

Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing

Subject
Bulletin
2011–2012

GRADE
9

Social Studies

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Government
of Alberta ■

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document was written primarily for

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Students | |
| Teachers | ✓ Grade 9 Social Studies |
| Administrators | ✓ |
| Parents | |
| General Audience | |
| Others | |

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You can find achievement test-related materials on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca.

At the home page, click on the tab *Teachers*; then click on the link *Provincial Testing*. Next click on the link *Achievement Tests*, and then click on one of the specific links listed under the *Achievement Tests* heading.

Additional topics of interest are found in the *General Information Bulletin*.

The Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test

General Description

The Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test consists of 50 multiple-choice questions based upon outcomes in the 2007 Program of Studies and is developed to be completed in 80 minutes. The test has two booklets: a *Sources Booklet* containing source materials and a *Questions Booklet* containing corresponding questions. Students record their answers to all multiple-choice questions on a tear-out, machine-scorable answer sheet.

The multiple-choice questions are based upon the two General Outcomes in the 2007 Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies: **9.1 Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights** and **9.2 Issues for Canadians: Economic Systems in Canada and the United States**.

The test is divided into sections based on Specific Outcomes in the Program of Studies. Each Specific Outcome has either one or two sets of issues-centred sources in the *Sources Booklet* upon which three to four multiple-choice questions are based.

Knowledge and Understanding and Skills and Processes outcomes are integrated throughout the test.

Values and Attitudes outcomes are best assessed in the context of the classroom.

Students may not use a dictionary, a thesaurus, or other reference materials when writing the test.

If a word that warrants definition is used on the test, it will be defined on the page in the *Sources Booklet* on which it appears.

The total test administration time of 80 minutes provides students with time for completing each of the multiple-choice questions. Students may take an additional 30 minutes to complete the test if necessary.

Description of Social Studies Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 9 students at the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence*, based on outcomes in the [2007 Program of Studies](#). These statements represent examples of the standards against which student achievement is measured. It is important to remember that one test cannot measure all the outcomes in the Program of Studies.

Acceptable Standard

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* in Grade 9 Social Studies are able to

- know basic features of the structure of Canada's federal political system to determine the impact lawmaking processes, the branches of government, Members of Parliament and Senators, political parties, the media, and lobby groups have upon citizens
- identify some roles and responsibilities, including jury duty, knowing the law, and advocacy, that citizens and organizations have in Canada's justice system and understand the intention of the Youth Criminal Justice Act
- recognize some of the ways in which the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms fosters recognition of individual rights in Canada, affects conditions in the workplace, and impacts citizens
- understand some of the historical factors related to recognition of collective rights in Canada and acknowledge some of the political implications of exercising these rights for Francophones and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples
- identify basic factors related to immigration and refugee policies in Canada (i.e., economic, political, health, security) and recognize some of the benefits of immigration

Standard of Excellence

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* in Grade 9 Social Studies are also able to

- evaluate the extent to which lawmaking processes, the branches of government, Members of Parliament and Senators, political parties, the media, and lobby groups in Canada's federal political system meet the needs of all Canadians
- appreciate how the effectiveness of Canada's justice system is dependent upon the participation of citizens and organizations to ensure that the enforcement of laws, such as the Youth Criminal Justice Act, is fair and equitable
- determine the impact the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has had upon the legislative process in Canada by assessing the extent to which individual rights are guaranteed to all citizens
- assess how increased demand for recognition of the collective rights of Francophones and Aboriginal peoples has impacted the legislative process in Canada by applying understandings of historical events to contemporary issues
- examine the provincial, national, and global implications of immigration from multiple perspectives and make judgments regarding how legislative processes in Canada address emerging issues of immigration

Acceptable Standard

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* in Grade 9 Social Studies are able to

- know fundamental features of market and mixed economies by understanding the roles of government, consumers, and labour unions, and how the basic economic problem of scarcity is addressed by the economic systems of Canada and the United States
- consider some of the basic indicators of quality of life to analyze the impact consumerism, marketing, and social programs have upon the economies of Canada and the United States
- understand that political decisions and economic systems are interrelated in terms of how political parties, the underground economy, and environmental issues impact quality of life in Canada and the United States
- demonstrate critical and creative thinking when examining issues from differing viewpoints and/or perspectives in order to formulate a personal viewpoint
- interpret diagrams, timelines, maps, charts, and graphs to understand historical events and issues and to analyze geographic information
- exercise skills of decision making and problem solving by anticipating the impact of prospective approaches to resolving issues
- comprehend the content of media messages and recognize points of view represented

Standard of Excellence

Students who meet the *standard of excellence* in Grade 9 Social Studies are also able to

- evaluate the impact government intervention in market and mixed economies has upon citizens' quality of life by analyzing the principles and practices upon which the economic systems of Canada and the United States are based
- critically analyze the societal values that underlie individual consumer behaviour and the provision of social programs in Canada and the United States to determine how consumerism impacts citizens' quality of life
- examine key elements of political party platforms, the underground economy, and environmental concerns to assess the interrelationship between political decisions and the economic systems of Canada and the United States
- think critically and creatively when synthesizing ideas from multiple sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of diverse viewpoints and perspectives
- analyze ideas from a variety of sources to examine issues in different contexts of time and place and discover correlations and causal relationships
- utilize problem-solving and decision-making strategies to predict outcomes, explore new ideas, and evaluate choices/plans of action
- evaluate the authority and authenticity of media messages and examine the differing values, lifestyles, and points of view represented

