a centre for arts and culture in Canada. The city contains a number of attractions, including the CN Tower (the 3rd tallest tower and the tallest free-standing structure in the Western Hemisphere), the Canadian Opera Company, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Ontario Science Centre, the Royal Ontario Museum, and a number of major theatres.
- Toronto is also made up of smaller cultural communities, including Chinatown (Spadina Avenue), Little India (Gerrard Street), Greek Town (the Danforth), Little Italy (College Street), and a number of smaller cultural neighbourhoods. Toronto schools reflect these cultural communities.
- Toronto is also known for shopping! The most famous shopping centre is the Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto. Other well-known shopping malls in the area include Yorkdale Shopping Centre and Vaughan Mills. Other shopping areas include Yorkville (downtown, high-end shopping), Queen Street West (young, hip shopping and club area), and Kensington Market (vintage and trendy used clothing stores).

Transportation

Buses

Public transit is a great way for visitors to get around Toronto. It's an easy, safe, and quick way to get around. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) provides service within the city of Toronto (including all of downtown), ferries connect to the Toronto Islands, and The York Region Transit (YRT) and other regional transit options handle commuter service to the suburbs.

There are two subway stations on York University campus: [York University station](#) and [Pioneer Village station](#).

In 2019, the TTC implemented the new Presto card. You can purchase a card and then add money to it for monthly passes or individual rides. Find details at http://www.ttc.ca/Fares_and_passes/PRESTO/index.jsp. As of 2023, credit cards can be used at some transit stations, and this option will become more widespread.

You can find Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) maps and schedules online at <http://www.ttc.ca/>.

You can also explore the TTC trip planner at http://www3.ttc.ca/Trip_planner/index.jsp, the trip planner uses TTC schedule information to suggest the quickest transit route to wherever you want to go. It also calculates the length of time your trip will take on transit.

If you wish to travel to York Region (just north of York University), you can find the York Region Transit (VIVA and YRT) maps and schedules at <http://www.yorkregiontransit.com/>

Taxis and Ride Services

Toronto has Uber, Lyft and other ride-sharing services. You can use these on your device as you would in other locations.

To hail a taxi cab on the street, signal to a taxi driver on the street by raising your arm and looking straight at the driver/car. Tell the driver your destination, or if you are phoning, tell the dispatcher your name, location and destination.

Expect to wait longer for a taxi or ride during rush hours, in bad weather or on holidays. If you plan to catch a train or plane, please book your taxi in advance. Taxi fares are based on distance and time taken, and are registered on the taxi-meter. All taxis must have a meter and the rates are fixed by law. When paying ask for a receipt and remember that tips for taxi drivers are applicable. Tips are generally 10-15% of total fare.

Inter-Campus Bus Services

York University's inter-campus bus service provides limited passenger service for faculty and students who have to commute between the Glendon and Keele campuses. The shuttle travels between the two campuses regularly throughout the day, Monday through Friday, and is approximately a 25-minute ride.

Getting Set Up for Study at York

Tait McKenzie Centre (Gym Membership)

If you are interested in getting access to the gym and all other sport/recreation facilities and amenities a monthly and daily passes are available. For more detailed information please visit the following website: www.recreation.yorku.ca/services/membership

Wireless Access on Campus

If you have a laptop computer, you will be able to access wireless internet on almost any location on the York University campus (with the exception of residences) by using your Passport York account.

Financial

ATMs and credit cards are widely used in Canada. Canadian currency is in Canadian dollars. You can check the exchange rate on the Bank of Canada website:

<http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/rates/converter.html>

Cost of Living in Toronto

Please check out the following two links to gain an understanding of the living costs in Toronto:

- <http://canadaimmigrants.com/category/cost-of-living/toronto/>
- <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Toronto>

Internet Access

All public libraries in every neighbourhood in Toronto have internet access and are free to Toronto residents. You can get a library card by showing your legal identification, which shows your Toronto address.

Toronto Weather & Your Wardrobe

Be prepared for changing weather in Toronto! In all seasons, the weather in Canada can be unpredictable.

In the **summer**, the weather is often hot (35°C) and humid.

In the **winter**, it is important to bring warm, waterproof clothing; sweaters, hoodies, heavy/warm jacket, hat, scarf, mittens or gloves, closed-toe shoes and warm water-proof boots. According to Environment Canada the temperature during February can be anywhere between -10° and -1° Celsius degrees.

In the **spring and fall**, you can expect fluctuating temperatures and weather, sometimes within single days!

We advise that you check the weather forecast before heading out for the day. You can check Toronto's weather forecast at https://weather.gc.ca/city/pages/on-143_metric_e.html

Alcohol

Alcohol can only be purchased at stores that are licensed to carry alcoholic products such as the LCBO (Liquor Control Board of Ontario), Vintages (a wine store), some supermarkets, or the Beer Store. In the province of Ontario, it is illegal for people under the age of 19 to consume alcohol. In addition, alcohol cannot be sold to anyone under the age of 19, nor can people under the age of 19 gain entrance to a club or bar that serves alcohol. Photo identification is often required.

Consumption of alcohol is limited to private residences or licensed public venues such as bars. Carrying or drinking from open alcoholic beverages in public outside these areas is illegal.

