



supporting Labour Market Attachment

Keys to Purchasing Good Training

Description

The following tool consists of a list of important questions to consider before purchasing or enrolling in a training program. Employers, HR practitioners, or others who are purchasing training programs for an organization or individuals can use this tool.

Recognizing Good Training

Questions to ask before purchasing or enrolling in a training program:

Question	Considerations
1. Is it clear to you what skills and knowledge you'll be learning?	The description of a quality training course or education program will clearly state what skills and knowledge you will acquire. They may be called “learning outcomes” or “course objectives.” Ask the registration office or read the course outline for a clear statement of learning objectives. Is this what you think you want or need to learn?
2. Is there evidence that the course or program actually delivers those learning outcomes?	A quality training course will have been formally evaluated. Ask the registration office or the program manager for an evaluation report including student achievement levels and satisfaction, the employment rate of graduates, and the perceptions of relevant employers. You want to know, for example, how many students registered and completed the program, and how many didn't complete and why. How many graduates got jobs in the industry right away? Compare for yourself what the program says you'll achieve with what others think—graduates, non-completers, and employers. Is this course or program effective—that is, does it do what it claims to do?
3. Are the skills and knowledge you'll be expected to learn up-to-date and related to real industry requirements?	A quality training program or career course will be related to real employment opportunities, present and future. Actual workers and employers will have been involved in setting the learning objectives or training outcomes. Training equipment will be modern and relevant to actual work situations. Ask the registration desk or the program manager for a list of the industry advisory council members. Ask recent graduates if they were trained on equipment that they actually use in their new jobs. Ask employers if they hire the graduates from the course or program. Does the training increase your job prospects?

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4. Are the skills and knowledge general enough to fit a variety of work settings and to help you with further skill upgrading?	Quality training will include a range of employability competencies—communications, computer literacy, interpersonal and teamwork skills, leadership and change management, lifelong learning skills—that are applicable in various worksites and that new skills can be built on. Check the learning objectives in the program or course description for a blend of general or transferable skills as well as occupation-specific skills. Does the training expand your career prospects or does it limit them?
5. Is there a direct connection to real employment and to future opportunity?	A quality career education or training program will prepare you for existing or future job opportunities that are supported by relevant labour market information. It will provide work experience or other links to real employment situations. Ask an employment counselor or check the HRDC Job Bank to see if there are employment opportunities in the particular industry and in the region where you want to live. Ask the program manager about co-op placements, mentoring, apprenticeship or internship opportunities, or workplace simulations. Is there evidence that you will be job-ready and that you will be likely to find work?
6. Is there flexibility in scheduling and delivery?	Quality training and career education will provide options for learners who have work and family responsibilities. Ask the registration office about options for full-time and part-time study, for on-site or distance delivery (e.g., on-line), for daytime or evening study. Often, in quality training, modules will break topics into manageable amounts; competency-based testing will assess your achievement at your own pace. Is there enough time, flexibility, and individualization in the program for you to be successful?
7. Is there variety in the instruction processes?	Quality training will include a variety of teaching approaches (e.g., lectures, readings, demonstrations, hands-on practice, technologically-based instruction). Ask the program manager or instructor about the teaching methods. Do you know your preferred learning style (e.g., reading, hands-on, listening), and do you think the instructional methods will help or hinder your success?

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8. Do you know when and how you will be evaluated?	Quality training will incorporate a variety of evaluation methods—written and oral tests, demonstrations, group assignments. Ask the program manager how success is defined and measured and what kinds of tests you will be given. How do YOU define success, and do you think you’ll be able to achieve it?
9. Will your instructors be top quality?	Teaching staff in quality training courses and programs will have recognized teaching and/or professional qualifications, demonstrated instructional skills for adults, relevant experience and/or current knowledge in the field. Ask the registration office or the program manager about the instructor(s). Do they have any teacher training? Do they have experience teaching adults? Have they worked in the industry recently? How do they have the necessary expertise to teach this course or program? This information should be in the program evaluation or course description.
10. Are the learning materials appropriate, affordable, and of high quality?	Quality teaching materials will be well-organized, up-to-date, understandable, clear, and free from cultural, racial, class, and gender bias. They will be tailored to the actual learner’s interests and ability levels, to the community and the industry. Appropriate and necessary technologies (e.g., computers, machines, and tools) will be used. Ask for a sample of the course materials. Are they something you’ll be comfortable paying for and using?
11. Are the training facilities safe, clean, and accessible?	Quality training services will use machinery, classrooms, and locations that don’t present health or safety risks. Check for yourself or ask former students if they were worried about their personal safety at any time. Is training equipment well-maintained? Could you get to the classroom if you had a disability? Would you feel comfortable leaving the facility after dark or being the first to turn on some equipment?

Question	Considerations
12. Will you, and others, be treated fairly?	Quality training services will treat individuals equally, regardless of gender, ethnic background, or disability. Training service managers will work to identify and remove barriers to participation by all. Ask former students or observe for yourself. Is there obvious bias or subtle discrimination against women, minorities, persons with disabilities, or aboriginal peoples? Is diversity respected and promoted?
13. Will you be treated like an adult and a valued customer?	Quality career education and training services will provide choice and information to help individuals make informed choices. When you ask the questions in this guide, you will get information that is in writing and that is understandable, complete, and current. Choices will be explained to you, and service will be courteous and prompt. Are the services you need (e.g., daycare, parking, public transportation, food services) available and affordable? How would you rate the service you've had so far?
14. Will you be treated like an individual?	Quality education and training services will focus on the learner as an individual, not a number or a group member. Learners will be involved in decision making that affects them. Ask the program manager and former students if instructors make an effort to understand and accommodate the learning styles, previous experiences, special limitations, and abilities of individuals. Will this training build on what you already know and can do? Will you have the opportunity to provide feedback on the instructor's effectiveness and other elements of the program design and delivery?
15. Will you get the help you need to make decisions about training, career development and employment?	Quality education and training services will provide or link to career, academic, and personal counseling to help you make informed choices, not just at the outset but throughout your program. Do you know how and where to access information and counseling services relative to this training service?

Question	Considerations
16. Will the training make the best use of your time and resources?	Quality education and training services will attempt to make the most efficient use of time, finances, and personal abilities—their own and their students. Your prior learning will be assessed, and you won't be expected to repeat or relearn what you already know. Ask the registration office about the availability of PLAR—Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition—and ask whether or not it meets the recommended national standards. Will you get a good return for your investment?
17. Will you end up with a useful credential?	Quality education and training will result in credits or credentials that can be transferred from one teaching institution to another, from one province to another, and from one employer to another. Ask the registration office if you will get a formal statement of achievement that will be accepted by employers and respected by other teaching institutions. Will this training experience allow you to work or study most places in Canada or will it tie you to one spot?
18. Does the education or training institution have a good reputation?	Quality education and training services will have professional services for providing current and useful information, conducting program evaluation, maintaining student records, demonstrating financial accountability, and establishing links with employers, the community, and other institutions. They will typically be professionally accredited, relating directly to occupational standards and agencies that license professionals in the industry. Ask employers and graduates their opinion of the training service. Observe for yourself if there is a credible organization behind the training course or program. Is this training service recognized and respected by other educators and by employers?