UPREP
HOW ADMISSION AVERAGES ACTUALLY WORK

Free resource

Which grades count, how 20+ Ontario universities treat repeats, Grade 11 marks and ranking, what published ranges mean, and how to calculate your own average.

15 pages | Worksheet included | 20+ universities compared | Fall 2027 entry



PREPARE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

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WHAT IS AN ADMISSION AVERAGE?

Your admission average is the number Ontario universities use to compare applicants on academics. For most Ontario high school students, it is the average of your top six Grade 12 U and M level courses (4U and 4M), including the specific courses your program requires. It is not your overall high school average, and it is not your Grade 11 average.

This one number shapes a lot of the application process, which is why it causes so much stress. Programs publish admission ranges, friends quote their own averages, and websites repeat cutoffs that may be out of date. Without a clear picture of how the average actually works, it is easy to misread where you stand or to spend your energy on the wrong thing.

This guide explains which grades count, how prerequisites change the math, how universities treat repeated courses and Grade 11 marks, how to read published ranges, how your average changes through the year, and how to calculate your own. It is written for Ontario high school students (Group A) and compares the rules at more than 20 Ontario universities, drawn from the OUAC's Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide for Fall 2026. Each university and program still has its own rules, so always confirm on the program's admission page.

Top 6
Grade 12 U and M courses

20+
universities compared

4
OUAC grade update dates this cycle

Final marks
decide if a conditional offer holds

IN THIS GUIDE

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your admission average is usually the average of your top six Grade 12 U and M courses, including the courses your program requires.
- A published range is an estimate from past years. It is not a cutoff and it is not a guarantee.
- Your average updates as grades arrive, and every conditional offer depends on your final marks.

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IMPORTANT

Admission ranges and cutoffs change every year and differ by program. Where this guide shows examples of published ranges, they are there to show how different schools describe their programs, not to give you a target. Use each university's official admission page for current numbers.

SECTION 1

1 WHICH GRADES GET COUNTED

The basic rule: Most Ontario universities calculate your admission average from your top six Grade 12 U and M courses (4U and 4M), including the courses your program requires. The University of Ottawa, the University of Guelph, and Guelph-Humber all describe it this way.

Both 4U and 4M courses can count

Mixing them is allowed. The catch is that prerequisites are usually 4U, so a 4M course generally cannot fill a required spot.

You need at least six 4U/4M courses

To be eligible, Ontario universities expect you to earn your OSSD with at least six 4U/4M courses, including your program's subject requirements.

If you take more than six, your best marks are used

Your required courses still have to be among the six.

The six courses are generally weighted equally

A mark in one course counts the same as a mark in another.

Grade 11 marks usually are not part of the average

However, some universities use 3U/M marks early in the admission cycle if you do not have enough Grade 12 marks yet.

Some programs have their own rules

For example, the University of Ottawa says that when a program requires math, it considers the highest level of math you have attempted. The program's admission page is the final word.

IB Diploma Program

Universities use the Ontario U and M equivalents your school submits. Check each university's page for details.

TIP Do not rely on a friend's average or a general rule of thumb. Look up the exact method on the admission page of every program on your list.

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SECTION 2

2 PREREQUISITE COURSES

What they are: Prerequisites are the specific Grade 12 courses a program requires you to have. They are usually 4U courses. For example, many programs ask for English (ENG4U or FRA4U), and programs in sciences, health, and engineering often ask for specific math and science courses, such as Advanced Functions (MHF4U), Calculus and Vectors (MCV4U), Biology, Chemistry, or Physics.

Why they matter for your average:

- Your program's required courses are always part of your six, even if they are not your highest marks.
- A required course with a lower mark can pull your average below what your six best courses overall would give you. See the worked example in Section 6.
- Some programs also set a minimum mark in a particular course, on top of the overall average.

What to do about it:

- [ ] Look up the prerequisites for every program on your shortlist before you finalize your Grade 12 course selection.
- [ ] Note which programs accept a choice between two courses (for example, one math course or another). The program's page will say.
- [ ] Put your required courses first when you plan your study time, because they count no matter what.
- [ ] If you are missing a prerequisite, talk to your guidance counsellor and the university's admission office about your options. Some students can complete a missing course in summer school or another way, but each university has its own rules.

TIP Choose courses that meet your prerequisites and that you can realistically do well in. Do not swap out a prerequisite for an easier elective, because your program still needs the required course.

SECTION 3

3 HOW TO READ ADMISSION RANGES

What a range is: Many universities publish an admission range, which is an estimate based on the averages of students admitted in previous years. It tells you how competitive a program has been, not what will happen this year.

