

POGO

PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY GROUP OF ONTARIO

**FOR KIDS WITH CANCER
FOR NOW, FOR LIFE.**

From Lockers to Lecture Halls: A Guide to Post-Secondary School



The POGO School and Work Transitions Program

GUIDANCE | ADVOCACY | EMPOWERMENT for childhood cancer survivors

Congratulations on getting into post-secondary school!

This resource will provide guidance around time management and studying, communicating with your professors, financial aid, academic accommodations and social activities.

School and Work Transitions Counsellors support survivors with a smoother transition from secondary school or from being off school or work to further education or employment. You'll see School and Work Transitions Counsellors (**POGO Counsellors**) mentioned throughout this guide. Know that you can contact your POGO Counsellor as needed.

Let's get started!

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SECONDARY (HIGH SCHOOL) VS POST-SECONDARY (COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY)

What is the difference between secondary and post-secondary school?



Below are some examples:

SECONDARY SCHOOL	POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL
SERT, LST, or LRT	Accessibility Services Counsellor
Guidance Counsellor	Academic Advisor
Class every day	Classes won't necessarily be every day
Class, some homework	Prep before, go to class, work after: reading, research, writing (1 hour of class = up to 3 hours of work outside of class, potentially more if disability considerations)
Teacher helps you with the interpretation of text	You interpret text on your own
You memorize and repeat what teachers say	You understand the subject and can talk about it in your own words
Tests after each chapter or unit	Midterms and Finals (need to retain info for longer)
You and the teacher know each other	Classes are much larger, less often, and there is less interaction between teachers and students
Follow up from teachers if you miss a class, test, or assignment	This is left up to you
Teachers, parents, etc. structure your time	You manage your time and organize your days
Teachers know your disability and accommodations	Professors know your accommodation(s) but not your disability unless you choose to disclose it. The Accessibility Services department will keep this information confidential.
Schools work with the student and their parents.	The school will <i>only</i> work with the student. No information about the student is disclosed to the parent without the student's permission.



TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND STUDY TIPS



Set Priorities. Academic success at college/university requires studying to be your first priority.

Know when you study most effectively. Schedule your study time then.



If you procrastinate, overcome it by staying organized. After you've written test and project due dates on a calendar or saved them on your phone, it's harder to ignore them. These reminders can help you plan ahead so you can stay on top of your tasks.

Be Realistic. Don't set yourself up for failure by telling yourself you can do a 4-hour job in 2 hours.



Study difficult (or boring) subjects first as they require the most energy. Save the subjects you enjoy for later.

Schedule time to read before class. Have material fresh in your mind. You will be able to participate in discussions, take better lecture notes, link the lecture to the text material, and determine what topic is more important than another.



Keep your notes organized by subject. Make sure they're easy to read and review.

Schedule time to review and revise your notes after each class. If you review your notes within 24 hours of attending the lecture, you retain up to 80% more of the info.



When you sit down to study, think about how much time you want to spend on each topic. This will keep you from getting overwhelmed. If it's Monday, and you've got three tests on Friday, figure out how much time you need for each subject between now and then. Plan to do a little each day.

Try breaking large topics down into chunks. For a history test on World War II, try breaking your study sessions into 2-year chunks or studying the material by specific battles.



Avoid marathon study sessions. Three two-hour sessions are far more productive for most students than one six-hour session. When you do study in long sessions, take a short break every half-hour or so and a longer break every 60-90 minutes. Stop when you get tired or frustrated. Also, work on several subjects each day to avoid mental overload.

Study based on the type of test you're taking. Multiple-choice questions might focus on facts and details, while essay questions usually require deeper understanding of the material and the ability to write a response.



When trying to memorize dates, names, or other facts, remember that it usually takes several tries to remember something. Flashcards can help with memorization. Verbal memory cues, also known as "mnemonic devices," can also help you memorize information.

Do some practice problems. Find or make a practice test and test yourself (this is a good use of Chat GPT! Scan your notes in and ask it to create a test for you). Take note of any practice problems you're struggling with and ask a teacher or tutor for help to understand them better.



Join a Study Group (or Start Your Own). When you study with classmates, you can double-check your notes, come up with ways to remember the information, and test one another. You'll also hear different people explain the same concepts and explain the concepts yourself, both of which can deepen your understanding.

Study in the Right Frame of Mind. If you're distracted or otherwise not in a good mood try strategies to improve your mood, such as breathing exercises or meditation to get you into the right frame of mind to study. Just pausing for a minute to take a couple of deep breaths can help you clear your mind and focus better.



