The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions

Support for Students with Special Education Needs and ESL or ELD Learners

OSSLT, 2006–2007 school year
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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 students enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) and English literacy development (ELD) courses, deferrals and exemptions. It also clarifies the expectations for documentation.

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

- Policy/Program Memorandum 127 (PPM 127)
- Individual Education Plans: Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation

Definitions

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

“Accommodations” are supports and services that enable students with special 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 of the test for students in ESL or ELD programs. These provisions do not affect the validity or reliability of test results.

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

Organization of Sections

The headings “The Student,” “Decision Making,” “Required Documentation” and “Notes” are used for each of the following topics:

- accommodations for students with special education needs (Section A)
- accommodations for students with special circumstances (Section D)
- other accommodations (not covered elsewhere in this guide) (Section E)
- special provisions for ESL or ELD learners (Section F)
- deferrals (Section G)
- exemptions (Section H)

Information on scribes and prompters, special versions and the process for submitting student responses to special versions is also included in this document.

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 documented according to the instructions in this guide. Sample letters to parents are available on the secure portion of the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.
### 1. The Student

The student has an IEP that outlines the accommodations made during regular classroom testing practices used for the student.

### 2. Decision Making

Permit only accommodations listed in the right column that are on the student’s IEP and that the student regularly receives when doing tests.

**Decide on the accommodations**
- based on the student’s IEP,
- prior to the test,
- for each student individually and
- in consultation with the student and parents or the adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff.

### 3. Accommodations

**Applicable to Both the Reading and the Writing Sections**

- **a) Setting** *(adjustment 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

- **b) Timing** *(adjustment to the time allotted for the test)*
  - additional time, to a maximum of double the time allotted
  - periodic supervised breaks

- **c) Presentation Format** *(adjustment to the format of the test)*
  - sign language or an oral interpreter*
  - Braille version
  - large-print version (no Student Answer Sheet)
  - coloured-paper version
  - large-print coloured-paper version (no Student Answer Sheet)
  - audio version (CD or tape)
  - assistive devices and technology (e.g., text-to-speech software or augmentative or alternative communication systems)

- **d) Response Format** *(adjustment to the format of the responses)*
  - use of a computer or word processor (with spell checker)
  - audiotaping of responses (for later transcription)
  - assistive devices and technology (e.g., a speech synthesizer, a Brailier, speech-to-text software or augmentative or alternative communication systems)
  - verbatim scribing of responses

* 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 assigned tasks.
Applicable to the Writing Sections Only

Presentation Format
• verbatim reading of the writing question prompts (including the topic and accompanying materials)

Applicable to the Reading Sections Only

Response Format
• videotaping of signed responses (for later transcription)

4. Required Documentation
• Student Information Form (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

Keep all documentation on file.

Notes
• The student must complete the assigned booklets by the end of the administration day.
• 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.
• The time allowed for reading instructions, for the break and for the questionnaire is not considered part of the time allotted for the student to complete the test.
# B: Scribes and Prompters

## Definition
A scribe or a prompter is someone who supports the accommodations the student receives. Scribes and prompters must not be relatives of the students they are assisting.

## Guidelines

**The scribe or prompter must**
- follow the guidelines in this guide, including the requirement to report child abuse;
- 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.”

### 1. Scribes
The role of the scribe is to write, type or word-process the student’s dictated answers.

**Scribes are allowed to**
- write by hand, or use a typewriter or computer, to record the student’s answers exactly as they are dictated;
- fill in the circles on the student’s Student Answer Sheet;
- (for large-print only) circle the student’s responses to multiple-choice questions in the booklets and
- read back what has been recorded, at the student’s request.

**Scribes are not allowed to**
- assist the student in formulating answers to the questions,
- give any assistance or suggestions related to the content of the test or
- give advice related to the order of the questions or the time to be spent on them.

### 2. Prompters
A prompter is allowed for students with severe attention difficulties if supervised breaks will not adequately accommodate the student’s needs.

**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.
Under no circumstances may special versions be photocopied for use by other students. If a shortage is discovered the day of the administration, please call EQAO at 1-888-327-7377.

### 1. Available Special Versions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncontracted Braille plus a set of regular-print booklets for the scribe’s use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracted Braille plus a set of regular-print booklets for the scribe’s use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-print booklets—white paper (no Student Answer Sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-print booklets—blue, green or yellow paper (no Student Answer Sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular-print booklets—blue, green or yellow paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One single-sided hard copy to be scanned for use with assistive devices and technology resources such as text-to-speech software, plus the required sets of regular-print student booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio CD plus a set of regular-print booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio CD plus a set of large-print student booklets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio tape plus a set of regular-print booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio tape plus a set of large-print student booklets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Submitting Student Responses to Special Versions