A range is not a guarantee

The University of Guelph states plainly that an average within its estimated range does not guarantee an offer of admission.

Ranges move every year

The number of applicants, the strength of the applicant pool, and the number of spaces all change, so last year's numbers are only a starting point.

A minimum is different from a range

A minimum is the lowest average a program will consider. A range describes what recent admitted students looked like. Check which one a page is showing you.

Check what the number is based on

Look for the method (top six or required courses only), the year the data comes from, and whether the program also requires a supplementary application.

Be careful with third-party sites

Websites, forums, and social media often repeat old or incomplete numbers. Confirm anything you read on the university's own admission page.

How to use ranges well:

- Build a list that includes programs where your average sits comfortably within or above the range, programs where it sits close to the range, and, if you want, one or two where it sits below.
- Do not rule out a program you love because of a single number, but be realistic about where it falls.
- Keep working. Your average keeps changing until your final marks are in.

SECTION 4

4 MIDTERM GRADES, FINAL GRADES, AND CONDITIONAL OFFERS

Your average is not fixed. Universities use the most current grade data available when they review your file, so your average updates as new marks arrive through the OUAC. For the 2026 to 2027 cycle, the OUAC schedule looks like this:

Grades arriving	OUAC receives from schools by	Universities receive by (target)
Midterm or final grades available for 4U/M courses	November 19, 2026	November 26, 2026
Final grades available for 4U/M courses and current full-year grades	February 11, 2027	February 18, 2027
Midterm or final grades available for 4U/M courses and interim full-year grades	April 22, 2027	May 3, 2027
All final grades for 4U/M courses	July 8, 2027	July 15, 2027

OUAC grade deadlines for 2026 to 2027

Nov 19, 2026
Midterm or final 4U/M grades

Feb 11, 2027
Final 4U/M and full-year grades

Apr 22, 2027
Midterm or final 4U/M, interim full-year

Jul 8, 2027
All final 4U/M grades

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What this means for you:

- Early in the year, a university may be working with your midterm marks, completed courses, and in-progress grades. Your effort in the fall and winter counts, not just your final exams.
- Many offers are made in the winter and spring using the grades available at that point, so steady marks all year matter.

Conditional offers: Most offers made before you finish high school are conditional. Typical conditions include earning your OSSD, completing six 4U/M courses including your required subjects, and keeping a minimum final admission average that is written in your offer. If your final marks fall short, the offer may no longer hold, so read the conditions in every offer and keep them somewhere you can find them.

TIP Write your offer conditions on one page: the minimum final average, the required courses, and the deadline for final grades. Check it again in May and again in June.

SECTION 5

5 HOW UNIVERSITIES TREAT REPEATS, GRADE 11 MARKS, AND RANKING

Most universities calculate the average the same basic way, but they handle the edge cases differently. This section is based on the OUAC's Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide for Fall 2026, which universities write for high school counsellors. Policies can change, so confirm anything that affects you on the university's own page.

Repeated courses. If you retake a Grade 12 course to raise a mark, universities do not all count the new mark.

What the university does	Universities
Uses the highest grade	Algoma, Brock, Carleton, Guelph, Guelph-Humber, Lakehead, Laurentian, McMaster, Nipissing, OCAD, Ontario Tech, Ottawa, Saint Paul, TMU (some exceptions), Trent, Windsor, York, Huron, King's, Laurier (all programs except Science and the Lazaridis School of Business)
Uses the most recent attempt	Queen's
Looks at the first attempt	Rotman Commerce (first attempt only), and UTM and UTSC give preference to first attempts, especially in prerequisites
Does not count repeated grades	U of T Engineering, generally
Averages the attempts	Western averages the attempts if you have 3 or more repeats, and uses the highest attempt if you have 2 or fewer (CONFIRM, because Western's own page says the highest grade)

What the university does	Universities
Mixes first and latest	Laurier Science and Lazaridis School of Business: a weighted average of the first and latest attempts, for required courses only
Decides case by case	Waterloo

McMaster adds a different kind of rule: it may ask for a letter if you repeated more than 2 courses, or any one course more than twice.

WARNING

A retake is not always a clean fix. Queen's uses your most recent mark, which could be lower. Rotman Commerce and the Engineering faculty at U of T treat repeats very differently from schools that take the highest. Before you retake anything, check each program on your list.

Grade 11 marks. Most universities say your admission average comes from Grade 12, but many use Grade 11 results early in the cycle, before Grade 12 marks exist.

