

Thinking about IPSE?



IPSESA Program Overview

Since 1994, **IPSESA** has been a non-profit organization helping individuals with developmental disabilities (PDD) thrive in post-secondary education and employment. We support students in actively engaging in university life, including attending classes, joining campus activities, volunteering, and gaining work experience. We empower students to make decisions, become more independent, and build confidence through hands-on support. We collaborate with the University of Calgary, St. Mary's University, and SAIT to offer these opportunities.

What is an IPSE Program?

An Integrated Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) program supports students with developmental disabilities in their pursuit of higher education. It provides tailored academic, social, and employment experiences, helping students integrate into university life and gain essential career skills.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be 18 years old or older
- Must be PDD funded

How to Apply

1. Contact your PDD worker to express interest.
2. The PDD worker will submit your application to IPSESA.

Application Timeline:

- **January** - Contact PDD casework to express interest
- **February** – PDD coordinates referrals and send to IPSESA office
- **March** – Interview to assess suitability
- **April** – Acceptance or deferral letter to candidates
- **July** – Start with IPSESA

Program Duration

- University of Calgary & St. Mary's University: 4-5 years (Open Studies program)
- SAIT: 3 years (School of Business)

Students must complete the full program duration to receive a Certificate of Completion or Recognition.

Frequently Asked Questions



Do students need a high school diploma or certain academic levels to participate?

No, students do not need a high school diploma, nor are there minimum reading or writing levels required. Our program is designed to be inclusive and focuses on the individual's strengths and goals rather than academic benchmarks.

What are the tuition costs for the program, and is it covered by PDD funding?

We ask families to budget approximately \$2,000 to \$2,500 per year for tuition costs. These fees help support the academic and campus engagement components of the program. Please note that this cost is not covered by Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) funding, so families will need to plan for this expense independently.

Do students receive any academic support while auditing university classes?

Yes, students work with our Education Facilitators for approximately 3–4 hours each week. These facilitators help modify course content to align with each student's individual learning goals. Instead of focusing on completing all assignments or mastering all academic material, students engage with the course in a way that supports their strengths, interests, and personal development goals. This tailored support helps students participate meaningfully in class while building confidence and academic engagement.

Do students earn a degree or diploma after the program?

Students audit two university-level classes in the fall and winter semesters. This means they attend and participate in class, but do not earn credit or receive a grade. The experience is focused on exposure to academic life and developing learning skills. Once completing the program students will graduate with a certificate of completion.

Does the program continue after the academic year, and what do students do during the summer months (May to August)?

Yes, the program continues year-round. During the summer months, from May to August, the focus is on employment readiness and development. Students participate in activities like job training, volunteering, skill-building workshops, and exploring different work environments. This helps them gain valuable experience and prepare for future employment opportunities.

How do I know if my son or daughter is ready for the program?

A student is likely ready for the program if they are interested in learning, meeting new people, and becoming more independent. Since there is no one-on-one support, students need to be able to manage their daily routines on campus with general guidance. This includes navigating spaces, attending classes, and communicating their needs. Readiness also includes being open to trying new experiences and working toward personal goals in education, employment, and campus life. If you're unsure, we're happy to talk with you to help determine if the program is a good fit.