Allow flexibility in your schedule. Recognize that unexpected things happen and don't schedule every hour.

Make a plan for living. Time management must include physical exercise, social activities, and rest and relaxation. Leave out recreation and exercise and you'll sacrifice concentration, memory and productivity.

If you need more ideas or support, and are registered with **Accessibility Services**, ask to be connected with a **Learning Strategist**. They can help you:

- Identify the impact of your disability on your learning
- Discover how to use your learning strengths
- Learn to stay organised, manage time, and address procrastination issues
- Develop new strategies for reading, writing, studying, note taking, test taking, and breaking down and understanding assignments and projects

Do You Experience Test Anxiety?

Test anxiety is a nervous feeling you get when you're about to take a test, to the point where the worries are so strong that you can't concentrate and don't do as well as you could.



ASK YOUR POGO COUNSELLOR FOR HELP!

For more information on test anxiety check out this [resource!](#)

Try using test-taking strategies

- Do a "memory dump" of information you are afraid you will forget on the back of the exam when you first receive it.
- Read through the exam at the beginning and figure out how much time to spend on each question, according to what each question is worth.
- To build confidence, start with questions you know rather than focusing on the ones you don't.
- Take 30-second "mini-breaks" during the exam to use a relaxation strategy such as closing your eyes, relaxing your hands, and breathing deeply.



Check out the resources below for extra exam prep tips and tricks

[6 ways to study better for tests](#) & [exam preparation: 8 strategies for reducing exam anxiety](#)

If your thoughts are racing and your mind becomes cluttered with worries

- Don't focus on getting rid of the anxiety because that will only feed the anxiety
- Mentally yell "**STOP**" to break the cycle
- Take a 30-second "mini-break"
- Concentrate hard on a specific sensation (e.g. the hum of the lights in the room) to clear your mind
OR
- Be with your anxiety – concentrate on your physical symptoms. If you can completely experience a physical sensation, it often disappears.

It's helpful to learn and practice, on a daily basis, relaxation and visualization techniques so they will come easily to you at exam time.



Remember your POGO Counsellor is there to help you every step of the way!



COMMUNICATION

How to Write an E-Mail

Important Parts of an E-mail:



To/Recipients: The e-mail address to whom you're sending the e-mail. Be careful of spelling and make sure it is going to the intended person.

CC: This stands for "Carbon Copy". This is used when you want to send the same e-mail to others to keep them in the loop. The original recipient can see who else you sent the email to.

- For example, you email a professor regarding an upcoming test and CC your accessibility counsellor on the email because they asked you to follow up with your prof. This lets them know that you have done this and lets your prof to know that the counsellor is aware of the situation.


BCC: This stands for "Blind Carbon Copy". This is used when you want to send the e-mail to someone else, but the original recipient will not be able to see that you have shared the email with anyone else.

- For example, you email your accessibility counsellor to ask about a decision on an accessibility issue and you BCC your parent. This way, there will be a record of your email to the school, but you don't want your parent to be emailed by the counsellor or copied on the counsellor's response.

Subject: This is what your e-mail is about. Try to be specific without being too long (~2-6 words).

DO ✓	DON'T ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your first and last name, especially if it is your first e-mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use acronyms (LOL, OMG, TTYL) or slang
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include your course code and section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type in all CAPITAL letters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send without editing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a greeting (e.g., "Dear", "Hello", "Hi") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use "Hey", "What's Up", "Yo"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Dr., Professor, Mr., Mrs./Ms., if known. Check the syllabus, or look at how they sign off on e-mails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your teachers' first names unless they tell you otherwise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign off with your name and student number. You can sign off with "Thanks", "Regards", "Sincerely", "Cheers", or "I look forward to hearing from you", for example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-mail last minute and keep e-mailing if you don't hear back right away

Example:

	To	Abbas Mohammed
	Cc	
	Bcc	POGO Counsellor
Subject Latest Assignment Questions - BIO-101		
<hr/>		
<p>Dear Mr. Mohammed,</p> <p>I hope you had a great weekend.</p> <p>My name is Aliyah Chang, and I am in your BIO-101 class, section A2. I missed class yesterday due to a doctor's appointment, and I was hoping to ask you some questions about the latest assignment. Unfortunately, I have class during your office hours. Are you available any other times/dates this week?</p> <p>Thanks, Aliyah Chang (1075375)</p>		

Other Recommendations

1) Set up your school email on your phone/set up notifications

Depending on your post-secondary school, you may be able to set up your school email account on your phone. If this is not an option, you are encouraged to set up notifications so that you can keep up to date with your communications and course content.

