

Credit Transfer for Open/Online Graduate Programs: Annex 1 Canada

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3.1 Canada

In a report for a Canadian university it would be unnecessary and impertinent to describe the structure of the university system in Canada. So we merely note that *Universities Canada* has 97 members, with the vast majority being public institutions.¹ There are reported² to be 21 private universities in Canada, with a few being members of Universities Canada. It is our understanding that the few private universities, even those in Universities Canada, are not seen, or not seen yet (things change, as in recent years in the UK), as relevant sources of good practice for public institutions such as TRU.

After several years of apparent quiescence (as judged by outside observers) online education appears to be growing and in particular the province of Ontario is rapidly increasing its activity levels.³

3.1.0 Thompson Rivers University

Thompson Rivers University (commonly referred to as TRU) is a public teaching and research university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees and vocational training. Its main campus is in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. The university has a satellite campus in Williams Lake, BC and a distance education division called TRU-Open Learning. It also has several international partnerships through its TRU World division.

TRU offers 140 on-campus programs and approximately 60 online or distance programs through the Open Learning division, including trades apprenticeships, vocational certificates and diplomas, bachelor's and master's degrees.⁴ Nearly 26,000 students study on TRU campuses in Kamloops and Williams Lake, or in distance or online courses and programs through Open Learning.

¹ <http://www.univcan.ca/universities/member-universities/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_private_universities_in_Canada

³ e.g. <http://www.ontariolearn.com> and <http://cou.on.ca/key-issues/education/online-learning/>

⁴ <http://www.tru.ca/about.html>

TRU-OL

This material is edited from the introductory TRU-OL page.⁵

Thompson Rivers University offers more than 55 independent-study programmes so students can earn recognized credits and credentials by distance through Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning (TRU-OL). Students completing certificate, diploma or degree programs by distance through TRU-OL are awarded Thompson Rivers University credentials. TRU is an accredited public post-secondary institution and a member of Universities Canada.

TRU credentials available through TRU-OL include:

- adult Grade 12 (secondary school) completion
- certificates and diplomas, including advanced and post-baccalaureate
- and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees.

Program areas include Adult Basic Education, Arts, Business and Management Studies, Education (Online Teaching and Learning), Health and Human Services, Nursing, Science, Technology and Tourism.

Cooperative arrangements with other educational institutions, community organizations, industry, business and professional associations provide students with choices in earning recognized credentials.

TRU-OL program students have the opportunity to accelerate their credential completion through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and transfer credit. With PLAR, academic credits are awarded for previous knowledge and skills gathered from life and work experience. PLAR can help students expedite program completion and save money on tuition. Students may also transfer previously earned credits completed at other institutions into a TRU credential.

As a member of the British Columbia Post-Secondary Transfer System, Thompson Rivers University certificates, diplomas and degrees are accepted world-wide.

Graduate programmes⁶

TRU offers five Master's programmes:

- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Education
- Master's Degrees in Environmental Economics and Management
- Master of Nursing
- Master of Science in Environmental Science

and four graduate certificates (Postgraduate Certificates in UK, etc), the first two on-campus and the last two via TRU-OL:

- Graduate Diploma in Business Administration
- Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Child and Youth Mental Health

⁵ <http://www.tru.ca/distance/programs.html>

⁶ <http://www.tru.ca/programs/graduate.html>

- Graduate Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning.

MBA

TRU offers students one of the most flexible MBA programs in Canada. Students can pursue the MBA on-campus, online, or study through a combination of on-campus and online courses on a full-time or part-time basis.

Choices include

- a two-year program
- an accelerated one-year program
- part-time, online and blended study; and
- a graduate diploma in business administration

Two-Year Programme

This is split into three phases.

1. Year One MBA Foundation (two semesters)

- Managerial statistics
- Financial accounting
- Management accounting
- Global economics
- Marketing management
- Human resource management

Students who successfully complete the MBA Foundation level courses with a B (GPA of 3.00) or better in each course can apply to be awarded a *Graduate Diploma in Business Administration*.

