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Policies and Procedures for Standards Tests

2006–2007

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The *Policies and Procedures for Standards Tests (2006–2007)* is one of a three-part series of documents:

- *Policies and Procedures for Standards Tests (2006–2007)*
- Information bulletins
- Administration manuals for supervising teachers

These documents prepare teachers and administrators for the administration of the Grade 12 standards tests. Please use this document in conjunction with the registration package and other documents in the series to gain a full understanding of the procedures associated with the testing program at Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Policies and procedures for standards tests contains information related to the administration of standards tests that school personnel are required to follow. This document and related documents are also available at: <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/publications.html>.

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1.0 Introduction

This document outlines the current policies and procedures related to the administration of the provincial standards tests at Grade 12. These policies and procedures reflect the principles and guidelines contained in *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (1993) and help to ensure that tests are

- Valid | The content of the assessments is consistent with the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn according to the student learning outcomes set out in the provincial curriculum documents.
- Reliable | The assessments used to collect information about student performance and the strategies used to evaluate student responses for a particular grade and subject area are applied consistently. Tests are constructed to reflect consistency in content, form, and standards.
- Fair | All students are given an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do as part of the assessment process. Adaptations to test materials and administration procedures are available for students, including students with learning or physical disabilities, to allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, provided the adaptations do not jeopardize the integrity or content of the test. Every reasonable effort is made to develop and administer tests that are free from bias related to gender, culture, and other characteristics that are extraneous to the purpose of assessment.

Provincial standards tests are developed and administered in collaboration with classroom teachers who are knowledgeable and experienced in teaching the subject and grade level being tested.

2.0 Standards Tests

2.1 Purpose of Standards Tests

Standards tests are intended to provide pertinent information about each student's knowledge and skills in relation to student learning outcomes as set out in provincial curriculum documents.

To provide students with an accurate, balanced, and well-rounded profile of their progress and achievement, standards tests complement a variety of classroom assessments. These assessments may include teacher observations, writing samples, exhibitions, portfolio assessments, and demonstrations.

2.2 Local Marking of Standards Tests

Standards tests are locally marked and individual student results are reported locally. Each jurisdiction nominates one or more local marking coordinator to oversee the marking process. The local marking coordinators receive training and support from Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth in procedures related to marking and reporting of results. The Department provides \$10 to funded independent schools and school divisions for each test that is locally marked and for which all materials have been submitted to the Department on time. The purpose of the \$10 is to compensate teachers and/or provide release time for marking standards tests. This funding goes to the school division or funded independent school in which the student is enrolled.

The Department provides local marking coordinators with a marking guide containing answer keys, scoring rubrics, and exemplars of scored responses. This package assists local marking coordinators with the training of local markers and serves as a guide for local marking sessions.

3.0 Eligibility and Requirement to Write Standards Tests

3.1 Students Required to Write Standards Tests

Provincial standards tests in Grade 12 mathematics and language arts (English language arts, *Français langue première*, and *Français langue seconde*) are mandatory for students in the English, Français, and French Immersion programs who are enrolled in the applicable 40S courses only.

The schedule for the administration of Grade 12 standards tests is published annually and distributed to schools. These tests count for 30% of each student's final grade and are locally marked. Schools are to ensure that courses are scheduled such that students can write standards tests on the prescribed dates. All mandatory standards tests are written in the designated language of instruction for that course or subject area. Tests must be administered at the prescribed time and in accordance with administration procedures to be recognized as standards tests.

For information regarding rewriting standards tests, see Section 3.3.

Standards tests in the subject areas being assessed shall be administered to students enrolled in

- public schools and funded independent schools
- institutional programs
- alternative education centres or continuing education programs
- a school who are studying through a web-based course or other alternate delivery method. (Students wishing to write a test off-site in the presence of the instructor may do so—see Section 8.0, Alternate Writing Site.)
- a school as exchange students seeking Manitoba Grade 12 credits for official transcript purposes

Normally, students are registered to write standards tests by the enrolling school regardless of the course delivery method used.

Students attending adult learning centres (ALCs) are guided by policy related to their student status and graduation requirements regarding participation in standards tests. In the fall and winter of each school year, the Department will contact registered ALCs to determine which ALC sites will be participating in standards tests. If participating, all normal policies and procedures with respect to formal participation in standards tests apply. The ALC will receive a registration package, and the education director of each centre will be responsible for registering students for standards tests. However, students should be registered only when the test administration criteria set out in this manual can be met (see Section 5.0, Exemptions from Standards Tests).

