Education Quality and Accountability Office

EQAO

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions

Support for Students with Special Education Needs and English Language Learners

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Support for Students with Special Education Needs and English Language Learners

Purpose of This Guide

This guide provides information and directions to assist principals and teachers in making decisions about accommodations for students with special education needs, special provisions for English language learners, deferrals and exemptions.

This guide is based on the following three Ministry of Education policy documents, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca:

- Policy/Program Memorandum 127 (PPM 127), issued August 7, 2009
- *Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation*
- *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2007)

Definitions

"Modifications" are changes to content of the test and to performance criteria. Modifications are not permitted, because they affect the validity and reliability of the test.

"Accommodations" are supports and services that enable students with special education needs to demonstrate their competencies in the skills being measured by the test. Accommodations change only the way in which the test is administered or the way in which a student responds to its components. Accommodations do not alter the content of the test or affect its validity or reliability.

"Special provisions" are adjustments to the setting and/or timing for writing the test for English language learners. They do not affect the validity or reliability of the test.

"Exemptions" are decisions made for students whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) states they are not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

"Deferrals" are decisions to postpone the writing of the test until the following year for students who are working toward an OSSD, due to one of the reasons outlined in Section C of this guide.

Role of the Principal

The principal is responsible for making decisions about student participation in the test and ensuring that all accommodations, special provisions, deferrals and exemptions are provided and documented according to the instructions in this guide. Sample letters to parents are available on the secure section of the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.

Section A Accommodations

1. Students with Special Education Needs

The Student

The student has an IEP that outlines the accommodations that are necessary for and consistent with regular classroom practices used for the student. **The student must normally receive these accommodations for all forms of assessment, including summative assessments, and not only for provincial tests.**

Decision Making

Permit only the accommodations listed below.

Decide on the accommodations

- based on the student's IEP;
- based on regular classroom practice, including accommodations provided for all forms of assessment, including summative assessments;
- prior to the test;
- for each student individually and
- in consultation with the student and parent(s) or the adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff.

Permitted Accommodations

Applicable to both the reading and the writing sections

Setting *(adjustments to the **environment** in which the test is written)*

- an individual or small-group setting or an individual study carrel
- preferential seating within the regular classroom
- adaptive equipment (e.g., special lighting, special pens or pencil grips or a device to support the student's arm for printing, writing or keyboarding)
- prompts for students with severe attention problems who are off-task for significant periods of time, solely to draw their attention back to the test (refer to page 6)

Timing *(adjustments to the **time allotted** for the test)*

- additional time, to a maximum of double the allotted time
- periodic supervised breaks

Presentation Format *(adjustments to the **format of the test**)*

- sign language or an oral interpreter*
- Braille version
- large-print version (with large-print Student Answer Sheet)
- coloured-paper version (with matching coloured-paper Student Answer Sheet)
- large-print coloured-paper version (with matching large-print coloured-paper Student Answer Sheet)
- audio version (CD)
- assistive technology: electronic formats used with technology (e.g., text-to-speech software)

New **Note:** Students with a visual impairment can have access to both the Braille and the audio versions.

Response Format *(adjustments to the **format of the student responses**)*

- use of a computer or word processor
- audio recording of student responses (for later transcription)
- assistive devices and technology used for recording responses only (e.g., a speech synthesizer, a Brailler, speech-to-text software or augmentative or alternative communication systems)
- verbatim scribing of responses (refer to page 5)

Note: Remember to complete the Student Answer Sheet for multiple-choice responses.

Applicable to the writing sections only

Presentation Format

- verbatim reading of the writing questions and prompts (including the topic and accompanying materials)

Applicable to the reading sections only

Response Format

- video recording of signed responses (for later transcription)

Required Documentation

- the student information recorded in the online EQAO Student Data Collection (SDC) system
- an information letter from the principal to the parent(s) or adult student outlining the accommodations approved (sample letters are available on the secure section of the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com)

Keep all documentation on file.