Test Blueprint

The blueprint below identifies the reporting categories and test sections by which questions are classified and reported to schools and school authorities. The number of questions in each reporting category is approximate.

| | Knowledge and Understanding ¹ | Skills and Processes ² | Number (Percentage) of Questions |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <p>The Political and Judicial System (9.1.4, 9.1.5)³ Students examine the structure of Canada’s federal political system and analyze the role of citizens and organizations in Canada’s justice system by exploring and reflecting upon questions and issues regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how federal laws are passed • branches of the federal government • selection of MPs and Senators • accountability of MPs and Senators • the role of federal political parties • the role of media in political issues • lobby groups and government decisions • extent to which political and legislative processes meet the needs of Canadians • participation in Canada’s justice system • citizens’ legal roles and responsibilities • the Youth Criminal Justice Act | 4 (8%) | 7 (14%) | 11 (22%) |
| <p>Individual and Collective Rights (9.1.6, 9.1.7)³ Students critically assess the impact of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on legislative processes in Canada and how increased demand for recognition of collective rights has impacted legislative processes in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon questions and issues regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of individual rights • exercising individual rights • conditions in the workplace • rights and responsibilities of citizens • recognition of collective rights • the needs of Francophone minorities • the needs of Francophones in Québec • the rights of official language minorities • how the Indian Act recognizes the status and identity of Aboriginal peoples • Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 • legislation and Métis cultures and rights | 4 (8%) | 7 (14%) | 11 (22%) |
| <p>Immigration (9.1.8)³ Students critically assess how legislative processes address issues of immigration by exploring and reflecting upon questions and issues regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factors influencing immigration policies • changes to Canadian policies on immigration and refugees • immigration and Aboriginal peoples • provincial immigration policies • immigration policies in Québec • immigration policies and the Charter • how Canada benefits from immigration | 3 (6%) | 5 (10%) | 8 (16%) |
| <p>Economic Decision Making (9.2.4)³ Students analyze principles and practices of market and mixed economies by exploring and reflecting upon questions and issues regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principles of a market economy • government intervention • Canada’s mixed economy • the role of consumers in market and mixed economies • consumer individual and collective identity • the economic impact of labour unions • government intervention in the economy in Canada and in the United States • the basic economic question of scarcity | 3 (6%) | 5 (10%) | 8 (16%) |
| <p>Consumerism, Quality of Life, and Political Decision Making (9.2.5, 9.2.6)³ Students critically assess the relationship between consumerism and quality of life in Canada and the United States and the interrelationship between political decisions and economic systems by exploring and reflecting upon questions and issues regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicators of quality of life • individual consumer behaviour • how marketing affects consumerism • consumerism and quality of life • consumerism as a power of a collective • consumerism and economic growth • values underlying social programs • economic platforms of political parties • political party philosophies and platforms • the underground economy • environmental issues and quality of life | 5 (10%) | 7 (14%) | 12 (24%) |
| Number (Percentage) of Questions | 19 (38%) | 31 (62%) | 50 (100%) |

¹**Knowledge and Understanding**—includes the breadth and depth of information, concepts, evidence, ideas, and opinions fundamental to decision making as identified in the Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007).

²**Skills and Processes**—the application of critical and creative thinking, historical thinking, geographic thinking, decision making, problem solving, and media literacy to relevant situations as identified in the Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007).

³Bolded numbers in parentheses cross-reference specific outcomes in the Grade 9 Social Studies Program of Studies (2007).

Preparing Students for the Social Studies Achievement Test

Suggestions for Preparing Students

The best way to prepare students for writing the achievement test is to teach the Program of Studies well and to ensure that students know what is expected. Many of the skills and attitudes that support test writing are, in fact, effective skills and strategies for approaching all kinds of learning tasks.

Teachers are encouraged to familiarize their students with the types of questions that will appear on the test. Samples of questions are available on the Alberta Education website and at workshops conducted throughout the province by the Assessment Sector in conjunction with the Regional Professional Development Consortia.

All Sources and Questions test booklets are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education.

Beginning in 2011, released items will be posted on the Alberta Education website every second year in the fall.

Teachers are also encouraged to share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test.

Suggestions for Writing the Test

- *You may not use a dictionary, a thesaurus, or other reference materials when writing the test.*
- *Budget your time wisely.*
Recommendations are provided in the test regarding the amount of time you should spend on each segment of the test.
- *Work through the test using the strategies that work best for you.* You should either
 - read the sources and think carefully about them before you try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the sources **OR**
 - read the questions first and then read the sources, keeping in mind the questions you will need to answerEach set of multiple-choice questions is ordered according to the sequence in which the sources are presented. For example, the answer to the first question will likely deal with the first source, and so on. Questions relating to the set of sources as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.
- *Feel free to write or highlight in either of the test booklets.* Identifying key words of the questions or features of the sources in this way may help you to more easily determine an answer.
- *Consider all forms of information provided.* Information will be presented in words, charts, pictures, graphs, maps, or cartoons.