Students who are not required but are eligible to write a standards test (see Section 3.2) may choose to participate formally. Such students must be registered to write the standards test by the enrolling school and participate according to normal procedures, including having a MET number.

Students not seeking a Manitoba credit in a classroom where the standards test is being written, such as an exchange student, may participate informally using extra test materials normally provided to schools. No marks are submitted to the Department in this case.

All students seeking Manitoba credits in the subjects to which standards apply must meet all course requirements, including participating in standards tests. Exceptions are stated in Section 3.2.

3.2 Students Not Required and Not Eligible to Write Standards Tests

Standards tests are not applicable to mathematics and language arts courses in the Senior Years Technology Education Program, and not applicable to “M”-designated and “E”-designated (i.e., 40M, 40E) courses.

Students in the following circumstances are not required to write standards tests:

- exchange students not seeking Manitoba Grade 12 credits
- home school and Independent Study Option (ISO or “distance education”) students not enrolled in the course in a school (If opting to write, arrangements must be made through a public or funded independent school to register for and write a test; the Department will be including these students’ results with school and school division reports.)
- band-operated and non-funded independent school students not seeking Manitoba Grade 12 credits

3.3 Rewriting a Standards Test

A student may rewrite a standards test at any future administration of the test after course requirements have been fulfilled, whether currently enrolled in the course or not. This provision also applies to students who missed writing the standards test (e.g., due to illness) and wish to have a standards test result on record (see Section 6.0). Normal test registration procedures should be followed (there is no cost).

When a student rewrites a standards test, the test mark replaces any previous test mark. Therefore, there is only one standards test mark for each student in each subject, and the test mark is applied to one course only. Note that a student retaking a course is not required to rewrite the associated standards test. The final grade must include the standards test mark weighted at 30%, whether the test is rewritten or not. There is no limit to the number of times a student may rewrite a standards test.

3.4 English Language Arts

English Program

Students enrolled in any of the following Grade 12 English language arts courses are required to write the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test (one test common to the three courses), including students for whom the course is being adapted (e.g., EAL students):

- Transactional Focus (40S)
- Literary Focus (40S)
- Comprehensive Focus (40S)

For students enrolled in more than one of these courses, the standards test is written once and the standards test mark is applied to only one course.

Français and French Immersion Programs

Students enrolled in Français and French Immersion programs may choose to write the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test in addition to the required tests.

3.5 Français

Français Program

Students enrolled in the *Français langue première 40S : Langue et communication* course are required to write the respective standards test. The English Language Arts Standards Test is optional for students in the Français program (see Section 3.4).

French Immersion Program

Students enrolled in the *Français langue seconde — immersion 40S : Langue et communication* course are required to write the respective standards test. The English Language Arts Standards Test is optional for students in the French Immersion program (see Section 3.4).

3.6 Mathematics

Students enrolled in any of the following Grade 12 mathematics courses are required to write the standards test associated with the course (a separate test for each course), including students for whom the course is being adapted (e.g., EAL students):

- Applied Mathematics (40S)
- Consumer Mathematics (40S)—note that students registered in Consumer Mathematics (45A) or (45B) are not eligible to write the standards test
- Pre-Calculus Mathematics (40S)

4.0 Adaptations to Standards Tests

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is committed to equity of opportunity and fairness to students. Every reasonable effort is made to enable students to demonstrate learning in relation to the student learning outcomes set out in the curriculum documents in the course or subject area that is being tested.

Students may be granted one or more of the following adaptations, provided the adaptations do not affect the validity of the test:

- use of a computer or Braille writing device
- specially printed assessment instruments (e.g., large-print and Braille versions of the test)
- additional writing time
- supervised breaks
- alternative settings outside the classroom (with continuous supervision)
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- reading aloud
- use of a bilingual dictionary (mathematics only)
- other subject-specific adaptations as approved by the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation)

Wherever possible, certified American Sign Language interpreters should be used to assist students who rely upon ASL as a primary means of communication.

Adaptations that jeopardize the integrity or the validity of a test are not allowed. Marking procedures, evaluation criteria, and achievement standards are the same for students who receive adaptations as for other students. In cases of vision impairment and the use of a scribe, further information is available in documents specific to the particular test, including information bulletins available in all schools and on the web (see the inside of the cover page of this document for the website address).