Notes

- Refer to PPM 127.
- The student must complete the assigned booklets by the end of the administration day.
- The time allowed for instructions, the break and the questionnaire is not considered part of the time allotted for the student to complete the test.
- A teacher (or other adult) may help the student by separating the pages of the test booklet so that text and questions are side by side.

* An oral interpreter mouths words for deaf or hard-of-hearing students so that they can lip-read. The interpreter does not vary from the approved administration instructions or from the assigned tasks.

2. Requests for Special Consideration of Accommodations

Excerpt from PPM 127

1. Accommodations that are listed in the EQAO *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions*

   When a parent, adult student, or principal identifies the need for an accommodation that is listed in the EQAO guide, one of the following procedures applies, as appropriate:

   a. If the accommodation is not described in the student's IEP, the parent, adult student, or principal may submit a request for consideration to the appropriate supervisory officer. The decision of the supervisory officer is final.

   b. If the student does not have an IEP because he or she recently transferred into the school from another jurisdiction, the parent, adult student, or principal may make a request for accommodations to the appropriate supervisory officer. The decision of the supervisory officer is final.

   c. If, owing to temporary circumstances, a student who would not normally require accommodations requires one or more in order to take the test, the principal may grant permission for the use of any appropriate accommodations that are permitted in the EQAO *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions*. If the principal determines that it is not possible to provide an accommodation that will allow the student to take the test, a deferral should be considered. Where the parent or adult student disagrees with the decision of the principal, he or she may make an appeal to the appropriate supervisory officer. The decision of the supervisory officer is final.

2. Accommodations that are not listed in the EQAO *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions*

   When a parent, adult student, or principal identifies a need for an accommodation that is not listed in the EQAO guide or involves more than double the time allowed for the test, that conforms to the definition of accommodations in the guide, and that is described in the student's IEP, the parent, adult student, or principal must submit the request for consideration to the Chief Assessment Officer of the EQAO. The decision of the Chief Assessment Officer is final.

Requests for such accommodations to the Chief Assessment Officer (CAO) must include the following:

- the student's full name;
- his or her date of birth;
- a letter or e-mail record of the request for special consideration from the principal, the parent(s) or the adult student;
- a description of previous implementation of the student's IEP and
- a brief description of the documentation that identifies the student's special needs (e.g., psychological or medical reports).

The principal may grant permission for other accommodations only when approved in writing by EQAO's CAO.

Chief Assessment Officer
Education Quality and Accountability Office
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1200
Toronto ON M5B 2M9

EQAO Information Centre: 1-888-327-7377
E-mail: e-mail@eqao.com

Note: The request must be received by the CAO **six weeks** prior to the administration of the test.

3. Scribes and Prompters

Definition

- A scribe or a prompter is someone who supports the accommodations the student receives on a regular basis for all forms of assessment.
- Scribes and prompters must not be relatives of the students they are assisting.

Guidelines

The scribe or prompter must

- follow the guidelines outlined below;
- work under the supervision of a teacher, unless he or she is a teacher, and
- adhere to the "Professional Responsibilities for the Administration of the OSSLT" and the "EQAO Policy on the Duty to Report Child Abuse" in *Administering the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.*

Scribes

This accommodation allows for writing assistance for a student

- who normally requires a scribe in the classroom;
- who normally has all forms of assessment scribed, including summative assessments or
- who has a temporary condition and is unable to write.

A student requiring a scribe must be assessed in a **separate quiet area** so that other students who are writing the assessment are not disturbed. The principal must ensure that scribes are aware of the acceptable practices for EQAO assessments, listed below.

The scribe must

- print by hand or type exactly what the student dictates. Handwritten transcriptions must be made directly in the booklet. Typed transcriptions must be stapled to the inside front cover of the appropriate booklet.

The scribe may

- fill in the circles on the Student Answer Sheet as directed by the student.
- New — assume that each sentence begins with a capital and ends with a period.
- read the dictation back to the student if requested.

