

Field Testing

Description of the Field Testing Program

Alberta Education prepares and administers field tests prior to the January and June diploma examination administration sessions. Field testing is essentially a process of “testing a test” – test questions are administered to determine their difficulty level and their appropriateness for use on a diploma examination. As well, teachers are able to provide comments about potential test questions, thereby contributing to the development of fair, valid, and reliable provincial examinations. Teachers are asked to consider the following points when commenting on specific questions and the overall test:

- appropriateness of the questions
- adequacy of writing time limits
- test length
- text readability
- artwork/graphics clarity and appropriateness
- question difficulty

Field tests may be composed of multiple-choice and/or numerical-response questions, depending on the course and type of field test being administered. Generally, field tests, like diploma examinations, are designed to assess outcomes from entire programs of study. However, some field tests that Alberta Education administers are “unit” tests that assess learning outcomes from only portions or sections of those programs of study.

Diploma examination field tests are available in paper or digital formats. They are not available in Braille or audio format and no writing accommodations (e.g., readers, scribes, extra time) are permitted to be used. Teachers are expected to provide alternate programming for any student who is unable to write a field test without writing accommodations.

All field tests are secure before, during, and after administration. **Paper** format field tests are delivered to a school and administered to students by an assigned Alberta Education field test supervisor. **Digital** format field tests are delivered and administered to students using school computers under the supervision of the teachers who requested them. Field tests of this format must be administered to students using Alberta Education’s *Quest A+* locked browser application, which is available for download at <https://questaplus.alberta.ca/help>.

Paper format field tests are administered to students in Francophone schools by field test supervisors who speak French. Every effort is made to schedule French speaking field test supervisors to administer paper format

field tests to students in French Immersion programs. However, it is not always possible to do so.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the field test administration scores and feedback, all field tests are administered to a prescribed number of students in classes that are selected to ensure a representative sample from across the province. Consequently, not all requests for field tests may be met.

Participation Requirements

For a class of students to be selected to have a field test administered at their school, the following conditions must be met:

1. Alberta Education must receive superintendent authorization to invite that authority's schools to participate in the Field Testing Program.
2. The principal must approve the administration of paper format and/or digital format field tests in that school.
3. A teacher must submit a request for a field test by the deadline.
4. A field test placement of the type specified by a teacher on a field test request application must be available for scheduling.

Field Test Security and Administration Rules

For field test results to be valid and reliable, field tests must be administered under conditions that are similar to the administration of diploma examinations. Consequently, all of the directives and rules that are specified in this bulletin for the administration of diploma examinations apply to the administration of field tests.

In addition to the directives and rules that are specified elsewhere in this bulletin, the following rules must be adhered to when field tests are administered in a school:

1. The security of all field test materials must be maintained before, during, and after their administration.
2. Paper format field tests must be administered by and remain in the custody and control of Alberta Education personnel at all times.
3. Digital format field tests must be administered by, and at all times remain under the custody and control of, the teacher whose students are writing them.
4. Immediately following a field test administration session, teachers who administer digital format field tests must submit a declaration to Alberta Education concerning the security of the testing material and its administration.

5. Teachers whose students are writing paper format field tests must be present in the examination room to verify the answer key and to review and validate test questions.
6. Prior to reviewing and validating a paper format field test, a teacher must review and sign a declaration concerning the security of the field test materials.
7. Only teachers whose students are writing a particular field test may examine its contents.
8. Validation of a field test must occur in the examination room where the field test is being administered.
9. No field test question or answer key may be copied, either by hand or mechanically, for any purpose.
10. Discussion of field test questions after their administration must be limited to a review of the concepts being assessed rather than to details of specific questions.
11. Students must be made aware of the purpose and importance of a field test prior to its administration.
12. Students who arrive late are not permitted to write a field test if there is insufficient time for them to complete it within the scheduled administration time.

Field Test Scoring

The machine scorable questions on paper format field tests will be marked by the field test supervisor; student scores will be tabulated and provided to the participating teacher before the supervisor leaves the school. Alberta Education will provide no other field test marks.