Unless specifically stated otherwise, access to the Internet, including email, is prohibited when the use of a computer is allowed as an adaptation.

4.1 Procedures for Requesting Adaptations

Adaptations must be approved by the Department prior to the administration of the standards test.

Adaptation requests must be made separately for each standards test and should parallel, as much as possible, any classroom or school adaptations that are used on an ongoing basis to assist the student during assessment and evaluation activities. The requested adaptations must not jeopardize the validity of the test or create inequities in test administration procedures.

Any request on behalf of a student for an adaptation should be made with the full knowledge and signed consent of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student if she or he has reached the age of majority. Requests are treated confidentially.

Requests for adaptations to standards tests are made by completing the *Request for Adaptations Form* at the time of student registration for a specific standards test. These forms are included in the registration packages sent by the Department. The form requests the student's name, student MET number, the program (Français, French Immersion, or English), the reason(s) the adaptation is necessary (e.g., auditory or visual impairment), and the code for the specific adaptation sought. Adaptation codes with full explanations are provided with the student registration package for each test.

An adaptation may be requested or revised after the registration process, should circumstances change.

4.2 Approval for Adaptations

The completed *Request for Adaptations Form* is sent to the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or to the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation) for review and approval. The results of the departmental review, including any modifications and any implications regarding the marking of the test, are communicated to schools prior to the administration of the test.

5.0 Exemptions from Standards Tests

Decisions regarding exemptions are made at the school level based on departmental guidelines, and generally do not require departmental approval.

5.1 Exemption Categories

The following categories are intended to assist teachers in determining which students may qualify for being exempted from writing standards tests:

- emotional or psychological condition or circumstance
- substantial adaptations to curriculum/grade level material required for *phase d'accueil—bloc intensif* designation students (Français program only)
- other subject-specific exemptions based on special needs (e.g., auditory impairment, visual impairment, physical disabilities for which an adaptation is not available)

In the event that an exemption is being considered that does not fall within the existing exemption policy, school personnel must write to the coordinator in the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or the coordinator of the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation) with details of the exemption request.

Exemptions may not be granted for reasons of cognitive disability or low levels of knowledge or skill in the course.

5.2 Disrupted Test Administration

If a test session is interrupted (e.g., due to a fire alarm) such that students have an opportunity to discuss test content in a manner that compromises test validity, the students involved should be exempted and the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation) should be notified.

5.3 Determining a Final Grade for Exempted Students

Once an exemption is granted by the school, it is the school's responsibility to use a variety of assessment methods to evaluate the student and assign a final grade. The student's report card must indicate that there is "no mark" for the standards test.

5.4 Guidelines for Providing Exemptions

Any decision to exempt a student should be made with the full knowledge and signed consent of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student if the student has reached the age of majority.

Exemptions must be determined on an individual student basis and as a collaborative decision involving the teacher, principal, student, and parent(s)/guardian(s).

Decisions regarding exemptions need to be made for each specific standards test.

Exemptions will not normally be granted after test administration, and may not be granted based on poor performance alone.

Documentation regarding exemptions should be kept in students' cumulative files and should be available to the Department upon request.

The reason for exempting a student from writing a standards test remains confidential.

The names of students receiving exemptions and the reasons for granting the exemptions are provided to the Department by completing the *Student Exemption Report* at the time of student registration for standards tests. The Department reserves the right to investigate exemptions. Any changes to a student's exemption status must

be documented in writing, using either the *Update Form: Students Without a Preprinted Demographic Data Form*, the student's preprinted *Demographic Data Form* (if available) provided with the test materials, or a letter to the coordinator in the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or to the coordinator of the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation).

6.0 Missed Standards Tests

6.1 Student Absences

Students who are absent on the day(s) of a standards test (or who are unable to complete the test) due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., sudden illness, death in the family, family crisis, incapacity resulting from an accident, irreconcilable scheduling conflicts) are governed by school or school division policy concerning student absences during final tests (e.g., requirement for a physician's note explaining illness). Reasons for absences are documented on the *Update Form: Students Without a Preprinted Demographic Data Form* or the preprinted *Demographic Data Form* provided with the test materials.

Since standards tests cannot be rescheduled and counted as a standards test, schools will have the responsibility of providing a final grade to students for whom the school has granted an excused absence. Schools will be responsible for indicating that the final mark reflects school-based assessment and evaluation practices only, and for indicating that there is "no mark" on these students' report cards for the standards test (see Section 3.3 regarding rewriting standards tests).