2. Year Two MBA (three semesters) MBA core

- Ethics and corporate social responsibility
- Corporate finance
- International business
- Leadership and organizational development
- Supply chain management
- Strategic management information systems
- Project management and consulting methods
- Strategic management

3. MBA completion options — choose one

C. Course-based option

- Advanced marketing management
- Advanced corporate finance
- Decision analysis and modelling
- Innovation and entrepreneurship

P. Graduate project option

- Research methods, preparation and presentation
- Graduate project

T. Graduate thesis option

- Research methods, preparation and presentation
- Graduate thesis

Accelerated One-Year Program

Applicants who hold a recent, acceptable undergraduate degree in business or commerce may qualify for admission directly into the second year of the MBA program. To qualify for the accelerated option, specific undergraduate pre-requisite courses must have been recently completed with a minimum B grade in each course. Please note that graduates of three-year degrees in business or commerce will not generally qualify to be accepted to the accelerated option.

Part-Time, Online and Blended Study

In the online MBA courses, students study the same rigorous curriculum as the on-campus courses and often have the same instructors but you aren't tied down with set class times. TRU's online MBA courses are paced, meaning students have set start and finish dates and fixed assignment deadlines as they would in the on-campus courses.

The TRU MBA program also gives you the flexibility to combine on-campus and online MBA courses to fit your needs. Because all TRU MBA students study the same courses and the same curriculum, students can choose to blend online and on-campus courses to customize their MBA experience.

Part-time study options are available for both the online and on-campus learners. Part-time students are able to select an individualized course load each semester and must complete the MBA program within five years of the start of the programme.

A contrast: MSc in Environmental Science

This is a thesis-based qualification.⁷ It requires the completion of 28 credit hours, including four required courses, and an independent research project/thesis. Required courses are:

ENVS 5100	Environmental Science I: History, Philosophy and Concepts	3 credits
ENVS 5200	Environmental Science II: Conducting Science ()	3 credits
ENVS 5300	Environmental Science: Topics and Case Studies ()	2 credits
ENVS 5400	Environmental Science: Dissemination and Outreach ()	2 credits
ENVS 5990	Thesis; Masters Thesis must be completed under the direct supervision of your Thesis Supervisor	18 Credits

This is much more clearly described than the MBA, including with credit values.⁸

⁷ <http://www.tru.ca/science/programs/msces/programcontent.html>

⁸ <https://www.tru.ca/science/programs/msces/programcontent.html>

The MSc in Environmental Science is a thesis-based degree. Because of our broad range of expertise, TRU is superbly positioned to train students to approach specific sub-disciplines using techniques ranging from molecular techniques to ecosystem ecology to policy, management, and ethical considerations.

Structure

The MSc degree in Environmental Science requires the completion of **28 credit hours**, including: four required courses, and an independent research project culminating in a thesis. The required courses are the backbone of our program, where faculty and students from many disciplines analyze and discuss environmental issues from different perspectives.

Required courses

ENVS 5100	Environmental Science I: History, Philosophy and Concepts	3 credits
ENVS 5200	Environmental Science II: Conducting Science	3 credits
ENVS 5300	Environmental Science: Topics and Case Studies	2 credits
ENVS 5400	Environmental Science: Dissemination and Outreach	2 credits
ENVS 5990	Thesis; Masters Thesis must be completed under the direct supervision of your Thesis Supervisor	18 Credits

Note that the thesis takes over half the credit value – this is unusual.

Master of Nursing

The Master of Nursing has 33 credits but the thesis element is just 12 and a project can be done at just 6.⁹ The structure is:

Core courses (15 credits)

- Knowledge for Advanced Nursing
- The Canadian Healthcare System
- Leadership and Managing Change in Healthcare
- Research in Healthcare

Choice of:

- Aboriginal Health Leadership
- Directed Studies in Health or Nursing Education
- Special Topics Course

Electives

12 credits for the project/paper option, or 6 credits for the thesis option.