The scribe must NOT

- edit or alter the student's dictation in any way;
- alert the student to mistakes;
- prompt the student in any way;
- initiate the use of test-taking strategies;
- show any reaction to the student's responses;
- correct the student's responses or
- engage in incidental conversation with the student or others during the administration of the assessment.

Prompters

A prompter is allowed for students with **severe attention difficulties.**

Prompters are allowed to

- draw the student's attention back to the test through a tap on the arm, shoulder or desk or
- use a verbal signal, for example, a word or phrase, to redirect the student's attention.

Prompters are NOT allowed to

- clarify, explain or comment on the reading selections, questions or writing tasks or
- draw the student's attention to a specific part of the test booklet.

Required Documentation

- the student information recorded in the SDC system
- an information letter from the principal to the parent(s) or adult student outlining the accommodations approved (sample letters are available on the secure section of the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com)

Keep all documentation on file.

4. Special Versions

Under no circumstances may special versions be photocopied or otherwise reproduced for use by other students.

If a shortage is discovered the day of the administration, please call EQAO at 1-888-327-7377.

Special Versions (for students receiving presentation-format accommodations)

Uncontracted Braille plus a set of regular-print booklets for the scribe's use

Contracted Braille plus a set of regular-print booklets for the scribe's use

Large-print booklets—white paper (with large-print Student Answer Sheet)

Regular-print coloured-paper booklets—blue, green or yellow paper (with matching coloured-paper Student Answer Sheet)

Large-print coloured-paper booklets—blue, green or yellow paper (with matching large-print coloured-paper Student Answer Sheet)

Audio CD plus a set of regular-print booklets

Audio CD plus a set of large-print booklets (with large-print Student Answer Sheet)

Assistive Technology—electronic formats used with text-to-speech software or augmentative or alternative communication systems. A set of regular-print booklets will also be sent to the school for those students who receive this accommodation. The electronic formats—Kurzweil (3000 and 1000), Premier, PDF, Word, HTML, WYNN and WordPerfect—will be available for download on the secure section of EQAO's Web site 48 hours prior to the start of the test.

Notes

- The download of the assistive technology versions must be completed **at the school level only.**
- The electronic files will be compressed in ZIP format.
- New — Order special versions using the SDC system. (There is now the option to order both the audio and the Braille versions for students with a visual impairment.)
- Ensure that computers have sufficient memory, that student work is saved frequently and that it can be printed.

5. Submitting Student Responses in Different Formats

After the test has been completed, handle the different student response formats according to the chart below. This is important to ensure accurate links between student work and the package IDs assigned to students.

Response format	Special instructions	What to return to EQAO and how
Computer responses (using regular-print-booklet presentation format) or assistive technology (e.g., text-to-speech software presentation format)	• Type the final 12 digits of the package ID number in the header of **each page** of the document. • Complete the Student Answer Sheet.	• Print the student's answers and staple the pages to the inside front cover of the corresponding test booklet. • Place the booklets and the **completed** Student Answer Sheet in the **Special Versions Envelope.** • Delete **all** electronic versions of the test and responses on **June 11, 2010.**
Scribed responses	• Responses scribed by hand should be written directly in the corresponding booklets or on the Student Answer Sheet. • For word-processed or typewriter scribing, follow the procedures outlined in "Computer responses" above.	• For handwritten responses only, return the booklets and the **completed** Student Answer Sheet with the rest of the test materials.
Audio-recorded responses	• Clearly state the final 12 digits of the package ID number at the beginning of each recording session. • Clearly print the final 12 digits of the package ID number on each audio recording. • Complete the hard-copy Student Answer Sheet (if possible).	• Place the student's audio-recorded responses with the student's regular-print or large-print booklets and the Student Answer Sheet in the **Special Versions Envelope.**
Braille responses	• Clearly print the final 12 digits of the package ID number at the top of each response page. • Complete the hard-copy Student Answer Sheet (if possible).	• Place the student's regular-print booklets inside the front cover of the corresponding Braille booklets. • Return the booklets and the **completed** Student Answer Sheet with the rest of the test materials.
Braille transcriptions	• Handwritten transcriptions should be made directly in the corresponding booklets or on the Student Answer Sheet. • For word-processed transcriptions, follow the procedures outlined in "Computer responses" above.	• Place the student's regular-print booklets inside the front cover of the corresponding Braille booklets. • Return the booklets and the **completed** Student Answer Sheet with the rest of the test materials.

