

Polytechnic University Areas of Teaching and Research Specialization



SUMMARY

As part of the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) committed to establishing areas of teaching and research specialization for the institution. In order to support input from Indigenous governments and key stakeholders, the GNWT has drafted a discussion paper that proposes initial areas of specialization, what they mean and why they are important. The full discussion paper and instructions on how to provide input can be found online at:

<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/have-your-say>

Areas of specialization help guide decision making and the allocation of resources within the institution to ensure it remains effective, efficient and sustainable. Areas of specialization, together with further engagement and analysis, will help to guide programming decisions and shape the design and delivery of those programs. Having clearly understood areas of specialization also provides a frame for communicating the ongoing successes within the institution.

The polytechnic university will have a place for every resident who seeks an opportunity to further their skills, knowledge and abilities through post-secondary education. This means meeting students where they are in their education journey and being supportive through the entire journey, from applying to a post-secondary education program right through to employment success. This requires a learning-centred approach that broadly aligns institutional success with student success.

The discussion paper proposes the new polytechnic university focus on the following areas of specialization:

Skilled Trades and Technology

This area of specialization focuses on skilled trades, with a particular focus on the application of new and emerging technology. There are more than 300 designated trades in Canada, including trades related to construction, transportation, manufacturing and service industry. In the NWT, trades make up an important segment of the labour market, and training must target areas where there is a high potential for employment inside the NWT. This is also an area of specialization with great potential for research programs that seek innovative solutions to issues around construction and maintenance of Northern infrastructure, including housing and transportation.

Mineral Resource and Environmental Management

This area of specialization encompasses mineral resource extraction and environmental management as interconnected themes that can be addressed through a common set of teaching and research programs. Within this area of specialization students would gain theoretical and applied knowledge in environmental analysis and problem solving. Teaching and research would advance efforts to manage the natural environment and learn about local climate change.

Northern Health, Education and Community Services

This area of specialization focuses on empowering people to help and support others in Northern communities. This would include teaching and research that supports physical, mental and emotional health in a manner that fosters personal and community resilience. It would also include training for educators that will, in turn, provide care, mentorship and support to generations of Northerners. Teaching and research in this area of specialization requires an understanding of the people, cultures and land that define Northern communities.

Business and Leadership

Being a leader is not a position, it is about a person's ability to guide and support others. Leaders face a range of challenges that can impact the culture within their team, the development of their team members, as well as the future of their organization. The federal, territorial, Indigenous and community governments, and non-governmental organizations and businesses require employees with business and leadership training. More specifically they require business and leadership training that can help their employees succeed in a Northern social and economic context.

The initial areas of specialization are about setting focused targets for the polytechnic university in terms of teaching and research programs. This will take time.

Each area will support the establishment of new programs for the polytechnic university and coincide with work being undertaken to ensure academic and research excellence. However, decisions about programming will require continued engagement with key stakeholder and potential co-investment partners, including federal, territorial and Indigenous governments, and industry.