How Grade 11 is used	Universities
Used to make early offers, which stay conditional on your Grade 12 results	York (many programs), Ottawa (first two rounds), U of T (all three campuses; Engineering always looks at Grade 11), TMU (Grades-Only programs, with offers starting in November), Brock, Carleton, Algoma, Trent, Laurier, Western, Huron, King's, Laurentian, Nipissing, Windsor (some programs, with a minimum 80% final Grade 11 average), Waterloo (some programs), Ontario Tech, Saint Paul. Lakehead uses only exceptional Grade 11 marks.
Used only as a fallback when a required Grade 12 mark is missing	Queen's, Guelph, Guelph-Humber
Considered, with no penalty	McMaster says Grade 11 marks may be considered, especially when Grade 12 marks are not yet available, and that applicants will not be disadvantaged
Generally not considered	OCAD

For prerequisites, U of T, UTM and UTSC use the matching Grade 11 course if the Grade 12 grade is not available yet. McMaster Midwifery requires the Grade 11 prerequisites to be completed with a final grade of at least 85% when the Grade 12 course is still in progress on February 1.

Does the order of your choices matter? At almost every university, no. The exceptions are worth knowing. U of T Engineering says applicant choice may be a factor in its broad-based admission approach, and that ranking it as a lower OUAC choice could disadvantage an application. Huron says ranking does not affect whether you receive an offer, but admission advisors take it into consideration. Ottawa says ranking has no impact on admission but could be considered for students on a waitlist. Everywhere else the answer in the guide is that ranking does not matter. Rank honestly.

Dual credits and SHSM. Nearly every university says it does not recognize dual credits or Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs in the admission average. Some offer a small SHSM award instead (Algoma, Brock, King's and Lakehead offer $500 awards, Windsor offers $1,000 with an 80% entering average, and Trent offers a $2,000 award by application), and Western invites you to describe SHSM work on its Extraordinary Extracurricular Activities and Contributions to Citizenship Profile.

TIP If you are retaking a course, taking a summer course, or relying on Grade 11 marks, put those facts in a one-line note next to each program on your shortlist. Then the choices you make this year are based on how each school actually counts your marks.

SECTION 6

6 WHAT YOUR AVERAGE CAN UNLOCK AUTOMATICALLY

At many universities your admission average also decides your entrance scholarship, with no application. The thresholds differ widely. These are the amounts and cut-offs listed in the Fall 2026 Resource Guide. The UPrep Ontario Scholarships and Awards Guide covers applications and deadlines.

University	Automatic entrance scholarship
Trent	95% and up: full tuition (renews at $4,000 a year). 90 to 94%: $3,000. 85 to 89%: $2,000. 80 to 84%: $1,500
Nipissing	80% or higher (best six 4U/M, not counting prerequisites); 95% or higher: free domestic tuition
Guelph-Humber	75% or higher: renewable scholarship up to $17,000
Laurentian	75% or higher; Academic Excellence $1,000 to $5,000 a year at 80% or higher
York	80% and up: $1,000 to $3,500 a year, renewable at all tiers if you keep the minimum GPA
Lakehead	80% or higher: $750 up to free domestic tuition, renewable
Brock	85% or higher: $3,000 to $7,000
Carleton	85% or higher: renewable, with A- standing required
Ottawa	85 to 100%: $1,000 to $3,000
Ontario Tech	85% or higher: $1,000 to $4,000
Waterloo	85% or higher: $1,000 to $2,000 (top six 4U/M including required courses)
Windsor	Entering average of 85% or higher: entrance financial support offered with your admission
King's (Western)	Starts at 85%
Queen's	$7,000 for students in the top 3% of the competitive admission average for each first-entry program
U of T (St. George)	More than 1,100 admission awards of $10,000 to $15,000

University	Automatic entrance scholarship
McMaster	Entrance awards set by your final average; non-renewable; the general application deadline is February 19, 2027
Laurier	Based on your admission average as of July 2027, split over the first two terms
OCAD	$1,000 to $3,000 entrance awards for Ontario secondary school students

Notice what this table shows. An 85% average can trigger an automatic award at many schools, but at Queen's the award is for the top slice of each program, and at Trent the amount rises in steps. Averages also mean different things depending on the courses included: Nipissing's scholarship average ignores prerequisites, while Waterloo's includes them.

NOTE Some scholarships are renewable only if you keep a minimum GPA once you start university. Read the renewal terms in your offer, not only the entrance amount.

SECTION 7

7 WHAT AVERAGES LOOK LIKE IN DIFFERENT FIELDS

Programs publish their averages in different ways, and a number that is typical for one field can look unusual in another. These examples show how schools describe themselves. They come from each school's own pages as of October 11, 2026. Treat them as snapshots, not targets.

