

WORK CENTRAL AB

Adult Learning

Pathways Back to Education at Any Stage of Life

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

Adult Learning Programs in Central Alberta

Returning to learning as an adult, whether to complete foundational education, upgrade skills, or pursue a new credential, comes with its own supports and considerations. This guide covers the main adult learning pathways available across the region.

1. Foundational Learning and Academic Upgrading

- Alberta's Foundational Learning programs fund basic education upgrading and language education for adults who need these skills for further training or employment.
- Community Adult Learning Programs, delivered through local organizations across the province, support adults facing literacy and numeracy challenges - an estimated one in five adult Albertans face some degree of literacy or numeracy barrier.
- These programs are typically low-cost or free, designed specifically to remove financial barriers to foundational skills development.

2. High School Equivalency

Adults without a high school diploma can pursue upgrading through adult learning centres, online programs, or equivalency testing pathways, opening the door to further post-secondary study or specific job requirements that require high school completion.

3. Returning to Post-Secondary as a Mature Student

- Most Central Alberta institutions, including Red Deer Polytechnic and Olds College, welcome mature students and often have flexible or alternate admission pathways for those without a traditional high school transcript.
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) can credit relevant life and work experience toward program requirements, saving both time and money.
- Part-time and evening program options make it more feasible to combine study with work and family responsibilities.

4. Support Services for Adult Learners

- Childcare support or referrals, particularly important for parents returning to learning (see our Childcare Resources guide).
- Flexible scheduling, including evening, weekend, and online options.
- Academic support services such as tutoring, writing centres, and disability accommodations.
- Financial aid counselling, since navigating funding options can be one of the biggest barriers for adult learners.

5. Common Motivations for Returning to Learning

Adults return to learning for many reasons - a career change, a promotion requirement, personal growth, or rebuilding after a job loss. Whatever your motivation, starting with a clear goal (a specific credential, career, or skill) makes it easier to choose the right program and stay motivated through the process.

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

Is there an age limit for returning to post-secondary education? No - Central Alberta institutions welcome learners of all ages, and mature student pathways are specifically designed for those returning after time away.

Do I need my high school diploma to start upgrading? No - upgrading programs are specifically designed to help adults build toward a high school equivalency or the prerequisites needed for further study.

Can I study part-time while working full-time? Yes - most adult-focused programs offer part-time, evening, or online formats specifically to accommodate working adults.

6. Balancing Learning With Work and Family

- Talk to your employer early about your learning goals - some employers offer flexibility or financial support once they understand your plans.
- Build a realistic weekly study schedule that accounts for work and family commitments, rather than assuming you'll find time as you go.
- Connect with other adult learners in your program, since peer support is often one of the biggest factors in successfully completing a program later in life.

Adult Learning Checklist

- ✓ Identified whether foundational upgrading is needed before further study
- ✓ Explored mature student admission pathways at your target institution
- ✓ Asked about PLAR to credit prior experience
- ✓ Confirmed available support services (childcare, flexible scheduling, financial aid)
- ✓ Set a clear goal to guide your program choice

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See our Government Training Programs guide for funding options specifically supporting adult learners. Visit **workcentralab.ca/resources**.