

All students working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) must complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement activities, as required by the Ontario Ministry of Education. This procedure explains how Royal Ontario Academy (ROA) students plan, complete, document, and receive credit for these hours, whether they live in Ontario, elsewhere in Canada, or overseas.

What Counts as Community Involvement

Community involvement hours must be unpaid and must take place outside of instructional time; they cannot be part of a credit course. Eligible activities include volunteering with businesses, not for profit and charitable organizations, healthcare institutions such as hospitals and long term care homes, public sector organizations, and First Nations, Metis, or Inuit communities and organizations, as well as informal activities such as religious, cultural, or community events.

Activities That Do Not Qualify

An activity cannot be counted toward the 40 hour requirement if it:

- is required for a class, course, or program the student is enrolled in, such as a cooperative education placement
- takes place during instructional time (an activity during a lunch break or spare period is permitted)
- would normally be performed for wages in that workplace, including paid work, work in a family owned or operated business, or activities such as babysitting for pay
- involves operating a vehicle, power tools, or scaffolding
- involves giving medication or a medical procedure to another person
- involves handling a substance classified as a designated substance under the Occupational Health and Safety Act
- requires the knowledge of a tradesperson whose trade is regulated by the province
- involves banking, securities, or handling valuable items such as jewellery, art, or antiques
- consists of the student's regular household chores or personal recreational activities
- is part of a court ordered program
- poses a safety risk to the student or others, or involves discrimination or harassment

If a student is unsure whether a proposed activity qualifies, or wants to propose an activity that is not on ROA's list of eligible activities, they should confirm with the Principal before starting, using the Community Involvement Approval Form described below, rather than after the hours are completed.

Approval Before Starting an Activity

Before starting any community involvement activity, the student completes ROA's Community Involvement Approval Form, providing their contact information, a description of the proposed activity, the supervising organization and contact person, the expected duration, and the expected number of hours. The Principal reviews the proposed activity against the eligible and ineligible activity criteria, records a decision of approved or not approved with any comments, and signs and dates the form. Students should not begin an activity before it has been approved.

Confirming Completed Hours

Once an approved activity is complete, the student completes ROA's Community Involvement Tracking Form, describing the completed activity and confirming the supervising organization's contact information. The supervisor signs the form and confirms the date of the activity and the total hours volunteered. The student returns the completed, signed form to the school and keeps a copy for their own records.

Completing Hours in Ontario, Elsewhere in Canada, or Overseas

The community involvement requirement is not tied to a specific location. Students living in Ontario, elsewhere in Canada, or overseas may complete their hours with organizations in their own community, including recognized virtual or online volunteering. International students are encouraged to volunteer with local organizations in their home country or with established virtual volunteer programs. Documentation from an organization outside Canada is accepted provided it clearly identifies the organization and supervisor and the dates and hours completed, and is provided in English or French, or accompanied by a translation.

Additional Documentation for Students Outside Ontario

To help verify submissions from students living elsewhere in Canada or overseas, students are also asked to submit a photo of themselves taking part in each different type of community involvement activity, showing an identifiable background, such as signage for the organization or location. This is in addition to, and does not replace, the signed Approval and Tracking Forms. Students are encouraged to provide any further documentation that supports an activity, such as an organization's own volunteer certificate or letter, as this can help the Principal confirm the hours. Photos and supporting documentation are used only to confirm that hours were genuinely completed and are kept on the student's file with the same care as their other records.

Recording Hours

Once the Principal confirms a student has completed the required number of hours, this is recorded on the student's Ontario Student Transcript and noted on their final secondary report card. Students may begin accumulating hours as early as the summer before entering Grade 9, and are encouraged to submit forms as hours are completed rather than waiting until graduation is near. For students who transfer to ROA partway through their secondary studies, including from home schooling, a non-inspected school, or a school outside Ontario, the Principal determines the number of community involvement hours still required based on the student's prior secondary studies.

Mature Students

A mature student is a student who is at least 18 years old on or after January 1 of the current school year and is enrolled in a program to earn the OSSD. For mature students, the standard 40 hour requirement does not automatically apply. Ministry policy gives the Principal discretion to determine how many hours of community involvement a mature student must complete toward the OSSD, which may be less than 40 hours, based on the student's individual circumstances and life experience. Mature students should discuss their situation with the Principal as part of their admission and program planning.

This procedure is reviewed periodically to ensure clarity, fairness, and alignment with Ontario Ministry of Education requirements and ROA operational needs, and is updated as needed. Final decisions on interpretation and application rest with the Principal. Questions may be directed to Royal Ontario Academy at info@royalontarioacademy.com. Last updated July 2026.

Appendix: Ideas for Finding a Community Involvement Activity

Students who are not sure where to start can consider the following types of activities and resources.

- Community centres, libraries, or recreation programs, which often need help running activities for children, seniors, or newcomers
- Hospitals, long term care homes, or other healthcare institutions
- Local not for profit or charitable organizations, food banks, and shelters
- Faith communities and cultural or heritage organizations
- Tutoring another student, in person or through a reputable online tutoring program
- Environmental activities such as park or neighbourhood clean ups, or tree planting
- Taking part in an organized food, clothing, or other donation drive supporting disadvantaged or in need groups in the community
- In the event of a public health emergency, such as a pandemic outbreak (for example, COVID-19 or Ebola), the Principal may approve virtual volunteering as an exception and for health and safety reasons, including where an activity would otherwise be expected to take place in person.

This list is a starting point only, not a list of pre-approved activities. Students should still confirm any proposed activity with the Principal using the Community Involvement Approval Form before beginning, since not every activity in these categories will be eligible in every case.