

## *Benefits of Field Testing*

### **How do Field Tests Benefit Teachers and Students?**

Teachers receive each student's marks promptly, gaining useful, immediate information about their students' levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Students also benefit from writing a test that is similar to the experience of writing a diploma exam. Field tests provide students and teachers with good examples of the style and content of items that may appear on diploma exams. Finally, because of field testing, students, teachers and parents can be reassured that the items on diploma exams have undergone a rigorous process of development, improvement and validation.

### **Why is Field Testing Necessary?**

Field testing is an essential stage in the development of valid and reliable provincial assessments. Field testing is essentially the process of *testing a test* and testing the items before they become part of a diploma exam. Potential diploma exam items are administered to students in diploma courses throughout the province to determine their level of difficulty and appropriateness. Each field test requires a large student sample to provide the diploma exam developers with reliable information including, but not limited to, statistical data and comments from teachers and students.

### **How is Field Test Data Used? Validity and Reliability**

The data received from field tests indicates the reliability of each item. Reliability refers to the consistency of scores provided by an assessment within an administration and across administrations. An item has high reliability if it produces similar results under consistent conditions. Items are also examined for validity and appropriateness with regard to course content. Validity refers to how well the evidence and theory support the interpretation of assessment scores for a given use of the assessment.

To ensure the reliability of the field test administration scores and feedback, field tests are administered to a prescribed number of students in classes that are selected to ensure a representative sample from across the province.

Other items, or sets of items, which do not perform as well as required are subject to revision and are retested with the objective of generating items that meet Alberta Education standards. These changes are influenced by the written comments of students and teachers, who provide valuable advice about the appropriateness of the items, adequacy of writing time limits, test length, text readability, artwork/graphics clarity and suitability, and item difficulty.

## *Field Testing*

### **Description of the Field Testing Program**

Alberta Education prepares and administers field tests prior to the January and June diploma exam administrations.

Teachers and students are to consider the following points when commenting on individual items and the overall field test:

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

Depending on the diploma course and type of field test being administered, the field test will be comprised of multiple-choice and/or numerical-response items.

Generally, field tests, like diploma exams, are designed to assess outcomes from the entire programs of study. However, Alberta Education also administers *unit* tests which assess learning outcomes from components within the programs of study.

Diploma exam program field tests are available in some or all formats: paper, digital, or hybrid formats.

**Paper format:** field tests are shipped to, and administered by, an Alberta Education field test supervisor. The humanities diploma courses are available in paper format field tests.

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.

**Digital format:** field tests are delivered to, and administered by, students using computers under the supervision of the teacher who requested the field test. 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:

<http://questaplus.alberta.ca/help/requirements.html>. The humanities, mathematics and all science diploma courses are available in digital format field tests.

**Hybrid format:** field test source materials are shipped to the school and the items are accessed using computers under the supervision of the teacher who requested the field test. Prior to the hybrid format field test

administration, the paper-format source materials must remain secured at the school by the school principal. Teachers may peruse the hybrid field tests for up to 24 hours after the administration. Immediately following the perusal period, **teachers must return the paper-format source materials to Alberta Education.** The humanities, mathematics and all science diploma courses are available in hybrid format field tests.

**Field Test  
Accommodations**

Humanities, mathematics and all science field tests are not available in special formats. Writing accommodations such as reader or scribe may be permitted.

Field tests are to be completed within the scheduled timeframe; it is important for teachers and Alberta Education to obtain information regarding appropriate test lengths which are captured by the field test completion rate. The genuine information captured in relation to students who complete the field test in the allotted time is invaluable and informative the creation of strong and reliable field tests.

It is best if all students complete the field test. If class time permits and students need more time, the writing time may be extended by 15 minutes. However, students who are unable to complete the entire field tests are not to be penalized and raw scores may be prorated. Teachers may create a mark for the student out of the number of questions completed and not the entire field test. Students should not be instructed to guess the remaining answers on the field test as this does not represent genuine authentic data of student ability.

**Participation  
Requirements**

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

1. The teacher must submit a request for a field test by the deadline. Field test requests can be submitted through an online request system: <http://public.education.alberta.ca/FieldTestScheduler> or by using the following form: <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/forms/>
2. A field test placement of the type specified by the teacher 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 exams. Consequently, all of the directives and rules that are specified in this bulletin for the administration of diploma exams 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, the Alberta Education field test supervisor at all times
3. Digital and hybrid format field tests must be administered by, and at all times the materials must remain secure
4. Teachers whose students are writing paper format field tests must remain present in the field testing room for the duration of the field test and are expected to verify the answer key, review and validate test items
5. Prior to reviewing and validating a paper format field test, a teacher must review and sign a declaration regarding the security of the field test materials
6. Only teachers whose students are writing a particular field test may examine its contents
7. Validation of a paper format field test must occur in the room where the field test is being administered
8. Validation of a digital or hybrid format field test may occur within a 24-hour period following the field test administration. Digital and hybrid format field test contents are secure, and must not be copied or replicated in any manner
9. After the 24-hour perusal period, **source material for hybrid format field tests must be returned to Alberta Education**
10. No paper, digital, or hybrid format field test item or answer key may be copied, either by hand or digitally, for any purpose
11. Discussion of field test items after their administration must be limited to a review of the concepts being assessed rather than to details of specific items
12. Students must be made aware of the purpose and importance of a field test prior to its administration
13. Students who arrive late are not permitted to write a field test if there is insufficient time to complete it within the scheduled administration time

**Field Test Marking** Machine-scored digital and hybrid format field tests will be electronically

marked at Alberta Education. Student scores will be emailed to the teacher who supervised its administration. In addition to a raw score, digital and hybrid format field test results will also contain supplementary information, including the proportion of students in the class who chose each alternative on the multiple-choice items and the proportion that left a numerical-response item blank. For mathematics and all science field tests, the items will be blueprinted to the programs of study outcomes. Teachers are then able to meaningfully use field test results to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Teachers may use the report during the digital or hybrid field test perusal.