PLAR

The following are excerpts from the key policy document.¹⁰

⁹ <http://www.tru.ca/nursing/programs/master-of-nursing.html>

III. TRU accepts credit earned through PLAR (as transfer credit) from all Canadian accredited postsecondary institutions that have formally adopted quality assurance standards from a recognized organization such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, the European Union or UNESCO. Such transfer credit is applied in the context of TRU course and program requirements.

V.3. For programs offered on TRU campus, a maximum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the credits required in a program will be awarded for prior learning. Exceptions to this would be subject to recommendation by the appropriate Faculty Council and approval of the Dean.

For programs offered through TRU-OL, Planning Council for Open Learning will establish the proportion of each credential that can be gained through PLAR.

V.4 Not all courses are eligible for PLAR; non-eligibility will be determined by the appropriate department after consultation with the Director, PLAR.

VI. FEES: PLAR assessments are done on a cost-recovery basis. The cost of PLAR will be based on the services performed in the assessment process and the number of credits requested. For assessment of PLAR for an individual course, this cost will not be more than the course fee charged as defined by the tuition fee schedule. Students are responsible for all associated costs involved with PLAR which may include long-distance phone calls to an assessor, travel to an assessment site and/or mailing a portfolio to an assessor. All fees are non-refundable.

3.1.1 Athabasca University

Athabasca University is of course a pure distance teaching university. Unlike some distance teaching universities around the world it has a substantial graduate programme, with offerings in Arts, Business, Counselling, Health, Science & Technology and last but not least Distance Education itself.¹¹

Athabasca University has a comprehensive admissions page,¹² leading to a set of more detailed pages. The top page unsurprisingly notes: “You must have an undergraduate degree to apply for most graduate programs”. Note the “most”.

There are three ways to gain credit so as to allow the completion of fewer modules in the graduate programme:

- Credit for previous education
- Credit for what you already know (PLAR)
- Challenge for credit.

Credit for previous education

There is a comprehensive credit transfer tool which lists a set of universities within and beyond Canada and has awareness of the programmes offered by these universities. This

¹⁰ https://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/PLAR5678.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.athabascau.ca/programs/graduate/>

¹² <http://www.athabascau.ca/admissions/requirements/>

system is just a guide and students have to apply for credit transfer, which could be from universities not listed in the credit transfer tool.¹³

Time limits on credit transfer inwards

The following is a precis of the key page:¹⁴

Usually, courses will be considered for transfer credit regardless of when they were completed. There are some exceptions.

Depending on the program, AU will not award transfer credit for some administrative studies courses (e.g., law, senior-level accounting, management science, marketing or finance courses), information systems courses, or science courses that were completed more than **10 years ago**.

Athabasca University will not award transfer credit in the following programs for nursing courses that were completed more than seven (7) years ago, or for non-nursing courses that were completed more than **10 years ago**...

In addition, AU will not grant transfer credit in the following programs for computer science courses that were completed more than **five years ago**...

Students transferring credit completed within a Canadian Information Processing Society¹⁵ (CIPS) accredited diploma or who have completed a science-related diploma program from a college or technical institute, and who are enrolling in the Bachelor of Science Program, *may* [our italics] not be eligible for a block transfer of credit if the diploma is more than five (5) years old. Consequently, if student diplomas are more than five (5) years old and students are currently active in their field of study, **they should arrange to provide evidence of this activity**...

The procedures for arriving at a final credit transfer statement are complex,¹⁶ and depend on where the institution is located. In particular,

If you have credentials from an institution outside of Canada or the United States and you would like AU to consider them for transfer credit, you'll follow a different assessment process. This assessment must be done by an international assessment agency – for example, the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS).¹⁷

Credit for what you already know (PLAR)

*This does not apply to graduate programmes.*¹⁸ However there seems to be one small loophole: "If you're planning to pursue graduate study, check with the graduate program you want to enter to see if your PLAR credits will be accepted. **Get this in writing.**"