After the test has been completed, handle the different student response formats according to the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response format</th>
<th>Special instructions</th>
<th>What to return to EQAO and how</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Computer responses    | • Type the student’s name and full 22-digit 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.  
                        |                                                                                       | • Return the booklets and the Student Answer Sheet with the other test materials. |
| Audiotaped responses  | • Clearly state the full 22-digit ID number at the beginning of each taping session.  
                        | • Clearly print the full 22-digit ID number on each audio tape.                        | • Place the student’s audio tapes with the student’s regular-print or large-print booklets inside the Issues Envelope. |
| Braille responses     | • Clearly print the full 22-digit ID number at the top of each response page.        | • Place the student’s regular-print booklets inside the front cover of the corresponding Braille booklets.  
                        | • Staple the student’s Braille responses to the inside front cover of the student’s regular-print booklets. | • Return the materials in the Issues Envelope. |
| Braille transcriptions| • Handwritten transcriptions should be made directly in the corresponding booklets.  
                        | • For word-processed transcriptions, follow the procedures outlined in “Computer responses” listed above.  
                        | • Complete the Student Answer Sheet.                                                   | • Place the student’s regular-print booklets inside the front cover of the corresponding Braille booklets.  
                        |                                                                                       | • Return the materials with the other test materials.                                |
| Videotaped responses  | • Clearly state the full 22-digit ID number at the beginning of each taping session.  
<pre><code>                    | • Clearly print the full 22-digit ID number on the outside of each videotape.           | • Place the student’s video tapes with the student’s regular-print booklets inside the Issues Envelope. |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response format</th>
<th>Special instructions</th>
<th>What to return to EQAO and how</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scribed responses</td>
<td>• Responses scribed by hand should be written directly in the corresponding booklets.</td>
<td>• Return the booklets and Student Answer Sheet with the other test materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For multiple-choice questions, complete the Student Answer Sheet, or if large-print</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>booklets were used, circle responses in the booklets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For word-processed or typewriter scribing, follow the procedures outlined in “Computer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responses” on the previous page.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Single-sided</td>
<td>• Type the student’s name and full 22-digit ID number in the header of each page of the</td>
<td>• Return the student’s responses and the student’s regular-print booklets with the other test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard-copy responses</td>
<td>document.</td>
<td>materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete the Student Answer Sheet.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-print versions</td>
<td>• Large-print booklets do not have a Student Answer Sheet. Students circle multiple-</td>
<td>• Return the booklets with the other test materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>choice responses in the booklets.</td>
<td></td>
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### D: Accommodations for Students with Special Circumstances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The Student</th>
<th>3. Permitted Accommodations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students with a Temporary Condition</strong>&lt;br&gt;The student would not normally require accommodations but has a temporary condition (e.g., a hand injury) that prevents him or her from writing or using a keyboard.</td>
<td>The principal may grant permission for accommodations according to the section “Accommodations for Students with Special Education Needs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students New to the School</strong>&lt;br&gt;The student has transferred into the school from another school, school board, province or country shortly before the test, and there is no time to develop an IEP. There is documentation to show that accommodations are necessary.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>2. Decision Making</th>
<th>4. Required Documentation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Decide on the accommodations</em>&lt;br&gt;• prior to the test,&lt;br&gt;• for each student individually and&lt;br&gt;• in consultation with the student and parents or the adult student, and with the appropriate teaching staff.</td>
<td><em>Student Information Form (in the SDC system)</em>&lt;br&gt;– Under “Special Permission,” indicate that the student has the principal’s permission for accommodations due to a temporary injury or condition or recent arrival from another school.&lt;br&gt;– Indicate the accommodations provided.&lt;br&gt;<em>an information letter from the principal to the parent(s) or adult student</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Keep all documentation on file.**

**Notes**

• Consider a deferral if it is determined that the student will not be able to participate in the test, even with accommodations.<br>• If the adult student or parents disagree with the principal’s decision, they may appeal to the appropriate supervisory officer for a final decision.
1. The Student

An adult student or a student’s parents request an accommodation that is not listed in this guide (e.g., more than double the time allotted for the test).

2. Decision Making

*Decide on the accommodations*
- prior to the test and
- for each student individually.

Submit to the Chief Assessment Officer (CAO)
- 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).

3. Permitted Accommodations

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.

4. Required Documentation

- Student Information Form (in the SDC system)
- written approval for the accommodation from the CAO

*Keep all documentation on file.*

**Notes**
- The student must complete the test by the end of the administration day.
- 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.
- The decision of the CAO is final.
- Refer to PPM 127.
F: Special Provisions for ESL or ELD Learners

1. The Student

The student
• is enrolled in an ESL or ELD course at Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 or ESL Level 5 (Bridge to English) or
• would qualify for ESL or ELD courses if they were offered at the school.

2. 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.


a) Setting (adjustment to the environment in which the test is written)
   • an individual or small-group setting or an individual study carrel

b) Timing (adjustment to the time allotted for the test)
   • additional time to a maximum of double the time
   • periodic supervised breaks

4. Required Documentation

• Student Information Form (in the SDC system)
• an information letter from the principal to the parent(s) outlining the special provisions approved

Keep all documentation on file.

Notes
• Do not provide special provisions to students who have completed ESL/ELD Level 5 (Bridge to English).
• The student must complete the test by the end of the administration day.
• The time allowed for reading instructions, for the break and for the questionnaire is not considered part of the time allotted for the student to complete the test.
• ESL or ELD learners who have special education needs and have an IEP are also entitled to accommodations in accordance with the section “Accommodations for Students with Special Education Needs.”
1. 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 registered in an ESL or ELD course at Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 or ESL Level 5 (Bridge to English) 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 board and appropriate accommodations cannot be provided.

2. 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.

3. Required Documentation

- Student Information Form (in the SDC system)

Keep all documentation on file.

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.
1. The Student

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

2. Decision Making

Decide on an exemption

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

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.

3. Required Documentation

- Student Information Form (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 parents 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 (OSR).

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.