Section B Special Provisions for English Language Learners

The Student

The student is an English language learner as defined by *English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (2007).

Decision Making

Decide on the special provisions

- prior to the test;
- for each student individually and
- in consultation with the student and parent(s) or the adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff.

Permitted Special Provisions

Setting *(adjustments to the **environment** in which the test is written)*

- an individual or small-group setting or an individual study carrel

Timing *(adjustments to the **time allotted** for the test)*

- additional time, to a maximum of double the allotted time
- periodic supervised breaks

Required Documentation

- the student information recorded in the SDC system
- an information letter from the principal to the parent(s) or adult student outlining the approved special provisions (sample letters are available on the secure section of the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com)

Keep all documentation on file.

Notes

- English language learners who have special education needs and an IEP are also entitled to accommodations in accordance with "Students with Special Education Needs" on page 2 of this guide.
- The student must complete the test by the end of the administration day.
- The time allowed for reading instructions, the break and the questionnaire is not considered part of the time allotted for the student to complete the test.
- New The audio version is only available for English language learners who have an IEP that indicates the audio accommodation.

Section C Deferrals

The Student

The student is working toward an OSSD but will not participate in the current administration of the test for one of the following reasons:

- The student is an English language learner and has not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English sufficient to participate in the test.
- The student has been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee and would not yet be able to participate in the test even if all permitted accommodations were provided.
- The student has not yet acquired the reading and writing skills appropriate for Grade 9.
- The student has a temporary condition or is new to the school and appropriate accommodations cannot be provided.

Decision Making

The parent(s) or adult student may make a written request for deferral addressed to the principal, or the principal may suggest a deferral in consultation with the parent(s) or adult student.

Decide on a deferral

- prior to the administration of the test;
- for each student individually and
- in consultation with the student and parent(s) or the adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff.

Required Documentation

- the student information recorded in the SDC system

Keep all documentation related to the decision to grant a deferral in the student's Ontario Student Record.

Notes

- Participation may be deferred only to the next administration of the test. If a deferral is required again, there must be a new request, and the decision-making process must begin again.
- There is no limit to the number of deferrals a student may receive, but the student must be advised that a deferral will result in fewer opportunities to take the test and that passing either the OSSLT or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a diploma requirement.
- Students must be informed of the following: In June 2004, policy was changed to grant principals the discretion to allow a student to enroll in the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to take the OSSLT, if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the student (see PPM 127).
- Student materials (booklets, etc.) will not be shipped for deferred students.
- If the adult student or the parents disagree with the principal's decision, they may appeal to the appropriate supervisory officer for a final decision.

Section D Exemptions

The Student

The student's IEP indicates that he or she is not working toward an OSSD.

Decision Making

Decide on an exemption

- prior to the administration of the test;
- for each student individually;
- in compliance with the procedures outlined in this guide (in accordance with PPM 127);
- in consultation with the student and parent(s) or adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff and
- with the consent of the parent(s) or adult student.

If an adult student wishes to write the test, or the parents want their son or daughter to write it, the student must be allowed to write.

Required Documentation

- the student information recorded in the SDC system
- a letter from the parents or adult student, requesting exemption, or a record of parental consent if exemption has been initiated by the school
- a copy of the principal's letter to the adult student or parent(s) informing them of the exemption
- a record of the supervisory officer's decision, if applicable

Keep all documentation related to the decision to grant an exemption in the student's Ontario Student Record.

Notes

- If the learning expectations in the student's IEP are revised and the student begins to work toward an OSSD, the student will no longer be exempted and must meet the literacy requirement to receive a diploma.
- Student materials (booklets, etc.) will not be shipped for exempted students.

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