

Ministry of Education  
Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministre de l'Éducation  
Édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



**MEMORANDUM TO:** Directors of Education  
Director of the Provincial Schools Branch  
Supervisory Officer of Centre Jules-Léger  
Secretary Treasurer, James Bay Lowlands School Authority

**FROM:** Mary Jean Gallagher  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Student Achievement Division

Raymond Théberge  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
French-Language Education, Aboriginal Learning  
and Research Division

**DATE:** November 12, 2009

**SUBJECT:** **Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Application for 2010-11**

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We are pleased to provide you with information about the Ministry of Education's plans for further implementation of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program and to invite district school boards, in collaboration with their business and postsecondary education and training partners, to submit an application to offer SHSM programs in 2010-11.

The SHSM program aligns with the government's strategic goals to improve student success in secondary education and increase access to and participation in postsecondary education, training and employment opportunities. The overarching goal for the Student Success Strategy is to reach every student and to increase individual opportunities for success.

The SHSM is a specialized career-focussed program option for students to customize their learning to suit their individual interests, strengths and needs while meeting the high standards and requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As such, the career focus and SHSM requirement for pathways to apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace also support the strategic goals of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. In 2009-10, student access to these specialized programs increased significantly, with approximately 20,000 students participating in over 740 SHSM programs.

### **Priorities for SHSMs in 2010-11**

The Ministry of Education's priorities for 2010-11 are to ensure high quality SHSM programs and to support the expansion of SHSM programs to:

- continue support for current SHSM programs;
- deepen implementation in all participating boards, provincial schools and one school authority (where applications qualify);
- promote alignment between approved SHSM pathway programs and approved dual credit programs, managed under the separately administered School-College-Work Initiative;
- promote partnerships of co-terminous and/or neighbouring boards;
- increase the number of programs and services that could impact positively on student retention and success in the French-language education system;
- expand the initiative into new sectors in addition to the 16 sectors currently offered.

### **Applying for a Specialist High Skills Major Program**

Boards have the opportunity to submit SHSM applications in sixteen (16) established sectors: agriculture, arts and culture; business; construction; environment; forestry; health and wellness; horticulture and landscaping; hospitality and tourism; information and communications technology; justice, community safety and emergency services; manufacturing; mining; and transportation.

In addition, we are inviting expressions of interest in different sectors based upon other specialized programs that schools have developed to support students. New sectors, such as education and training, public service and the not-for-profit sector, and others will be considered.

By virtue of applying, boards are committing that the five required components as outlined in the sector-specific guides, are implemented in their programs. Once approved, boards must ensure, over the two-year implementation period, that their SHSM programs provide opportunities for students pursuing all four postsecondary pathways and offer the required components:

1. a bundle of 8-10 required credits with pathways to the four destinations: apprenticeship training, college, university and the workplace. Each bundle of credits consists of:
  - 4 major credits
  - 2 to 4 other required credits
  - 2 cooperative education credits;
2. compulsory certification and training courses/programs;
3. career exploration and experiential learning such as job shadowing, job twinning, and work experience;
4. 'reach ahead' opportunities where students participate in authentic experiences in their postsecondary option of choice, whether in apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace;
5. development of Essential Skills and work habits and the use of the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) for purposes of documentation.

In addition, approved SHSM programs must be offered in partnership with local business, industry, and/or community organizations, and where applicable, public postsecondary educational institutions and training centres.

### **Application Details**

In all cases, the Ministry of Education's approval is required to offer an SHSM and to enable students to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) with the SHSM designation. This year we will be asking for boards to submit an application that will enable a three-year planning process for mature programs contingent upon continued delivery of high quality programs. Programs currently in their first year will be required to submit a complete application.

Boards are requested to submit one application which will host information relating to their current SHSM(s), to proposed SHSM(s), and to projected numbers of students over a three-year period.

Boards will be required to submit

- applications for new SHSMs, either new sectors or new schools,
- applications for any school that started an SHSM program in 2009-10, and
- projections for the number of students that will participate in each of the SHSM programs for each year to 2012-13.

Submit the board's application to [irina.buyanova@ontario.ca](mailto:irina.buyanova@ontario.ca) no later than December 17, 2009, with copies to your Student Success Leader and the education officer with the lead on the SHSM at the board's Ministry of Education Regional Office.

### **Key dates in the application process for 2010-11:**

- November 12 - memo and pre-populated application sent electronically to each board
- November 16, 17 - teleconference on SHSM application on technical aspects for boards
- November 20 - teleconference on proposed new sectors
- December 17 - applications due (electronically) to the ministry

Funding available to support SHSM program implementation is subject to the ministry's budget for 2010-11, and will be based on factors such as the number of SHSM students, the total number of approved SHSM programs, and the breadth and depth of SHSM implementation in the board and across the province. Please note that, as in the past, boards are encouraged to use a portion of the funding provided for Student Success through the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) to support the implementation of SHSM programs.

### **Dual Credit Programs and the SHSM Application**

Students in approved SHSM sites may benefit from access to dual credit learning opportunities in college courses and apprenticeship programs related to their majors. Boards applying to the

Ministry of Education to offer an SHSM in 2010-11 may wish to consider submitting a proposal to the School College Work Initiative (SCWI) for the SHSM's college and/or apprenticeship pathways' components in order to offer dual credit learning opportunities within their proposed SHSM programs. The timing of both the SHSM and dual credit application processes have been coordinated to facilitate alignment opportunities where appropriate.

For further information, please contact Audrey Cartile at (416) 326-0552, [audrey.cartile@ontario.ca](mailto:audrey.cartile@ontario.ca), or Aldo Cianfrini at (416) 325-2669, [aldo.cianfrini@ontario.ca](mailto:aldo.cianfrini@ontario.ca)

Thank you for your commitment to the Student Success Strategy. We look forward to receiving your application for further development and expansion of SHSM programs.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Mary Jean Gallagher

Raymond Théberge

Copy to: Marie-Lison Fougère, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Programs  
Division, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
Laurie LeBlanc, Assistant Deputy Minister - Employment and Training Division  
Richard Franz, Acting Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation,  
Strategic Policy Branch  
Ginette Plourde, Director, French-Language Education Policy and Programs  
David Euale, Director, Student Success/Learning to 18 Implementation, Training and  
Evaluation Branch  
Alayne Bigwin, Director, Aboriginal Education Office  
Patti Redmond, Director, Programs Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and  
Universities  
Kit Rankin, Director, Field Services Branch  
Regional Office Managers  
Regional Office Leads for SHSM  
Student Success Leaders  
SHSM Board Leads