The machine scorable sections of a digital format field test will be electronically marked by Alberta Education; student scores will be emailed to the teacher who supervised its administration, once the teacher has submitted the required security declaration form to Alberta Education.

To promote an atmosphere in which students are motivated to perform well, teachers are encouraged to use the results from field tests in their assessment of individual students.

**Field Test Request
and
Administration
Dates**

In 2011–2012, Alberta Education will be administering paper and digital format field tests for diploma examination courses within the following timeframes:

Paper Format Field Test Administration Sessions		
	Session 1	Session 2
Unit Tests:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 3–December 21 • January 9–10, 16–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 29–June 11
Year End Field Tests:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 12–21 • January 9–10, 16–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 22–June 11

Digital Format Field Test Administration Sessions		
	Session 1	Session 2
Unit Tests:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 26–December 21 • January 9–10, 16–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 31–June 11
Year End Field Tests:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 12–21 • January 9–10, 16–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 22–June 11

Note: Requests for **paper** format **unit field tests** must be submitted to Alberta Education by **September 23** for Session 1 administrations and by **February 10** for Session 2 administrations.

Requests for **paper** format **year end field tests** must be submitted to Alberta Education by **October 7** for Session 1 administrations and by **February 24** for Session 2 administrations.

Requests for **digital** format **unit field tests** must be submitted two weeks prior to the preferred field test administration date.

Requests for **digital** format **year end field tests** must be submitted to Alberta Education by **December 5** for Session 1 administrations and by **May 25** for Session 2 administrations.

No unit or year end field tests will be scheduled or administered on the following days:

- October 10, 2011–Thanksgiving Day
- November 11, 2011–Remembrance Day
- December 22, 2011–January 6, 2012–Christmas
- February 20, 2012–Family Day
- April 6, 2012–Good Friday
- April 9, 2012–Easter Monday
- May 21, 2012–Victoria Day

Participation Approval and Request Process

A formal and deadline-sensitive process is used by Alberta Education to schedule and administer field test sessions in Alberta schools. That process, and school and school authority responsibilities related to it, are as follows.

1. Alberta Education seeks and receives superintendent authorization to approach schools:
 - 1.1. In late June, a letter is sent to every superintendent, by the Director, Exam Administration, requesting authorization to invite their schools to participate in the Field Testing Program in the upcoming school year.
 - 1.2. Superintendents indicate their authorization by replying to that letter.
2. Alberta Education seeks and receives principal approval to field test in their schools:
 - 2.1. In late July, a letter is sent by the Coordinator, GED & Field Testing, to every principal whose superintendent has authorized field testing in that school authority. This letter invites principals to consent to having their schools participate in the Field Testing Program in the upcoming school year.
 - 2.2. Principals express their willingness to have their schools participate in the Field Testing Program by submitting a *Field Test Participation Consent* form (see *Examination Administration Forms* section). Through this expression of consent to participate, a principal authorizes Alberta Education to accept field test requests from that school and, if classes from that school are subsequently selected to write paper format field tests, to enter the school to administer them. On this form, principals are also given the option to approve the administration of digital format field tests using school computers.
 - 2.3. Principals who have approved the participation of their schools in the Field Testing Program are expected to communicate that decision to their staff and to designate an individual whose responsibility it will be to work with Alberta Education to coordinate that process within the school. Contact information for the individual who is designated to coordinate field testing in that school is provided to Alberta Education on the returned *Field Test Participation Consent* form.
3. Schools submit field test requests:
 - 3.1. Field test administrations are set up and scheduled based on information gathered from school personnel about students' availability to write field tests. This information is collected from

schools using the *Paper Format Field Test Request Form* and/or the *Digital Format Field Test Request Form* (see *Examination Administration Forms* section). These forms must be completed using a **current** *Field Test Request Guide*. All of these documents are available on Alberta Education's website at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/forms.aspx>.

- 3.2. Two field test sessions are run within each school year, October/January (Session 1) and March/June (Session 2). Schools must submit separate *Field Test Request Forms* for each of these field test sessions. Only schools whose students will be writing a diploma examination in a given session are eligible to apply for field tests during that session.
- 3.3. To request **digital** format field tests, the teacher whose students will be writing the field tests must submit a *Digital Format Field Test Request Form*, by email, to Alberta Education.
- 3.4. Requests for **paper** format field tests must be submitted to Alberta Education, by email, using the *Paper Format Field Test Request Form*. Alberta Education prefers to receive **one** paper format field test request submission per school within a given term or semester i.e., all teacher requests for field tests should be submitted on one request form.