2) Set up canned responses or templates on your email

Depending on your email provider, you may be able to set up quick replies/emails. For Gmail, these are called "Canned responses" and for Outlook, they are called "Templates".

3) Add a signature to your email

Often, any correspondence with staff or services at your post-secondary school will require your full name and student number. Consider putting this information into a signature, which can be automatically added each time you send an email.

4) Record contact information in your phone

Consider recording any contact information for professors, fellow students, or support staff directly into your phone's contact list. Once added, you can also add these contacts to your "Favourites" list for easy access. Alternatively, you can add any contacts to any "note" app on your phone.

* If you are unsure of how to set up any of these recommendations on your phone/computer, please reach out to your school's IT Service for support. They may also have other suggestions/apps for you to use.



OSAP

What is OSAP?

The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is a mix of loans and grants to help you pay for post-secondary school. OSAP is funded by both the Ontario and Canadian governments. You can apply for this program if you are a full-time, part-time, or micro-credential student.

How do I know if I am eligible?

Many students think that they will not be eligible for a variety of reasons. We would encourage you to try out the [Aid Estimator](#) in the springtime before you start post-secondary school as it will provide a more accurate representation of your potential funding.

I don't want any loans after post-secondary school. Why would I apply for OSAP?

You can only find out if you are eligible for grants by determining if you are eligible for OSAP. If you are eligible for grants, you can request that you receive the "Grant Only Funding", meaning that you'll receive grants but not the loans portion of OSAP. You do not have to pay back grants unless:

- you are not taking the minimum course load or,
- you decide to withdraw from your program or,
- your OSAP application is reassessed to show underrepresented income

Speak with your financial aid office well in advance if you'd like the "Grants Only Funding".

I have a permanent/persistent disability. What other financial aid can I apply for?

Many of the students working with the POGO School and Work Transitions Program consider themselves a student with a disability. If you qualify for financial assistance through OSAP, you may also qualify for the Bursary for Students with Disabilities ([BSWD](#)) and Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment – Students with Disabilities ([CSG-DSE](#)).

These are bursaries/grants that help eligible full-time and part-time students pay for disability-related services and equipment needed to participate in postsecondary studies, such as note-takers, tutors, or assistive technology, while you're in postsecondary studies.

When completing your OSAP application, indicate that you have a disability. You will need a physician or nurse practitioner to complete the [OSAP disability forms](#). **If you are already registered with Accessibility Services, they should be able to support you with applying to these disability bursaries/grants.**

The amount of funding you may receive depends on the services and equipment you need. **Maximum** funding per academic year:

- BSWD: \$2,000
- CSG-DSE: \$20,000

I received my funding. How do I purchase services/equipment?

You will need to speak with your school's Accessibility Services and/or Financial Aid office to determine how funding will be issued and what services/equipment you would be eligible for. Any funding related to the BSWD or CSG-DSE must go through your Accessibility Counsellor.

I am an underrepresented learner. Are there other options for me?

Whether or not you identify as having a disability, there may be other financial aid available to you if you are an "underrepresented learner":

1. [Indigenous student](#)
2. [First generation student](#)
3. [Other grants](#)

I am receiving ODSP/OW, can I still apply for OSAP?

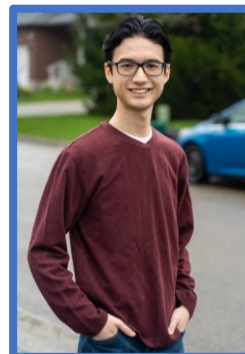
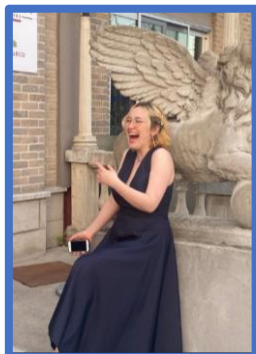
If you are receiving support from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), you can still apply for OSAP. ODSP will not count any income earned while you are enrolled in full-time post-secondary studies. Keep in mind, however, that OSAP has a threshold of how much income you can receive during a study term.

There is a possibility that your ODSP income will be reduced due to OSAP. OSAP breaks down their funding into "Educational" and "Non-Educational." "Non-Educational" funding helps with things like living expenses, which is something ODSP gives you money for. One way to avoid this is to only take the grants portion of OSAP. Be sure to check your OSAP Assessment Summary to ensure that this is financially viable for you.