Some events held on campus may feature a "wristband" policy so that all ages can attend the event, but only those with a wristband may purchase alcohol.

Smoking (Cigarettes/Cannabis) & Vaping in Public

The [Toronto smoking by-law](#) prohibits smoking inside all restaurants, bars and pubs and near doorways. Smoking is permitted on designated, outdoor bar patios. There is no smoking in public buildings (office buildings, government buildings, schools, shopping malls etc.) by law, and it may not take place near building entrances.

York University is a smoke-free environment, which means that there is no smoking or vaping in any of the buildings on campus, and must take place beyond 9 metres of the entrance. See York University policy: <https://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/smoking-policy/> and government legislation: http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/health/smoke_free/legislation.asp

See fact sheet about the laws: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-inspections-monitoring/smoking-legislation-enforcement/smoke-free-ontario-act-2017/smoke-free-ontario-act-2017-fact-sheets/>

Long Distance Phone Cards

Long distance phone cards are offered by several companies and are usually available in convenience stores. Phone cards usually list the countries they operate in and the call charge per minute—which is often cheaper than regular long-distance charges. Some companies also charge a nominal connection fee.

Using Skype, Zoom or another online service for phone calls may be cheaper than using cellular SIM cards or phone cards.

York University Observatory

The observatory on York University campus welcomes public interest and highly promotes the field of astronomy to those who are interested. On public viewing nights, visitors are able to observe selected celestial objects for free in the presence of friendly staff, in addition to engaging in various on-hand presentations. Visits to the observatory are free.

For more information please see <http://observatory.info.yorku.ca/join-us-wednesday/>

International Student Services

Some services are available to international students through York International. You can find them at <http://yorkinternational.yorku.ca/>. Their office is located on the second floor of the York Lanes mall.

Visas & Immigration

In Canada, anyone giving immigration advice should be licensed to do so. York International has staff who are licensed in this area <http://yorkinternational.yorku.ca/>.

Practicum Courses & Experiential Placements

Graduate Students may have the possibility to complete a practicum courses, which may include a workplace-based placement.

Note that in 2021-22 with the covid-19 pandemic, there may be additional requirements for students who are interested in completing placements.

For *most* of these placements, a **cleared criminal record check with vulnerable sector screening** must be completed and presented to both York University and to the employer as a part of the process before beginning the placement. This is a legal requirement.

- This paperwork must be from your home jurisdiction's police force. If you are an international student who is arriving in Toronto, this paperwork must be obtained from your local police force.
- If the paperwork is *not* in English, it must also be translated by an official translator with a stamp/seal. You can find local translators at <https://atio.on.ca/>.

For details on this opportunity, please contact the Graduate Program Office at gradprogram@edu.yorku.ca.

Ontario schools and many community placements have high professional standards, which are reflected not only in the curriculum that is taught and programs that are run, but also in the ways that teachers and other professionals are expected to conduct themselves and in the way that they dress.

School-Based Placements

Graduate Programs in Education *do not* lead to teaching certification.

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), which is the professional regulating body for Ontario indicates that regulates the teaching profession in the province, and issues teaching licenses requires all teachers to follow the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, and the Ethical Standards of Teaching (found at https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Standards%20Poster/standards_flyer_e.pdf). Please note that we also have a “no-touch” policy in schools between teachers/students and between students.

Likewise, teachers and other volunteers are expected to *look* like professionals. The clothing that is considered to be appropriate in the classroom is what is considered to be “**business casual**” attire. School administrators and managers often wear suits to work each day, or attire that is more formal than “business casual”. Please check on the dress code of your particular placement before the first day of placement.

The expectation of visitors is that they will be keen to participate in classroom activities and lessons as well as in extracurricular activities. Successful student teachers show initiative and conduct themselves in a positive and professional manner, and like teachers, put the needs of students before themselves. Please pack appropriately!

Living in Toronto

Students are responsible for their own living expenses and accommodations while studying at York University.

Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods. As you decide where to live in the city as you study at York, you may want to explore the various neighbourhoods: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/>

Information for on-campus housing can be found through [Housing Services](#).

Things to do in Toronto

If you are interested in additional activities and site-seeing please refer to the follow site for some of the various things to do in Toronto. <https://www.destinationtoronto.com/>

Emergency Phone Numbers

On campus:

In case of **emergency on campus**, contact:

York University Security

Emergency phone: 416-736-5333

Non-emergency phone:

Non-emergency email: scc@yorku.ca

Website: <http://security.info.yorku.ca>

In case In case of a **life-threatening emergency** in Toronto (or elsewhere):

In the event of a **life threatening situation** you should immediately **call 911** on any phone, including pay phones (for free).

If you require **emergency service on the York University campus**, **first call 911**, then you can call **416-736-5333 for York Security Services**. York Security meets and expedites emergency vehicles directly to the scene of the emergency so that valuable time is not lost searching for a particular building or location.

Walking alone across campus in the evening

On campus, there is a **GoSafe Program** available in the evenings to assist individuals going across campus safely.

- Contact this service at 416-736-5454
- Website: www.yorku.ca/gosafe