¹³ For example many UK universities are not listed in the tool

¹⁴ http://calendar.athabascau.ca/undergrad/current/page06_08_i.php

¹⁵ It should be noted for later use that CIPS has mutual recognition agreements with similar societies in other advanced countries including the British Computing Society and the New Zealand Computer Society – <http://www.cips.ca/mutual>

¹⁶ <http://www.athabascau.ca/admissions/get-credit-education/>

¹⁷ This is an agency of the Alberta government – <https://www.alberta.ca/iqas.aspx>

¹⁸ <http://www.athabascau.ca/admissions/get-credit-work-life-experience/>

Challenge for credit

*This again is not available for graduate programmes.*¹⁹

3.1.2 TÉLUQ

TÉLUQ is North America's only French-language distance education university:²⁰

It has over 20,000 students, more than half of them in the Montreal area. Most students (71%) are females. About a third of all students (35%) taking courses at TÉLUQ are from other universities or in on-campus programs. Most students (64%) are between 20 and 34 years old. About a fifth of the student population (22%) holds a degree.

TÉLUQ has been through a number of interesting changes in recent years.²¹ Old information (2008)²² was that TÉLUQ offered several undergraduate programmes including six degrees. It also offered two master degree programmes and one Ph.D. programme. It had a number of courses and degrees in computer science, education, communication, environmental sciences, and management.

More recent information current on the web site lists:

- Master of Science (Information Technology)²³
- Master of Education (with dissertation – concentration in distance education)²⁴
- Master of Education (with dissertation – concentration in educational technology)²⁵

There is a full list of programmes available but few are at Master's level.²⁶ *No further information could be found in English.*²⁷

3.1.3 Memorial University

This was not on the original list for Canada but was added to cover the situation where the credit transfer system might have been different for distance-teaching universities than for primarily campus-based institutions, coupled with the lack of information in English about TÉLUQ and its lack of graduate programmes.

¹⁹ <http://www.athabasca.ca/admissions/challenge-credit/>

²⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%89LUQ>

²¹ <http://www.telug.ca/site/en/history.php>

²² <http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.eu/index.php/TELUQ>

²³ <http://www.telug.ca/site/etudes/offre/prog/maitrise-es-sciences-technologie-de-l-information-profil-avec-memoire/> and <http://www.telug.ca/site/etudes/offre/prog/maitrise-es-sciences-technologie-de-l-information-profil-sans-memoire/>

²⁴ <http://www.telug.ca/site/etudes/offre/prog/maitrise-en-education-avec-memoire-concentration-en-formation-a-distance/>

²⁵ <http://www.telug.ca/site/etudes/offre/prog/maitrise-en-education-avec-memoire-concentration-en-technologie-educative/>

²⁶ http://www.telug.ca/site/etudes/guide_programmes_telug.pdf

²⁷ **Added in proof:** A new page on PLAR is available at http://www.telug.ca/site/admission/reconnaissance_acquis.php – in French but with an excellent automatic translation to English with the title *Recognition of prior learning*

Memorial University is the only university in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has more than 18,500 students and 5,200 faculty.²⁸ It has more than 100 degree programme options, offering courses across its four campuses including abroad (UK) and online.²⁹

It offers online programmes³⁰ in:

Business Administration	Criminology	Education
Food Safety	Marine Studies	Maritime Management
Maritime Studies	Nursing	Physical Education
Quality Management	Technology	Technology Management

The ones in bold are offered also at graduate level.

A typical example is the Technology Management (Aquaculture Technology) Master's programme.³¹ This requires 10 courses (30 credit hours, either two compulsory courses with eight electives or two compulsory courses with six electives and an aquaculture management project). Applicants must have:

A post-graduate aquaculture credential, aquaculture focus in a completed undergraduate degree, or significant professional experience in the aquaculture industry.

No further admissions information is available on the site.

3.1.4 Royal Roads University

Royal Roads University is a small public university located in Colwood, British Columbia. It has 52 core full-time staff plus 450 associate faculty. Wikipedia reports that:³²

Royal Roads University offers applied and professional programs at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels, focusing on graduate level career development. The programs are primarily offered in a cohort model as a blended format, combining periodic on campus residencies for face to face intensive sessions with on line courses. This format is designed to favour working professionals, who may complete the programs at a distance while maintaining their career.