If you are receiving support from Ontario Works (OW), it depends on your situation if you are eligible for funding from both OSAP and OW. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

In both cases, it is important that you speak with your ODSP/OW caseworker.

Please ask your POGO Counsellor for the most up to date information about the many scholarships available for childhood cancer and brain tumour survivors.



Other Scholarships/Bursaries

Schools offer entrance scholarships and bursaries to those with high grades, but not all scholarships/bursaries depend on grades. Some scholarships are specific to a school or a field of study. Some are open to members of a specific group (e.g., service club or organization, high school, children of parents employed at a company). Your high school guidance counsellor or the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend may be able to help you.

For more general scholarships, you can also search online at www.studentawards.com and www.scholarshipscanada.com. Also, if you have a disability, you can search for disability-specific scholarships and bursaries at www.disabilityawards.ca and www.neads.ca.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Getting Set Up with Accessibility Services

Booking a Meeting

Contact **A**ccessibility **S**ervices (AS) as soon as you accept your offer of admission to your college or university. Don't wait until the start of the term, because they will be busy, and you'll have to wait until classes have already started to get your accommodations set up. Some schools have a mid-July deadline for registering for accessibility services.

You can call or go online and book a first meeting, usually called an intake meeting. You may be required to fill out an online "Intake Form" before your first meeting and send in any documentation that you have.

Here are some examples of what you can say when you call to book your intake meeting:

I had an **I**ndividualized **E**ducation **P**lan (IEP) in high school and am looking for similar supports at college/university.

I have a disability (you may be asked to be specific) and will need some academic accommodations at college/university.

I need assistive technology for my studies – who can I speak to about this?

*Have your student number and university e-mail address with you

Getting Ready

You will need some documentation for this meeting.

If you are still in high school, ask for copies of your most recent IEP and/or documentation from your resource teacher before you graduate. If you have graduated, call your high school and ask for it.

Your family doctor or specialist (e.g., psychologist, neuropsychologist, psychiatrist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist) should be able to provide the reports or may be able to complete the forms needed. Examples of the documentation you might need are: neuropsychological assessment, psychoeducational assessment, OSAP's Disability Verification Form or the school's functional limitations form. If you are having difficulties, ask for help from your POGO Counsellor.

Get your documentation together (medical reports, psycho-educational assessments, IEP, etc.).

Most schools want these reports to be less than 5 years old. If yours are older than that, your POGO Counsellor will help you get the reports you need.

Review your documentation. Be ready to talk about the strengths and difficulties it shows, the recommendations made, and how your accommodations help you learn.

If you are having trouble understanding your documentation, or don't know why an IEP was put in place, speak with your parents or guardians, resource teacher, or POGO Counsellor.



REMEMBER: the focus of the meeting will be **YOU** (the student) and your counsellor/advisor will want to hear from you directly. If a family member or POGO Counsellor goes with you to your meeting, you will still need to be ready to talk about yourself, your disability, and how it impacts your ability to learn or show what you've learned on tests and exams.

Ask yourself:

- Does your documentation do a good job of identifying your strengths and difficulties?
- Are there recommendations and do they reflect the supports that would or have helped you?
- What accommodations and strategies have worked for you before? Do you use all of the accommodations listed on your IEP?
- What are your biggest academic concerns about starting post-secondary?

The Meeting

Your intake meeting will probably take around an hour. During the appointment, your accessibility counsellor will listen to your learning history, how your disability impacts your learning, and if you have used any accommodations/modifications in the past. They will discuss your documentation with you.

They will let you know what accommodations you will get, how they will be put in place, and what responsibilities you will have in making sure the accommodations are applied (e.g., providing the Letter of Accommodation to professors/instructors or booking exam rooms, etc.).

Possible Questions for Your Counsellor:

- Can I reduce my course load if needed?
- Are lectures posted online?
- Can I take photos or record lectures?
- Are there alternative formats in which I can get my course material? (e.g. audio textbooks)
- Are there adaptive/assistive technology services? Is there software/equipment available on campus?
- Can I get help to improve my skills, such as organization, time management, or note-taking?
- What do I do if I am struggling with course content? Are there tutoring services available?
- What transition or orientation programs are offered for students with disabilities?
- Is there a common space, social events, or clubs on campus specifically for students with disabilities?
- Is there funding available to me as a student with a disability for equipment or services?
- What should I do and who should I contact if I have concerns regarding my academic accommodations?