Example	What the page says
Queen's: Arts, Science, Music	Low 80s (minimum average based on prerequisite courses, for the last year's admitted class)
Queen's: Computing, Kinesiology, Life Science and Biochemistry, Engineering	Mid 80s
Queen's: Electrical and Computing Engineering, Mechatronics	High 80s
Queen's: Nursing, Health Sciences, Concurrent Education / Kinesiology	Low 90s
Queen's: Commerce	90 and above
Huron (Western): Arts, Social Science, Management and Organizational Studies	Anticipated midterm cut-off for fall 2026 of high 80s to low 90s; offers conditional on a final average of 80 to 83%
Ivey AEO (Western)	A low 90% average in your best Grade 12 courses, with a 50/50 balance between academics and leadership
McMaster Honours Health Sciences	Minimum 90% to be considered

Example	What the page says
McMaster Commerce	Mid to high 80s (as shown on OUInfo)
Schulich BBA (York)	Aim for the high 80s to low 90s; past minimum cutoffs have been around 91.5 to 92%
Waterloo	Publishes averages based on last year's admitted students and says it does not set them higher or lower than expected

Three things to take from this. First, the same word means different things: Queen's number is a minimum based on prerequisite courses, Huron's is a midterm cut-off, Waterloo's is last year's admitted students. Second, fields cluster: health, commerce, and engineering programs tend to publish higher numbers than arts, science, or music at the same university. Third, many programs say the number is only part of the picture, and several of the highest ones pair grades with a supplementary application that is weighted heavily.

SECTION 8

8 WHAT MATTERS BEYOND THE AVERAGE

For some programs, your admission average is most of the picture. For others, it is only the first step. Here is how to tell the difference.

- **Many programs admit on grades alone.** For example, the University of Toronto states that most of its program areas do not require essays, reference letters, or personal statements.
- **Some programs add a supplementary application.** This can be a form, written responses, a video interview, or a portfolio. How much weight it carries depends on the program, and the program's admission page explains it. See the UPrep Supplementary Application Checklist.
- **Entrance scholarships may depend on your average.** At some universities, scholarships are awarded automatically based on your admission average. At others, you need a separate application with its own deadline.
- **Your full transcript is still visible.** Universities receive your grades from Grade 11 and Grade 12 through the OUAC, even though most of them calculate the average from your top six Grade 12 courses.

TIP When you research a program, write down three things: how the average is calculated, what the published range says, and whether a supplementary application is required. Those three answers tell you where to focus.

SECTION 9

9 CALCULATE YOUR OWN ADMISSION AVERAGE

Use this worksheet for each program on your shortlist. Different programs have different required courses, so they can give you different averages. Treat the result as an estimate, because each university has its own exact method.

Step 1: List your Grade 12 U and M courses and marks. Use your most recent marks, or your predicted marks if a course is still in progress.

Course code	Mark (%)	Required for this program? (Yes/No)
Course 1		
Course 2		
Course 3		
Course 4		
Course 5		
Course 6		
Course 7		
Course 8		

Step 2: Mark every required course. These must be in your six, no matter what your marks are.

Step 3: Fill your remaining spots with your highest other 4U or 4M marks until you have six courses.

Step 4: Add your six marks together and divide by six. That number is your estimated admission average.

Step 5: Repeat for each program on your list.

Worked example (made-up numbers, for illustration only): A student takes eight Grade 12 courses and applies to a program that requires ENG4U and MHF4U.

Course	Mark	Required?	In the six?
ENG4U	88	Yes	Yes
MHF4U	74	Yes	Yes
BOH4M	92	No	Yes
SBI4U	90	No	Yes
ICS4U	85	No	Yes
SCH4U	84	No	Yes
HHS4U	82	No	No
CLN4U	76	No	No

The six marks are 88 + 74 + 92 + 90 + 85 + 84 = 513. Divided by 6, the estimated admission average is 85.5.

85.5	86.8	1.3
with MHF4U required	if MHF4U were not required	point gap from the required course

If MHF4U were not required, the six best marks would include HHS4U (82) instead of MHF4U (74). That gives 88 + 92 + 90 + 85 + 84 + 82 = 521, or 86.8. The 1.3 point gap is the effect of the required course.

Second worked example: a program with many required courses (made-up numbers). Some programs, such as engineering, require five specific Grade 12 courses, which leaves only one free spot among your six.