The machine-scored items 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.

**Field Test Request and Administration Dates**

In 2017–2018, Alberta Education will be administering paper, digital and hybrid format field tests for diploma courses within the following timeframes:

<b>Paper Format Field Test Administration</b>		
	<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>
<b>Year End Field Tests:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 4–21*</li> <li>• January 2–24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 14–June 15**</li> </ul>

<b>Digital Format Field Test Administration</b>		
	<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>
<b>Unit Tests:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September 18–December 21</li> <li>• January 2–24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 1–June 15</li> <li>• June 18–28</li> </ul>
<b>Year End Field Tests:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 4–21</li> <li>• January 2–24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 14–June 15</li> <li>• June 18–28***</li> </ul>

<b>Hybrid Format Field Test Administration</b>		
	<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>
<b>Year End Field Tests:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 4–21</li> <li>• January 2–24</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 14–June 15</li> </ul>

\* Social Studies **must not** be administered in **December**

\*\*Social Studies **must not** be administered between **May 14 and May 25**

\*\*\*Social Studies **must** be administered between **May 28 – June 15** and **June 18 – 28**

**Notes:**

- Mathematics and all science **unit tests** field tests are not available in

hybrid format

- Requests for **paper and hybrid** format field tests must be submitted to Alberta Education, online or using the request form, by **November 3** for Session 1 and by **April 13** for Session 2
- Requests for **digital** format field tests must be submitted to Alberta Education at least **5 working days** prior to the preferred field test administration date

## Participation Approval and Request Process

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

1. If a superintendent has previously provided authorization for Alberta Education to conduct field tests in his or her school authority, the consent will automatically be carried forward to subsequent years. If a superintendent does not permit its schools to participate in field testing or would like to verify or change the status of authorization, please notify [field.test@gov.ab.ca](mailto:field.test@gov.ab.ca) expressing this intent
2. If a school principal has previously provided consent for teachers within his or her school to participate in the Field Testing Program, the consent will be carried over to subsequent years. If a school principal would like to remove this consent or would like to verify or change the status of consent, please notify [field.test@gov.ab.ca](mailto:field.test@gov.ab.ca) expressing this intent
  - 2.1. Through Extranet, Principals authorize individual teachers to access the Field Test Request System. When teachers sign up for the Field Test Request System service, an email will be sent to the Principal indicating authorization is required
  - 2.2. If a Principal has previously provided authorization for a teacher to access the Field Test Request System, the authorization will be carried forward indefinitely. Using the Field Test Request System, a Principal can remove authorization for a teacher to access this application
  - 2.3. At any time, Principals can monitor field test requests for the school through Extranet
3. Teachers submit field test requests:
  - 3.1. All requests must be completed using the current *Field Test Request Guide*
  - 3.2. Online self-service: Field test requests are submitted using the Field Test Request System:  
<http://public.education.alberta.ca/FieldTestScheduler>
  - 3.3. Paper-based process: Teachers may also request field tests by submitting a *field test request form*. The *field test request form* is located at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/forms/>
  - 3.4. Two field test administrations are run within each school year, September-January (Session 1) and February-June (Session 2).

Schools must submit separate field test requests for each of these field test sessions

3.5. Teachers who intend on requesting field tests either through the online self-service or *field test request form* process must obtain an Alberta Education account. Instructions regarding this process can be found at this link: <http://goo.gl/aTGB8F>

4. Alberta Education schedules field test placements:

4.1. Submitted field test requests are reviewed to determine if (a) they match the participation requirements and (b) there are any available field tests for administration; where a match is found, a field test placement is scheduled

4.2. Paper format field test requests are also reviewed for supervisor availability. If a supervisor is not available in a particular region the following options may be exercised:

4.2.1. The school administration may recommend and provide an alternate supervisor such as a teacher or school administrator

4.2.2. The teacher may elect to administer the field test in digital format.

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 email to teachers communicating relevant details of the paper format field test

5.2. When **digital** and **hybrid** format field tests are placed, 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 or hybrid format field test. For hybrid field tests, Alberta Education will send information regarding the shipment of paper source materials

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

### **Special-Format Practice Tests**

Alberta Education has made Special-Format Practice Tests available to provide students with an opportunity to prepare for diploma exam-style questions in Braille, audio, large print or coloured print versions. Special-Format Practice Tests are offered in all subjects with a corresponding diploma exam. Braille tests are available in English, and by request, in French. All tests are provided free of charge, however, limits may be placed on order volumes to ensure access for everyone. For more information, contact 780-492-1644. The order form is available on the Alberta Education website.

## *Significant Dates*

- September 5, 2017      First day teachers may submit **Session 1** and **Session 2** paper, digital and hybrid format field test requests. Field test requests are submitted via the *Field Test Request Application* or by using the *Field Test Request Form*
- November 3, 2017      Last day for teachers to submit **Session 1** paper or hybrid format field test requests
- April 13, 2018        Last day for teachers to submit **Session 2** paper or hybrid format field test requests
- June 10, 2018        Last day for participating schools to submit digital format field test requests for year-end field tests

**Refer to the dates listed earlier in this section for field test administration dates.**