

How to Use Your School Guidance Counsellor

Guidance counsellors are one of the best ongoing sources of support for students who plan to go to college, university or a vocational training centre. They can provide guidance and support throughout the entire process. Your school counsellor can help you decide which programs are best suited to your educational goals. It is in your best interest to visit that person on a regular basis.

Start by making an individual appointment to introduce yourself to your counsellor. Although the counsellor will visit your class, make sure you schedule an uninterrupted time for a private, one-on-one session.

Throughout your high school years, your counsellor can help you:

1. Plan classes that will prepare you well for post-secondary admission and success. Your counsellor will know which high school classes are required for different programs and careers.
2. Review your academic record with you and suggest areas that need improvement. If you need to do some catching up, your counsellor can suggest ways in which to do that.
3. Begin the admission process by identifying the questions you should be asking—and finding honest answers. Questions such as: “How long do I want to study? Do I want to stay near home? Which institution has the program I’m interested in?”
4. Clarify and understand terms, ideas, and experiences for you that will encounter during research, campus visits or meetings with representatives. Your counsellor will know where to find information; for example in books, catalogues, brochures, and websites that deal either with the admission process or a specific vocational training centre, college or university.
5. Identify special opportunities that may maximize your chances for being a well-prepared and appealing candidate for post-secondary institutions. Your counsellor will know about local college fairs, open houses, opportunities to be a student for a day, and even overnight visits to colleges that may be offered.
6. Familiarize yourself with everything you need to know about the required college and vocational training admission tests.
7. Secure applications, identify application deadlines and prioritize in order to make sure that everything gets done carefully and ON TIME!

8. Complete your applications and polish any required essays so that the product you send to colleges will represent the best of your thinking and writing abilities. Make sure you take a “rough draft” to your counsellor early on. Leave plenty of time for revision and rewriting, prior to deadlines.
9. Figure out how to PAY for college, university or vocational training programs. First, your counsellor can give you essential information about the Quebec Student Financial Aid Program for loans and bursaries. She can help you understand how to complete the application. Your counsellor can also help you research scholarships that are based on factors other than your ability to pay for school.
10. Write a letter of recommendation to vocational training centres, colleges, universities and scholarships. Some will require that you obtain recommendations from both a counsellor and one or two teachers.
11. Look for summer employment and complete your resume.