



The TOPS Program

What is TOPS?

TOPS, or Talented Offerings for Programs in the Sciences, is unique to Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute. TOPS was initiated in 1987 and continues to produce outstanding graduates who excel in their post-secondary studies and are the recipients of numerous scholarships and awards. TOPS students have won close to twenty prestigious National Scholarships at the University of Toronto (valued at over \$50 000) in the past twenty years. Last year, a survey of our TOPS graduates indicated that they were offered in excess of \$1 500 000 in scholarships.

Students need not be recognized as “gifted” to enroll. TOPS students are highly motivated individuals with a broad range of interests. Students in the program are cored together for most of their academic classes over their 4 years of secondary education and benefit from being surrounded by individuals with interests and goals similar to their own. Course work is enriched through a variety of means, depending on the strengths and interests of the instructor. The TOPS program broadens students’ skills and knowledge by exceeding greatly the regular curriculum. Our grade 12 courses are often taught at a university or Advanced Placement level. For more information, please browse our website at www.topsprogram.ca.

Who can apply to TOPS?

Any student may apply to the TOPS program. Students from outside the Toronto District School Board are welcome to apply. In 2018, over 500 grade 8 students wrote the entrance exam. We will be selecting around 60 students. In addition, as space becomes available, a few placements may become open to students to enter grade 10 TOPS. These students go through a similar application process including an entrance examination. No students are permitted to enter grade 11 or 12 level TOPS.

How does one apply to TOPS?

Entrance to the program is determined using several criteria:

1. **A THREE-HOUR MULTI-PART EXAMINATION THAT IS COMPRISED OF 3 SECTIONS:** The exam contains a mathematics, science and written component. The mathematics and science sections are made up of **multiple-choice** questions. You **will not** be permitted to use a calculator on the mathematics portion of the exam. A calculator will be required for the science component. The written section consists of an essay on a topic that the student will choose from a given list. The selection committee takes into account students whose first language is not English when evaluating the written component. A dictionary (non-electronic) is permitted during the English component of the exam.



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2. **THE STUDENT PROFILE:** Students are asked to elaborate on their interests and hobbies by filling out the Student Profile. Please take the Student Profile seriously as the TOPS Program will not accept a candidate with high marks who does not plan to participate in other activities. Any items submitted will become the property of TOPS and will not be returned to the candidate. Please do not submit any original documents.
3. **A COPY OF THE MOST RECENT REPORT CARD:** A photocopy is sufficient. Please include a copy of your grade 7 final report card. In addition, you may include your first report card from grade 8 if that is available.
4. Please bring \$20.00 (cash or cheque made payable to Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute). This is used to cover the administrative costs of running the TOPS program, including the marketing of the program, incidental fees for the TOPS information night (including registration packages) and TOPS exam day. Any funds collected above those required for administration of the program are used to supplement enrichment opportunities for students in the program.

Online registration for the TOPS Exam is now available. We ask that you register for writing the exam in advance by registering online at www.topsprogram.ca in the **Apply to TOPS** section. This allows us to prepare adequately for the exam day. If you are unable to register online, please call the school and speak with Ms. Shazeela Ali at (416) 396-2410.

Thank you for your interest in the TOPS Program at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute.

Michael McMaster,
Curriculum Leader of the TOPS Program

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The TOPS Curriculum

TOPS is a four-year secondary school program offered at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute. TOPS students, staff and administration have provided input to determine the courses that will be compulsory to complete the TOPS program. A total of 20 courses are necessary to complete the TOPS Curriculum. These credits also count towards the required 30 credits needed for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. All courses are at the academic level or enriched level.

GRADE 9

Geography
English
Mathematics
Science
Civics & Careers

GRADE 10

Computer Science
English
History
Mathematics (2)
 (Grade 10 Principles of Mathematics)
 (Grade 11 Functions and Relations)
Science

GRADE 11

Biology
Chemistry
English
Calculus (Advanced Functions)
 (Advanced Placement AB or BC)
Physics

GRADE 12

English (AP Equivalent)
Mathematics (1 of the following)
 (Linear Algebra)
 (Mathematics of Data Management)
Science (2 of the following 3 courses)
 (Biology)
 (Chemistry)
 (Physics - Option: AP Physics C)

Note: It is **strongly recommended** that students and parents consult university calendars for the necessary Grade 12 prerequisite courses for the appropriate university program.

** students who take a 2nd math and/or 3rd science in grade 12 must choose the TOPS version of these courses



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Compulsory Credits for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma

Compulsory credits not addressed by the TOPS Curriculum;

- 1 credit in French
- 1 credit in the Arts
- 1 credit in Health and Physical Education
- 1 additional credit in Health and Physical Education **or** the Arts **or** Business Studies
- 1 additional credit in English, **or** a Third Language, **or** Social Sciences and the Humanities, **or** Canadian and World Studies

Many students complete these as **elective** courses in grades 9 and 10.

