

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SPECIALIST HIGH SKILLS MAJOR HIGH (SHSM)

1. What is a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)?

The SHSM is a way of recognizing outstanding programming and student success. An SHSM (Red Seal) designation on a diploma tells everyone that the student has focused his/her high school experience on a career path that matches his/her skills and interests. Specifically, the student has focused his/her educational program in a particular economic sector and successfully completed all key program components - *at the same time he/she has met all the graduation requirements.*

2. What are the components of an SHSM?

Bundle of Credits	Certifications	Experiential Learning	“Reach Ahead” Experience(s)
Successfully complete 8-10 Grade 11-12 courses in the SHSM pathway, including “coop” education. Students will complete an assignment that connects various subject areas to the sector.	Earn 6-7 compulsory certifications (e.g. Standard First Aid, CPR, and WHMIS) and additional sector-specific certifications	Participate in activities that provide opportunities to explore and reflect on a variety of sector-specific experiences and careers (e.g. guest speakers, job shadow, interviews)	Participate in activities that allow students to explore and experience post-secondary destinations within the sector (e.g. field trips).

3. In which sectors can a student earn an SHSM?

Schools can apply to the Ministry of Education to offer SHSMs in a variety of sectors, including: Agriculture, Arts & Culture, Business, Community Safety and Emergency Services, Construction, The Environment, Health and Wellness, Hospitality and Tourism, Horticulture and Landscaping, Information and Communications Technology, Manufacturing, Mining, and Transportation. Schools must receive approval from the Ministry of Education before they can offer an SHSM.

4. Are SHSM programs open to every student?

SHSM programs are open to all students in Grades 11 and 12 and is designed to meet the needs of students who want to pursue postsecondary education, training or employment in specific sectors. To ensure that there is a good match for the student, he/she must attend an information session before being registered in a program.

5. What are the benefits to students?

Students in an SHSM program are involved in courses and experiences that match and develop their skills and interests. They are “engaged” and motivated to succeed because they can easily connect their present-day learning to their postsecondary and career goals. Participants have many opportunities to:

- explore, identify and refine education and career goals;
- develop sector-specific knowledge and understandings;
- earn industry-recognized certifications;
- make real-life industry connections (i.e. for future employment or mentoring).

6. Do students and their families have to pay anything to take part?

Costs attached to the delivery a SHSM program include: the cost of transportation to conduct industry tours; the cost of supply teachers when classroom teachers are away with SHSM students; the cost of developing resources and marketing materials; the cost of co-ordinating the program, and; the cost of delivering industry-recognized certifications. All of these costs are being supported by the YCDSB, based on a grant from the Ministry of Education. There are no costs to students and their families.

7. If a student takes part in an SHSM, is he/she “locked in” until the end of high school?

Goals can change and students can make new choices as they develop new interests. As a result, all SHSM programs are designed with the flexibility to allow students to shift between pathways or to discontinue the SHSM should their career plans change – without a negative impact on their prospects for graduation.

8. Won't students have a hard time fitting all the “bundled” courses into their timetable in Grades 11 and 12, especially cooperative education?

With proper planning, students can fulfill all graduation requirements, successfully complete every SHSM component, and make sure they meet the entrance requirements for their desired postsecondary destination, including college and university. The key is to take control and plan effectively. Students who wish to pursue university studies after high school are encouraged to complete their cooperative education credits in Grade 11 to confirm career interests and in order to allow room in their timetables in Grade 12 for credits needed to meet university entrance requirements. Others may take “co-op” in summer school or night school. Finally, the secondary school program is organized to enable students to complete their high school program in four years, but student can take 4.5 or 5 years to do so. A significant number of students do so for a variety of reasons.

9. Do students who complete an SHSM earn the same diploma as all the other graduates from the school?

All high school graduates earn the same Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). However, students who successfully complete every component of the SHSM have a Red Seal added to their diploma to recognize this accomplishment. Successful completion of the SHSM is also indicated on the student's official transcript (i.e. the Ontario Student Transcript). In this way, a record of their success and program concentration is accessible to postsecondary institutions, employers, and training organization.

