

SPECIALIST HIGH SKILLS MAJOR



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About the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)

The Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) is a specialized program approved by the Ministry of Education that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

SHSMs assist students in their transition from secondary school to apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace.

These programs enable students to gain sector specific skills and knowledge in engaging, career-related learning environments, and prepare in a focused way for graduation and postsecondary education, training or employment.

Components of a SHSM

The requirements of each SHSM are unique and geared to a specific sector.

The design of all SHSMs, however, follows this model and includes all five components.

Each SHSM consists of five required components:

1. Bundled credits

Several of these credits often replace the elective choices in a student's timetable.

A defined bundle of credits consisting of eight to ten Grade 11 and Grade 12 credits, including Co-operative Education. The credits in the bundle provide students with technical knowledge and skills particular to, and valued by, the SHSM sector.

Therefore, the required credits for each SHSM will vary, depending on:

- the specific sector of each SHSM program
- the student's chosen pathway to one of four postsecondary options – apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace – within each SHSM.

The bundle consists of:

► Major credits

Each SHSM includes four major credits – two Grade 11 courses and two Grade 12 courses – that enable students to build a foundation of sector-focused knowledge and skills before entering a postsecondary destination.

► Other required credits

In addition to the four major credits, each SHSM student must complete two, three or four other required credits from the Ontario curriculum. Other required credits include English, Math, and other subjects that enhance student learning within the specific industry sector.

► Co-operative Education credits

Co-operative Education courses provide authentic learning experiences in a workplace setting and enable students to refine, extend, apply and practise the sector-specific knowledge and skills acquired in the bundle of credits.

Each SHSM pathway requires that students complete a minimum of two credits in Co-operative Education in a work placement in the sector.

NOTE: There are **NO extra credits required** to complete this program. All required credits may be obtained within the 30 required credits for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

2. Certification and training

All SHSMs require six or seven sector-recognized certifications that have been identified through extensive sector consultations. This component of the SHSM enables students to acquire the knowledge and skills related to safe work habits and sector-specific training. In addition, students with sector-recognized certifications and training have an advantage when entering the workforce.

They include:

- three or four compulsory certifications or training courses/programs (example: first aid, CPR, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System – WHMIS)
- the required number of remaining certifications, which are selected from a list of elective certifications or training courses/programs.

NOTE: All certifications required within the SHSM are offered to the student of the program at no cost.

3. Experiential learning and career exploration activities

The SHSM experiential learning and career exploration requirement consists of planned learning activities that take place outside the traditional classroom setting.

Experiential learning and career exploration activities give students opportunities to explore, observe, participate in, and reflect on a variety of sector-specific experiences and careers. These activities also enable students enrolled in the SHSM to find out about the opportunities available in careers that interest them.

4. Reach ahead experiences

Students pursuing a SHSM must have opportunities for “reach ahead” experiences connected with their postsecondary plans. These experiences enable Grade 11 and 12 students to gain confidence in their ability to be successful, refine skills and work habits, and make informed choices about future careers and next steps.

5. Essential Skills and work habits

SHSM programs help students develop the Essential Skills and work habits that will prepare them for lifelong success, using the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) as a planning and documentation tool. The OSP is a free, bilingual, web-based resource that provides clear descriptions of the Essential Skills and work habits important for work, learning and daily living.

Seven Key Benefits for Students

Pursuing a SHSM enables students to:

- 1 Customize their secondary school education to suit their interests and talents
- 2 Develop specialized knowledge and skills that are valued by the sector and postsecondary education institutions
- 3 Earn credits that are recognized by the sector and postsecondary education institutions
- 4 Gain sector-specific and career-relevant certification and training
- 5 Develop Essential Skills and work habits that are valued by the sector, recorded using the tools in the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP)
- 6 Identify, explore and refine their career goals and make informed decisions about their postsecondary destination
- 7 Remain flexible, with the option to shift between pathways should their goals and plans change



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