Students who formally refuse to write a standards test (by their own or by parental choice) or who are absent without a legitimate reason will receive a mark of 0% on the test. In addition to absences that are unexcused, this includes students who arrive too late to write without a valid reason, and students who are suspended. See the test-specific administration manual for further information.

6.2 Severe Weather/School Closures/Buses Not Running

Students are excused from a standards test and assigned a school-based mark for a course when they are unable to write a standards test on the scheduled date and time due to

- school closures
- school buses not running as a result of inclement weather
- other unforeseen circumstances

"No mark" should be indicated on these students' report cards for the standards test.

In such an event, advise the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation) of the circumstances in writing.

Note that students who miss a standards test may write one in a future administration period. See Section 3.3 of this document regarding rewriting standards tests.

7.0 Late Arrivals

Unless otherwise stipulated in the *Administration Manual for Supervising Teachers*, the following procedures apply to late arrivals:

- Students who arrive after the halfway point of any test session are not permitted to write and are considered absent unless otherwise stipulated in the administration manual for the test (see Section 6.1, Student Absences).
- A student who arrives late but within the first half of a test is allowed to write that test. In this case, the supervising teacher may allow the student additional time corresponding to the amount by which the student was late, if she or he feels this is appropriate given the particular circumstances.

8.0 Alternate Writing Sites

Students who are required to be away from their regular school site or outside Manitoba to participate in a special provincial, national, or international event (e.g., educational, cultural) during the administration of a standards test may be permitted to write the test at an alternate site. This also applies to students whose teachers are off-site, such as those receiving web-based instruction, who are wishing to write the standards test in the presence of the instructor.

When an alternate writing site is being considered, requests are made in writing to the coordinator in the Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment Branch or to the coordinator of the Direction des services de soutien en éducation (Section Évaluation) **no later than eight weeks prior to the test administration date**. In most cases, the Department covers the costs of sending test materials to and from alternate writing sites. In cases where costs for alternate testing sites are considered excessive, school jurisdictions may be asked to reimburse the Department.

Principals of schools in which such students are enrolled are responsible for

- making all the necessary arrangements to ensure that the standards test is written during the scheduled time period under the prescribed conditions
- identifying an alternate writing site (educational institution) when necessary
- receiving approval from the site manager at the alternate writing site (e.g., principal)
- identifying and arranging for appropriate supervision (e.g., classroom teacher, principal)
- requesting departmental approval in writing that includes documentation indicating that the test supervisor is prepared to administer the test under the prescribed conditions

9.0 Reporting Standards Test Results

Standards tests in Grade 12 count for 30% of the student's final grade.

It is the responsibility of schools in which the students are enrolled (regardless of course delivery method) to mark the tests and to report individual student results on provincial standards tests separately from term marks when showing final grades on report cards and in school files. Standards test results are based on local marking of the tests. Note that cheating and plagiarism should be reported to the Department and result in a standards test mark of 0%.

Local jurisdictions submit all completed scoring sheets to the Department, which provides data capture services and divisional and school reports to school division superintendents and independent school principals. Reports are typically delivered within three months of test administration. Results pertaining to ALC students are separated from results for students in regular programs, but are included in divisional summary information as appropriate.

With the exception of Consumer Mathematics (40S), the Department will prepare a report for each jurisdiction based on the re-marking of a sample of test booklets at the Department. This report will contain information regarding the degree of agreement between marks allocated locally and those awarded from central marking of the sample.

10.0 Standards Test Reread Policy

As the reporting of individual student scores on locally marked standards tests is the responsibility of each local jurisdiction, the reread policy for these tests is determined locally. All decisions regarding standards test marks reported to students, including, for example, those related to cheating and plagiarism, are the responsibility of the school or school division. Should a reread be requested for a test booklet that has been sent to the Department as a part of the sample for the feedback on the marking process, the Department will return a photocopy of the test booklet upon request.

11.0 Return of Standards Tests to Students

Whether test booklets are retained by school divisions or returned to students is a matter to be addressed and determined by the records management policy of individual school boards. For further information concerning the recommended records retention schedule, please consult the *Guidelines on the Retention and Disposition of School Division/District Records* available on the Department website at: <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/retention/retention.pdf>.

The test booklets sent to the Department as a part of the sample for the feedback on the marking process will be returned to school divisions within three months of test administration. Returned booklets are devoid of grades, marks, and comments to ensure an unbiased marking/reread process.



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