The University offers three formats:

- i) on-site with 100% face to face learning,
- ii) blended, with part of the program taught in a face to face residency and the balance on line; and
- iii) completely on-line.

²⁸ <http://www.mun.ca/main/about/>

²⁹ <http://www.mun.ca/main/programs.php>

³⁰ <http://www.mun.ca/main/programs.php?campus=online>

³¹ <https://www.mi.mun.ca/programsandcourses/programs/technologymanagementaquaculturetechnology/>

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Roads_University

Residency based programs range from one to three weeks, and are often held on-campus, but select programs host their residencies in unique locations around the world. Mature students are welcome, and credits are available for prior experience in the subject area.

Royal Roads describes its pedagogic approach as:³³

Team-based online learning combined with short on-campus residencies allows working professionals to maintain their lives while advancing their career.

Our online programs are developed in collaboration with industry experts and taught by leading practitioners. This ensures the knowledge and skills taught are current and relevant in the real world.

The current master’s programmes offered online or blended are below.

PROGRAM/DEGREE at Royal Roads University	DELIVERY	LENGTH
Master of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Management	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Disaster and Emergency Management	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Environment and Management	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Environmental Education and Communication	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Environmental Practice	Online	3+ years
Master of Arts in Global Leadership	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration and Leadership	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Intercultural and International Communication	Blended	~2 years
Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Justice Studies	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Leadership	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Learning and Technology	Online or Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Professional Communication	Blended	2 years
Master of Arts in Tourism Management	Blended	2 year
Master of Business Administration in Executive Management	Blended	1.5/2.5 yr
Master of Global Management	Blended	12–19 Months
Master of Science in Environment and Management	Blended	2 years

³³ <http://www.royalroads.ca/prospective-students/online-learning>

PROGRAM/DEGREE at Royal Roads University	DELIVERY	LENGTH
Master of Science in Environmental Practice	Online	3+ years

There is very little general information on Admissions³⁴ but there is a section on Transfer Agreements.

The table that follows overleaf selects those for graduate programs.

³⁴ <http://www.royalroads.ca/admission>

Credit Transfer for Open/Online Graduate Programs: Annex 1 Canada

INSTITUTION	ROYAL ROADS PROGRAM
Acsenda School of Management	Master of Arts in Tourism Management
Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology	Master of Arts in Tourism Management
Camosun College	Master of Global Management
Camosun College	Master of Arts in Tourism Management
Chair Academy	Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration and Leadership
Department of National Defence	Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Management
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Environment and Management
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Learning and Technology
Fielding University	Master of Business Administration in Executive Management
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Tourism Management
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Leadership
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding
Fielding University	Master of Arts in Disaster and Emergency Management
Humber College	Master of Arts in Professional Communication
Niagara College	Master of Arts in Tourism Management
Thompson Rivers University	Master of Arts in Leadership
University of the Fraser Valley	Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies , Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management
Vancouver Community College	Master of Arts in Tourism Management

A quick scan suggests that all of these agreements are related to admissions requirements for the *start* of the graduate programme and do not allow entry to that programme part-way through; indeed some of them suggest that the student will have to take some additional modules in order to even reach the start level. For obvious reasons we focus on the entry for TRU. The agreement with TRU states:

The School of Leadership Studies at Royal Roads University (RRU) recognizes Thompson Rivers University’s (TRU) Bachelor of Health Science as meeting the admission requirement of an applicable undergraduate degree into RRU’s Master of Arts in Leadership program. Graduates of TRU’s Bachelor of Health Science program will need to meet any other remaining entrance requirements for the MA in Leadership (per the admission requirements on the RRU website) and pursue the regular application process.

Some people experienced in credit transfer might regard that agreement as rather grudging.

Other universities

There do not seem any other established universities with sufficient distance teaching offerings at full Master's level from which to draw relevant conclusions.