After the Meeting

After your intake meeting is over, there will probably be some things for you to do to make sure your accommodations and services are in place.

Every school will be different, but your next steps may include:

- Booking and attending appointments with other staff members, including:
 - Adaptive Technologist
 - Learning Strategist
 - Peer Tutor
- Giving your Letter of Accommodation to professors/instructors as soon as possible (this may be done automatically, but it may be beneficial to follow-up with your professors)
- Booking a place in the Test Centre for midterms and exams (this may have to be done every time)
- Calling or e-mailing your accessibility counsellor if you are having trouble with your studies and need a review of your accommodations
- Requesting renewed accommodations or re-registering with the accessibility services to continue to receive services each year

Understanding your Accommodations

What accommodations did you have in high school? Why did you have them? Were they helpful?

Think about what supports helped or would help for tests and exams, learning strategies, instructor support, mental health support.

Examples of accommodations:

- Extended time on exams and/or assignments
- FM System for hearing loss
- No more than one exam per day
- Access to a computer or spell check on exams
- Note-taker/scribe in class
- Quiet space to write tests and exams
- Access to notes before class
- Seating at the front of the classroom
- Assistive technology
- Reduced course load

Examples of supports:




- Orientation Programs
- Learning Strategist
- Peer Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Academic Advisors
- Counselling Centre
- Accessibility Services
- Indigenous Student Navigators

SOCIAL



Social Activities

Although academics are an important part of your college/university years, it is encouraged that you check out what the school offers in terms of social activities. Not only will they round out your school experience, but your involvement with different activities looks great on a resume! Don't hesitate to contact your POGO Counsellor if you need support. Below are some examples:

<p>Sports</p> 	<p>Varsity: These are teams at the highest level and students have to compete for admission. These teams normally have a mascot and a special team name. They play against other post-secondary schools in tournaments during the athletic season. Examples: football, volleyball, hockey, basketball.</p> <p>Intramural: These teams play within a school versus against other schools. They can be competitive or recreational and can vary by your level. These sports normally last for the entire year versus the athletic season. Intramural sports are a great option for individuals wanting to stay active, meet new people, and/or try a new sport! Examples: squash, flag football, ultimate frisbee, dodgeball.</p> <p>Individual: Sometimes athletic departments offer non-competitive activities that you can do alone or in a group. If they are not offered through the department, check out student-run clubs. Examples: hiking, dance, yoga, pilates.</p>
<p>Student Government</p> 	<p>The Student Government is a group of either student-elected or appointed individuals that manage a variety of initiatives or events. This group makes decisions on behalf of the student body. The areas of focus may include academics, events, finance, and student life/student affairs. Usually a "President" and a few "Vice Presidents" are elected/appointed. These can be paid positions.</p>
<p>Clubs/Associations/Societies</p> 	<p>These are student-led groups that have a common goal/interest. Sometimes they serve an official function and represent a specific student body. Here are some examples based on various categories: Culture (e.g., Black Students' Association), Language (e.g., French Club), faith (e.g., Muslim Students' Association), LGBTQ+, subject (e.g., Psychology Association, Music Society), or Interest (e.g., photography club, calligraphy, juggling, etc.).</p>
<p>Volunteering</p>	<p>Another way to get involved is to volunteer. Check out options at your school and around the community.</p>

Mental Health Supports

Every college and university has mental health supports available for free on campus. Usually this is through counselling services and wellness programs.



[Good2Talk](#) provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students across Ontario by phone, text, and online messaging, 24/7. They also have a [Campus Services Directory](#), so you can find resources on your campus.

[BounceBack Ontario](#) is a free, guided self-help program that helps people aged 15 and up who are experiencing mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression, or may be feeling low, stressed, worried, irritable or angry. It's delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos.



A CALL TO ACTION!

Share this guide! Help ensure that more students, parents, caregivers and others know that post-secondary education is not only possible but also accessible to childhood cancer and brain tumour survivors!



**THE POGO SCHOOL AND WORK TRANSITIONS PROGRAM
MEET THE TRANSITIONS TEAM
STAY INFORMED BY JOINING OUR EMAIL LIST**

The Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario partners to achieve the best childhood cancer care system for children, youth, survivors, and their families in Ontario and beyond.

Funded by the generosity of donors,
The POGO School and Work Transitions Program supports survivors with a smoother transition from secondary school or from being off school or work to further education or employment.



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