- *Take the time to review the source(s) that is/are referred to in a question.* Sources contain key details that will help you determine the correct answers to questions. It is always worthwhile to reread the source(s) referenced and to consider the meanings of the source(s) (independently and in the context of the source set as a whole).
- *When answering “best answer” questions, be sure to carefully read all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that you think is best.* These questions will always include a bold-faced qualifier such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly** in their stems. More than one of the alternatives (A, B, C, and/or D) may be, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the information into account or can be supported most strongly with reference to the information.
- *Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so.* Read all the choices and see which one best fits the answer. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious fairly quickly, you may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use your judgment to select an answer from those that remain.
- *Double-check to make sure that you have answered every multiple-choice question.*

Opportunities to Participate in Test Development Activities

Field Testing

All Achievement Testing Program test questions are field tested before use. By “testing” the test questions, students who write field tests have an opportunity for a practice run at writing questions that could be used on future achievement tests. As well, the teachers have an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness and quality of the test questions.

The [Paper Format Field Test Request Form](#) and the [Digital Format Field Test Request Form](#) to request Grade 9 Social Studies field tests are available on Alberta Education’s website in late August for the April–June administrations of field tests. Principals must consent to having their schools participate in the Field Testing Program in the upcoming school year by submitting a [Field Test Participation Consent Form](#). Complete and accurate forms may be returned to the Field Test Coordinator at field.test@gov.ab.ca.

Once the completed request forms are received by the Assessment Sector, classes will be selected to ensure that a representative and sufficiently large sample of students from across the province take part in the field test. Every effort will be made to place field tests as requested; however, because field tests are administered to a prescribed number of students, it may not be possible to fill all requests. Once the field tests are placed, a confirmation letter of test placements will be sent to designated school field test contacts and principals with memos to the teachers who will be participating in the field testing.

For further information about achievement field testing, see the [Field Testing](#) section of the *General Information Bulletin*.

Working Groups

Teacher involvement in the development of provincial achievement tests is important because it helps to ensure the validity and appropriateness of the assessments.

To be selected to participate in a working group, a teacher must be nominated by a school administrator or superintendent, and that nomination must be approved by the superintendent. To ensure that selected working-group members have appropriate subject matter training and teaching experience, nominees are asked to provide their information to their school administrator so that it can be forwarded to the Assessment Sector at Alberta Education through the superintendent.

Test Development

Teacher working groups are used throughout the test development process to create raw forms of test questions and to review and revise draft forms of provincial achievement tests. These working groups usually meet for one or two days, two or three times per year. Occasionally, these meetings are held on weekends.

To be eligible to serve on a test development working group, a teacher must currently be teaching Grade 9 Social Studies and must have a minimum of two years of experience teaching the course.

Teachers participating in test development and/or test review working groups are selected from the working-group nominees provided by superintendents of school jurisdictions.

Contacts

Achievement Testing Program

Ken Marcellus, Director
Achievement Testing Program
Ken.Marcellus@gov.ab.ca

Nicole Lamarre, Director
French Assessment
Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca

Assessment Standards Team Leaders

Deanna Wiens
Gr. 3 English Language Arts and
Mathematics
Deanna.Wiens@gov.ab.ca

Peggy Lee Peters
Gr. 3 Français/French Language Arts
PeggyLee.Peters@gov.ab.ca

Robyn Pederson
Gr. 6 English Language Arts and
Social Studies
Robyn.Pederson@gov.ab.ca

Denis Dinel
Gr. 6 and 9 Français/French Language Arts
Denis.Dinel@gov.ab.ca

Kelly Rota
Gr. 6 and 9 Mathematics
Kelly.Rota@gov.ab.ca

Sean Wells
Gr. 6 and 9 Science
Sean.Wells@gov.ab.ca

Harvey Stables
Gr. 9 English Language Arts and
Social Studies
Harvey.Stables@gov.ab.ca

Ray Shapka
Knowledge & Employability (K&E)
Ray.Shapka@gov.ab.ca

Assessment Sector

John Rymer, Executive Director
Assessment Sector
John.Rymer@gov.ab.ca

Examination Administration

Michele Samuel, Director
Examination Administration
Michele.Samuel@gov.ab.ca

Sylvia Lepine, Manager
Examination Administration & Marking Centre
exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Amanda Jackman, Coordinator
GED and Field Testing
field.test@gov.ab.ca

Pamela Klebanov, Coordinator
Special Cases and Accommodations
special.cases@gov.ab.ca

Dan Karas, Senior Manager
Digital Systems & Services
Dan.Karas@gov.ab.ca

Assessment Sector Mailing Address:

Assessment Sector, Alberta Education
44 Capital Boulevard
10044 108 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 5E6

Telephone: (780) 427-0010
Toll-free within Alberta: 310-0000
Fax: (780) 422-4200
email: LAcontact@edc.gov.ab.ca
Alberta Education website:
education.alberta.ca