NOTE: Only field test request forms that are **fully and accurately completed** and **received by the submission deadline**, will be processed by Alberta Education (see *Significant Dates* below).

4. Alberta Education schedules field test placements:
 - 4.1. Submitted field test request forms are reviewed to ensure that they are from schools where field test participation has been approved.
 - 4.2. The individual field test requests included on a request form are reviewed to determine if they match the requirements of any available field test administrations; where a match is found, a field test placement is scheduled.
 - 4.3. If Alberta Education receives more requests for field tests than it has placements, future requests from those schools or classes that were not selected to participate in the current session will be selected first in the next field test session.
5. Alberta Education communicates and confirms field test placements:
 - 5.1. Once the scheduling of **paper** format field test placements is complete, Alberta Education sends a follow-up letter to designated school contacts who submitted paper format field test requests on behalf of the teachers at their school. This letter communicates the status of all field test requests from that school, including details of

all field test administrations that are scheduled to take place. Also included in the letter is a packet of information to be distributed to teachers whose students have been selected to write field tests in that session.

5.2. When a **digital** format field test placement is complete, Alberta Education sends a follow-up email to the teacher who placed the request and who will be supervising its administration. This email communicates the information the teacher requires to access and administer the digital format field test.

5.3. Prior to each scheduled **paper** format field test administration, a field test supervisor from Alberta Education will contact the teacher whose students will be writing to confirm administrative details (e.g., date, time, and location of the test administration; number of students being tested).

Significant Dates

June 30, 2011	Alberta Education sends a letter to superintendents requesting authorization to invite their schools to participate in the Field Testing Program in 2011–2012.
July 4, 2011	Alberta Education sends a letter to principals inviting them to consent to having their schools participate in the Field Testing Program in 2011–2012.
August 12, 2011	Deadline for superintendents to provide approval for Alberta Education to invite their schools to participate in the Field Testing Program
August 1, 2011– February 24, 2012	Time period during which principals may submit a <i>Field Test Participation Consent</i> form. Note: Field test request forms submitted by a school will only be processed by Alberta Education if the principal has approved that school’s participation.
August 31, 2011	First day participating schools may submit Session 1 Paper Format and <i>Digital Format</i> field test request forms. Note: Requests for digital format unit and year end tests must be submitted two weeks prior to the preferred field test administration date.
September 16, 2011	Last day for participating schools to submit Session 1 Paper Format Field Test Request Forms for unit field tests. Note: Session 1 Paper Format <i>Field Test Request Forms</i> received after September 16 will not be processed.
October 7, 2011	Last day for participating schools to submit Session 1 Paper Format Field Test Request Forms for year end field tests.

Note: Session 1 Paper Format *Field Test Request Forms* received after **October 7** will **not** be processed.

- August 31, 2011 First day participating schools may submit **Session 2 Paper Format Field Test Request Forms**.
Note: Requests for digital format unit and year end tests must be submitted two weeks prior to the preferred field test administration date.
- February 10, 2012 Last day for participating schools to submit **Session 2 Paper Format Field Test Request Forms** for **unit** field tests.
Note: Session 2 *Field Test Request Forms* received after February 10 will **not** be processed.
- February 24, 2012 Last day for participating schools to submit **Session 2 Paper Format Field Test Request Forms** for **year end** field tests.
Note: Session 2 *Field Test Request Forms* received after February 24 will **not** be processed.
- June 29, 2012 Alberta Education sends a letter to superintendents requesting authorization to invite their schools to participate in the Field Testing Program in 2012–2013.
- July 27, 2012 Alberta Education sends a letter to principals inviting them to consent to having their schools participate in the Field Testing Program in 2012–2013.
- August 17, 2012 Deadline for superintendents to provide approval for Alberta Education to invite their schools to participate in the Field Testing Program