Course	Mark	Required?	In the six?
ENG4U	86	Yes	Yes
MHF4U	91	Yes	Yes
MCV4U	89	Yes	Yes
SCH4U	84	Yes	Yes
SPH4U	87	Yes	Yes
ICS4U	93	No	Yes (best other course)
HSB4U	95	No	No

The six marks are 86 + 91 + 89 + 84 + 87 + 93 = 530, so the estimate is 88.3. A 95 in an elective cannot help here, because only one non-required course fits. In a program with two required courses the same 95 could move the average. The lesson is that you need to run the numbers for each program, not once.

TIP Update this worksheet every time you get new marks, and keep one copy per program so you can see how each program's requirements change your number. The UPrep Admission Average Calculator sheet does the math for you and holds up to 12 courses and 10 programs.

SECTION 10

10 COMMON MYTHS

MYTH	REALITY
"A published range is a cutoff."	A range is an estimate from past years. An average inside it does not guarantee an offer, and ranges change every year.
"Only my final marks matter."	Universities review your file using the grades available at the time, and offers depend on your final marks. Both matter.

MYTH	REALITY
"My Grade 11 marks are part of my average."	Usually not. Most universities use your top six Grade 12 U/M courses, though some use Grade 11 marks early in the cycle if Grade 12 results are not available yet.
"Every program calculates the average the same way."	Most use the top six, but required courses, minimum marks, and special rules differ by program.
"If my average is high enough, nothing else matters."	Some programs also require a supplementary application, and every conditional offer has conditions to meet.
"Once I have an offer, I can relax."	Conditional offers depend on your final marks, so the work is not over until your last grade is in.
"An easier course will protect my average."	Your program's required courses count no matter what, and a missing prerequisite can make you ineligible for the program.

TIPS, TRICKS & NOTES

Learn each program's method
The admission page tells you exactly how the average is calculated. Do not assume it matches the last program you looked at.

Run the numbers for every program
Required courses change the result, so one average does not fit all.

Protect your required courses first
They count in your six no matter what, so give them the most attention.

Keep your fall and winter marks strong
Universities use the grades available at the time, and offers can arrive well before your final exams.

Do not compare your average with a friend's
Programs calculate and weigh grades differently, so the same number can mean different things in different places.

Build a balanced list
Include programs where your average sits comfortably within the range as well as some closer to the edge.

Keep a one-page list of offer conditions
Minimum final average, required courses, and deadlines should be in one place.

Ask your guidance counsellor to check your numbers
They can confirm your course codes and help you find which courses count.

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Look at more than the number
Check whether a program also asks for a supplementary application, because that part of your application takes planning too.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

UPrep provides guidance, strategy, and feedback to help students present the strongest possible application. Admission decisions are made solely by universities based on many factors outside anyone's control, and no specific outcome can be guaranteed. Admission requirements and calculation methods change, so confirm everything with each university before you act on it.

Sources (checked October 11, 2026):

- OUAC: 2026-2027 Schedule of Dates (guidance.ouac.on.ca/resources/schedule-of-dates)
- University of Ottawa: Ontario admission requirements (uottawa.ca/study/undergraduate-studies/program-prerequisites/ontario-admission-requirements)
- University of Guelph: Admission information for guidance counsellors (uoguelph.ca/admission/undergraduate/guidance)
- Guelph-Humber: Ontario high school applicants (guelphhumber.ca/admission/ontario-high-school)
- University of Toronto: Requirements for Canadian students (future.utoronto.ca/requirements-canadian-students)
- OUAC: Guidance Dialogues Resource Guide, Fall 2026 (guidance.ouac.on.ca/docs/resource_guide.pdf), the source for the university-by-university tables
- University of Waterloo: What is an admission average? (uwaterloo.ca/future-students/admissions/admission-average)
- Western University: Ontario high school requirements (welcome.uwo.ca/next-steps/requirements/ontario-high-school.html)
- Queen's: Competitive Average for Admission Consideration (queensu.ca/admission/applying/competitive-average)
- Western Ivey: Advanced Entry Opportunity (ivey.uwo.ca/hba/program-details/university-years-1-2/advanced-entry-opportunity)
- Schulich: BBA admission requirements (schulich.yorku.ca/admissions-requirements/bba)

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Ontario University Atlas
All Ontario universities side by side

FREE
University Program Comparison Sheet
Research and compare programs side by side

PREMIUM
Grade 9 to 12 Admissions Roadmap
A year-by-year plan from Grade 9 to your application

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Ontario Scholarships and Awards Guide
Loran, Schulich Leader, Terry Fox, and entrance awards at 15+ universities

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UPrep provides guidance, strategy and feedback to help students present the strongest possible application. Admission decisions are made solely by universities, and no specific outcome can be guaranteed.

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