

# Sponsored Degrees: Transforming Talent Development for Canada’s Tech Companies

Sponsored degree/diploma programs are an emerging option in Canada’s tech sector due to the benefits they provide to employers and students alike. Examples include York University’s BASc in Digital Technologies, Bow Valley College’s Apprenticeship-Style Technology Diploma Programs, and Shopify’s Dev Degree program with Carleton University.

## Challenges

Canadian tech companies face declining budgets, fewer resources, and slower adoption of technologies compared to global counterparts. Technical skills gaps as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion concerns related to pay and representation also impact their competitiveness and profitability.

## WIL Solutions: Sponsored Degree/Diploma Programs

FEATURE	SPONSORED DEGREE/ DIPLOMA	TYPICAL COMPUTER SCIENCE CO-OP PROGRAMS
Work Experience Structure	Work and study are often simultaneous	Alternates between study terms and work terms (usually four to eight months long)
Mentorship	Structured long-term mentorship throughout the entire program	Limited short-term mentorship during work terms
Duration	Long-term work experience throughout the degree or diploma program	Shorter work terms, lasting a portion of the program
Industry Partners	Ongoing relationships with specific industry partners	Often different companies each work term
Portfolio Development	Gradual long-term development of a portfolio throughout the program	Periodic development of portfolio pieces in separate, shorter work terms
Skills Development	Focus on mastering specific technical skills over long-term work placements	More generalized work experience with potentially less time to develop specific technical skills, depending on company and term
Financial Benefits	Consistent paid work integrated with learning, reducing financial strain	Paid during work terms only, unpaid during study terms

## Impact:

- Sponsored degree/diploma programs help companies save recruitment costs and improve retention by utilizing PSI onboarding supports. For example, Shopify’s Dev Degree program boasts an impressive 90% conversion rate of students to full-time positions after graduation.
- Sponsored programs allow students to enhance productivity for employers.



**“These students can add value to your organization virtually straight away...And you don’t have to keep doing this every four months or every eight months. What’s there to lose?”**  
– JANE GOODYER, DEAN OF THE LASSONDE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

- Sponsored degrees/diplomas improve representation of traditionally underrepresented students in tech. For example, York’s BASc in Digital Technologies and Shopify’s Dev Degree both reported almost 50% participation from women.



**“We look for and value non-traditional candidates. People coming from underrepresented groups, or a second career... We can create that opportunity for them to be in an environment that really does celebrate that diversity and the uniqueness of their perspective.”**– ENGINEER AT SHOPIFY

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