

Stakeholder Summary

Numbers up but students with disabilities still face challenges in postsecondary education

The number of students with disabilities at Ontario's colleges and universities has increased in recent years but they still encounter barriers into, through and after postsecondary education (PSE), according to a synthesis of current research from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO).

Project Description

Previous HEQCO research identified students with disabilities as being underrepresented in PSE. This @ Issue paper, *Disability in Ontario: Postsecondary education participation rates, student experience and labour market outcomes*, is a summary of HEQCO research on students with disabilities in Ontario, focusing on their participation and attainment rates, transition and in-school experiences, and labour market outcomes.

Findings

Research shows that more students with disabilities are going to PSE and are choosing college over university. Yet, students with disabilities are less likely to graduate and often take longer to complete their education.

They are also more likely to drop out of high school, according to a study by the Toronto District School Board. Of those who were in grade 9 in 2003, 46% with behavioural disabilities, 35% with mild intellectual disabilities and 29% with learning disabilities dropped out of high school, compared to only 20% of students without a disability. Students with disabilities were also much less likely to confirm an offer to university than students without disabilities but more likely to confirm an offer to college.

PSE applicants with disabilities tend to be older and are less likely to go directly from high school. Of the overall population, those with disabilities have lower employment rates and lower earnings than those without disabilities, although attaining a PSE credential is narrowing this gap. Within the workplace, issues around the use of accommodations like assistive technology and fears of stigmatization still remain.

The @ Issue Disability in Ontario: Postsecondary education participation rates, student experience and labour market outcomes was written by Ursula McCloy, research director and Lindsay DeClou, research analyst at HEQCO.