Other Electives:

Other courses are recommended but not compulsory:

- Computer Science (Grade 11)
- Astronomy (Grade 12)
- Co-op (Grade 12)
- Economics (Grade 12)

The nature of the compulsory courses and timetabling for the TOPS program may limit the opportunities for some students to take electives. Students may choose to return for an extra year if they wish to take courses they have been unable to accommodate in their timetable previously.

Advanced Placement:

The Advanced Placement Program is a US exam-based curriculum that is accepted at over 1400 post-secondary institutions in the United States and is gaining approval at many Canadian universities. Considering the recent changes to the Ontario curriculum, we believe that the Grade 12 TOPS courses will provide excellent preparation for these examinations.

We feel that it is in the best interest of TOPS students to consider the Advanced Placement examinations. Not only do they offer a rigorous curriculum, but many universities will grant credit to students who achieve high grades on these examinations. Considering the high cost of tuition fees, these courses could result in significant savings depending on the program and university chosen. For example, McGill University will grant up to 5 credits to a student who has successfully written the Advanced Placement examinations. This would save one year's worth of tuition along with all of the associated costs.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Ms. Nan Marie Wismer at 416-396-2410 ext. 20041.

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TOPS PROGRAM

HEAR IT FROM US

Does TOPS Prepare You for University?

Recently, a major Toronto newspaper published a disturbing article about how poorly students from the double cohort and subsequent groups were doing in their university courses. We immediately sent out an email to our graduates and asked them if this were true for them. Their replies are now flooding in, but here are some that we have received.

“When I graduated from TOPS I felt confident that I would succeed in university. At the end of my first term, I have yet to meet another student with the same knowledge base that TOPS provided.”
– *Taylor Martin*

“Even though I abandoned the cause and went into an arts program, TOPS has given me a huge advantage. Being in the program made me develop, study, research, and writing skills that I didn’t have before, and that I wouldn’t have now if I had been in a regular program. And to their eternal shame, I, an artsy, can even help the engineers and science majors work through their physics homework!”
– *James Gotowiec*

“All of the TOPS graduates I’ve contacted this year are substantially more prepared for university than the majority of our peers – OAC and Grade 12 alike.”
– *Steve Benton*

“I feel that the amount of work I did in TOPS has definitely prepared me for the workload at university. I was also prepared content wise, which, as it has turned out, is much less important. As long as you know how to work, it doesn’t really matter what type of work you need to do.”
– *Delia Jacobson*

“Entering university requires a lot of adjustment to so many things, in so many ways. Academically, the adjustment is virtually absent. The study habits I had developed in high school were truly put to the test this semester, and they pulled me through just fine. It helped that we were over-prepared for this first semester of Calculus, allowing me to focus on my other subjects and continue adjusting to the rest of my new environment ... And every word is true!”
– *Vithika Siva*

“First semester calculus (and part of second) and chemistry have been a review, as well as both semesters’ physics courses. I go to calculus class for entertainment. I solve the problems for the entire class in the first ten minutes before the professor gets to them.”
– *Jeff Colden*

“I found that content-wise, especially in calculus and chemistry, the material has been mainly review. I’d also like to mention that in my film studies course, my TA told me I have excellent writing skills compared to many students in her class.”
– *Linsey Eng*



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“The TOPS teachers always told us that we would have nothing to worry about when it came to getting into and doing well at our university of choice. I was skeptical, and I didn’t realize until starting my first classes at McGill that TOPS gives students the opportunity to stand out from the thousands of other students in first year. I was expecting to be overwhelmed by the amount of work. Instead, my marks have remained high and the material is mostly review. TOPS not only gave me a strong foundation in math science, and English, but it also gave me more than any other high school could. What I liked most about TOPS was the dedication and enthusiasm of all the staff in the program. It was in this environment that I was able to learn everything I needed to make my first year of university a fun and stress-free experience.”
– *Welland Sin*

“TOPS has helped me a lot. I find that I am 15 to 20 percent above the mean in all my courses and I am able to grasp all the concepts presented in class with very little effort.”
– *Vinayak Viswanathan*

“The only thing I felt I wasn’t prepared for is sitting in a class with 1200 other people under one round dome (not to mention those hard chairs that give leg aches).”
– *T.J. Ye*

“There is no doubt in my mind that the material and subject matter I learned in all my courses in high school has sufficiently prepared me for my post-secondary education. Not only am I prepared for this year but some of the material I learned from high school, predominantly from TOPS, will not be covered until upper year university courses.”
– *David Kodoma*

“TOPS was a truly rewarding experience. Being a university student, I now come to appreciate all the opportunities that I was able to take advantage of. The English, biology, chemistry and calculus that I took in the TOPS program gave me an essential foundation that allows me to be a step ahead of all my university peers.”
– *Anisa Shivji*

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