

Private career colleges (PCCs) are privately owned (both for-profit and not-for-profit) post-secondary institutions that provide career specific certificate or diploma programs. They should not be confused with Ontario's 24 publicly-supported Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs). There are approximately 450 registered PCCs in Ontario training over 46,000 students annually at over 650 campuses. PCCs are attractive to many people including recent immigrants who are looking for a quick transition to the work place. They typically have small class sizes and offer intensive training, short program durations and multiple intakes throughout the year. While most PCCs are reputable institutions that provide the training they promise, there are also some disreputable PCCs which charge high tuitions, make false promises, offer limited instruction, inadequate learning facilities and sporadic schedules. Be cautious about misleading statements or advertisements guaranteeing admission to a program, guaranteeing graduation, guaranteeing a job offer after completion of a program or guaranteeing the issuance of a student visa.

**If you are planning to register with a PCC, it is your responsibility to investigate carefully. Before enrolling in a PCC program, it is advisable to follow these steps:**

Use Ontario private career college search service at [www.serviceontario.ca/pcc](http://www.serviceontario.ca/pcc) to determine if the PCC and/or a specific program you are interested in are registered. The website also provides information on colleges, such as where they are located and what fees they charge.

If the PCC you are planning to enrol is **registered** it means that its programs are approved and monitored by the Government of Ontario and you are protected under *the Private Career Colleges Act (PCCA), 2005*. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities investigates PCCs that engage in practices such as using poorly trained instructors, charging very high tuition fees or offering poor classes. You can check "Private Career College Violations" at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/audiences/pcc/notices.html> to see a list of PCCs that have been fined or closed by the Ministry because of violations under the PCCA.

If the PCC you are interested in is **not registered** and is offering a **vocational** program, it means that it is breaking the law and you cannot rely on any of the protections of the PCCA. Please note that **non-vocational programs** are not required to be registered and hence are not monitored. These programs include language-training programs, programs less than 40 hours in length, programs costing less than \$1,000, professional development programs and hobby courses.

Search the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) approved Private Career Colleges at [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprogram/pcc/](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprogram/pcc/). OSAP eligible PCCs are subject to more scrutiny since the Government of Ontario requires that all OSAP approved schools provide students with accurate information on student loan default rates, graduation rates and graduate employment rates. If the PCC you are interested in is OSAP approved, make sure that you have the information on these key performance indicators.

It is crucial that you:

- make sure that employers and other educational institutions recognize the program and the PCC;
- meet the admission requirement;
- tour the PCC facilities;
- know the total cost of enrolling in the program including application fees, tuition, books, equipment, room and board costs;
- read the "Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities" at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/statement.pdf>
- sign and receive a written enrollment contract;
- know that the college is not allowed to require you to obtain a product or service from a particular person as a condition of admission into the program;

Remember, "if it is too good to be true, it probably is."

## What types of protection *the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* offers to PCC students?

The enrollment contract must contain all the following mandatory terms:

- the approved program name, your address, telephone number and if applicable your e-mail address;
- the start and expected end date, the language of instruction and the admission requirements;
- a schedule of hours of instruction and the location of any practicum (e.g. work placement);
- the fees in Canadian dollars and a payment schedule;
- a place for you to acknowledge that you have received a copy of the Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities, the college's fee refund policy, the college's student complaint procedure and policy relating to the expulsion of students
- a consent section for the collection and use of your private information; and statements, in bold, that:
  - ✓ the contract is subject to the PCCA, 2005 and the regulations made under the Act, and
  - ✓ the private career college does not guarantee employment for any student who successfully completes a vocational program offered by the college.

**Cooling Off Period.** You can cancel a contract within **two days** of signing it if you deliver a written notice to a PCC at the address shown on the contract.

**Collection of Fees and Fee Refunds.** The PCCA provides that PCCs:

- may only charge fees in Canadian dollars;
- may collect no more than the lesser of \$500 or 20% of the course cost for enrollment costs;
- must submit its fee schedule to the Ministry, and may not charge an amount above the submitted fee schedule;
- must itemize the amounts being charged (e.g. whether for tuition, for books, for supplies, etc.);
- must give you a properly-dated and itemized receipt;
- have 30 days from the date of the request to issue a fee refund.

The PCCA requires the PCC to make a **full refund** when:

- a student withdraws during the cooling off period, giving proper notice;
- it collects fees before its licences /courses are approved by the Ministry or more than allowed for enrollment fees;
- more than 10% of the program is taught by unqualified instructors;
- the enrolment contract does not contain all of the mandatory terms;
- it discontinues the program before a student has completed it;
- it expels a student for reasons or in a way not covered in its expulsion policy; or
- the PCC makes false or misleading statements or inducements that represent a fundamental breach of the enrolment agreement.

The PCCA may permit a **partial refund** under certain circumstances. The PCC may retain 20% of the total fees for the program or \$500, whichever is less if the student:

- withdraws from the program before it begins;
- does not meet the program's admission requirements before the program begins;
- does not attend the first 14 days of classes.

If the student withdraws from a program after the program begins, the PCC may retain 20% of the total fees or \$500, whichever is less, plus the fees covering the portion of the course already delivered by the college.

### Student Complaint Procedure:

