

# *Writing Diploma Exams Using Technology*

## **BACKGROUND**

Students are permitted to use technology when writing the Part(ie) A component of diploma exams (English Language Arts 30–1, English Language Arts 30–2, Français 30–1, French Language Arts 30–1, Social Studies 30–1, and Social Studies 30–2). The principles, directives, and procedures presented below address the writing of diploma exams using computers.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

A school principal may allow students to use technology to compose the written response component of the diploma exam if:

- the students normally produce written work on a computing device,
- the students are proficient at using that school’s devices and word processing application,
- the students understand and are able to implement, the rules and procedures for preparing and submitting written responses using technology (see below)
- technical expertise is available before, during, and after the diploma exam administration to ensure effective and secure system functioning
- the security, validity and confidentiality of student work and diploma exam materials are in no way compromised
- the students are able to print and staple their final written responses to their diploma exam booklets. This includes verifying that the final printed hard copy of their writing is accurately and completely printed and attached to their booklet in proper page order. This step may occur after the officially scheduled time limit; however, this verification step does *not* allow any revision to finished work

## **COMPUTER USE DIRECTIVES**

### **Principal**

1. The principal of a school or designated writing centre shall decide whether to provide the opportunity for students to write humanities Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology. This decision shall be based on the principal’s certainty that the school or designated writing centre can adhere to all diploma exam writing and administration rules, and the directives, rules and procedures that follow.
2. The principal shall communicate to students and teachers the availability of, and requirements related to, the use of computing devices and word processing applications when writing the Part(ie) A component of humanities diploma exams.
3. The principal shall ensure that only those students who understand and are able to follow all of the directives, rules and procedures established for writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology are permitted to do so.

4. If a school or designated writing centre has more students who request this option than it has devices, students who have documented learning needs which specify the use of a computer shall be given priority when assigning access for diploma exam writing purposes.
5. The principal shall ensure that only computing devices, applications, and printers used for diploma exam administration purposes are appropriately configured to safeguard diploma exam security, validity and reliability, and to minimize distraction to students. **Student-owned PC** and Mac OS devices may be used with Quest A+ (see Quest A+ and the Use of Personally Owned Devices below).
7. The principal shall ensure that all facilities and equipment that have been set up for diploma exam writing purposes are secured and remain secured until after the diploma exam administration and follow-up administrative procedures are completed.
8. Before implementing the use of technology for writing diploma exams, the principal shall establish technical and exam administration contingency plans and emergency procedures to address unexpected issues and problems that may arise.
9. The principal shall ensure that teachers who are designated to supervise the administration of diploma exams that are being written using technology are appropriately prepared for that role, including being aware of and able to implement contingency plans and emergency procedures, should the need arise.
10. The principal shall ensure that no student responses, including rough work, remain on devices or accessible network locations once students have stapled their printed copies into their diploma exam booklets.
11. The principal shall develop a process to ensure that students are able to print and staple their final written responses to their diploma exam booklets.

#### Technical Personnel

1. Technical personnel shall configure all devices, word processing applications, and printers so as to ensure the security, validity of the diploma exam administration (see *Rules and Procedures* below).
2. Technical personnel shall develop and implement a plan to test the digital system prior to each diploma exam administration to ensure that all equipment and processes function as required (see *Rules and Procedures* below).
3. In cooperation with the principal and diploma exam supervisors, technical personnel shall develop a technical contingency plan that can be implemented, as required, to address unexpected network, device, or printer problems.
4. Technical personnel shall ensure that the facility and all designated and configured computers are secured until the time the scheduled diploma exam is written.

5. Following the diploma exam administration, technical personnel shall ensure that devices are cleared of all student work and individual devices can no longer access student responses.
6. Following the diploma exam administration, technical personnel in schools using local word processing solutions shall ensure that student work is archived securely for a period of 3 months from the date the exam is written. Archived files must only be accessible to a school authority network administrator.
7. After marking has been finalized, technical personnel shall ensure that all archived student work is permanently deleted.
8. If Quest A+ is used for Part(ie) A, diploma exams, the Quest A+ Locked Browser is installed and tested in advance of the diploma exam administration.  
<https://questaplus.alberta.ca/help/requirements.html>.

#### Diploma Exam Supervisors

1. Teachers who are designated to supervise the administration of digital diploma exams shall be familiar with, and able to implement, the guiding principles, directives, rules, and procedures related to the administration of diploma exams using technology.
2. Exam supervisors shall implement procedures for the pick-up and distribution of printing during and after the official scheduled exam administration period. The established process to ensure that students are able to print and staple their final written responses to their booklets must be implemented. These procedures shall safeguard test security and validity and minimize distraction to students.
3. In cooperation with the principal and technical personnel, exam supervisors shall develop a diploma exam administration contingency plan that can be implemented, as required, to address unexpected issues or problems that arise while diploma exams are being written using technology.
4. Exam supervisors shall ensure that students are aware of, understand and adhere to, the directives, rules and procedures for writing a diploma exam using technology, prior to the commencement of the official scheduled exam administration.
5. Exam supervisors shall ensure that no student accesses search engines, research tools, online dictionaries or other prohibited online or electronic resources while writing a diploma exam using technology.
6. Exam supervisors shall ensure that no student responses, including rough work, remain on any devices or student-accessible network locations once students have stapled their printed copies into their exam booklets.

## Students

1. If a principal allows technology to be used when writing Part(ie) A diploma exams, the decision to participate shall be the individual student's.
2. Students who choose to write diploma exams using school or writing-centre technology shall be proficient at using those devices and word-processing applications as a typical means of producing written work.
3. Students who choose to write diploma exams using computers shall understand and adhere to, the directives, rules and procedures for writing a diploma exam using technology.
4. Students are encouraged to print assignments for written response diploma exams in a single-sided page format.

## RULES AND PROCEDURES

### Technical and Administrative Set-up

1. Prior to the commencement of the official scheduled diploma exam administration, all devices to be used for diploma exam writing purposes must be networked and configured to:
  - enable secure and ready access to designated printers only, during and after the official scheduled diploma exam administration;
  - enable the saving of each student's written work in a manner that ensures its security during, and permits school personnel to readily access and remove those documents 3 months following, the official scheduled diploma exam administration. Technical personnel may save students' written work to a network location accessible to technical personnel only for this retention period;
  - disable access to search engines, research tools, online dictionaries and other online or electronic resources that are not permitted.
2. Prior to the commencement of the official scheduled diploma exam administration, all word-processing applications to be used for diploma exam writing purposes should be configured to enable:
  - insertion of footers that include the student's index number on each page of written work  
**Note:** The index number (test booklet number) is the six-digit number that appears in the bottom right corner of the student's label. Unregistered students will not have an index number, they must create a six-digit number and indicate that number on the back of their test booklet.
  - automatic and frequent saving of word processing documents to a designated location only;
  - access to routine tools, such as a spell-checker, that are integrated into the software.

**Note:** The *auto correct* feature of these tools must be disabled. For local word-processing solutions, online dictionaries and online thesauri are not permitted.

3. Prior to the commencement of the official scheduled exam administration, all computing devices, printers, and word-processing applications must be online and ready for use.

### **Diploma Exam Administration**

1. Students writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology must be given a paper form of the diploma exam at the commencement of the official scheduled diploma exam administration and must staple a hard copy of their word-processed written work to that booklet at the end of the administration of the diploma exam.
2. Students writing diploma exams using technology may access all of the diploma exam materials that are available to students who write paper forms of the diploma exam.
3. Students may revert to writing with pen or pencil at any time during the exam administration. Both the paper copy of the digital attempt and the continued response must be stapled into the booklet.
4. Students are encouraged to plan their responses and are able to plan or do rough work in either the diploma exam booklet or on the device. Planning must be annotated as rough work or planning.
5. Students may print interim hard copies of their written work at any time during the diploma exam administration.
6. Students may compose and edit their written work until the end of the official scheduled administration time.
7. Student may not access search engines, research tools or other prohibited online or electronic resources while writing a diploma exam using technology. To do so is a contravention of diploma exam rules.

### **Preparation and Submission of Written Work**

1. It is the students' responsibility to print and staple their final written response(s) to their diploma exam booklets. This includes verifying that the final printed hard copy of their writing is accurately and completely printed and attached to their booklet in proper page order in the correct locations. This step may occur after the officially scheduled time limit; however, this verification step does *not* allow any revision to finished work.

**Note:** A mark of zero will be assigned to any diploma exam question or assignment that has no written response, or the wrong written response, attached to it, for whatever reason, at the time of marking.

2. Students writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology must clearly label each page of their finished work according to its assignment title or question number and must staple the work into the appropriate places in the diploma exam booklet.

3. Each student must include his or her six-digit index number on every page of the finished work stapled into the diploma exam booklet. If the student does not have a label because he or she registered after the registration deadline, a 6-digit number must be created and annotated on each page.
4. Students writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology must indicate in the space provided on the back cover of the diploma exam that they have attached word-processed pages to the diploma exam booklet.
5. Students writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology must submit their final written work double-spaced and in an easy-to-read 12-point font. See the instruction page in the specific diploma exam booklet for details.
6. Each student writing Part(ie) A diploma exams using technology must clearly label all word-processed rough work or early drafts as *rough work* and must staple these documents into the exam booklets on pages designated *Planning*.
7. Students using Quest A+ for the written response component must print and staple their responses to the correct locations in the diploma exam booklet.

In the event of an emergency or disruption, contact the Director, Exam Administration, immediately by telephone at (780) 492-1400.

## **QUEST A+ AND THE USE OF PERSONALLY OWNED DEVICES**

Principals may allow students to use personally owned computers (PC or Mac OS) when writing Part(ie) A diploma exams on Quest A+. Due to device management requirements, personally owned Chromebooks or Chrome OS devices are not permitted. When used for diploma exam writing purposes, Quest A+ and its associated Locked Browser application temporarily block access to hard drives, network drives, and online resources by restricting users to the Quest A+ environment.

### **ACCESS TO QUEST A+**

Since the April 2015 diploma exam administration, the use of Quest A+ has been capped to 4,000 simultaneous users for any given diploma exam. This is to help ensure the reliability and stability of the application. While Alberta Education is exploring the development of a new system to better provide students with access to online diploma exams, priority for the use of the Quest A+ Application for humanities Part(ie) A written response diploma exams is given to schools who cannot administer these diploma exams with technology via alternate methods, i.e., exam accounts in conjunction with local word-processing solutions.

For example:

- A school has 100 students writing English Language Arts 30-1 and 30-2.
- This school has 80 available PC computers and 20 students have personally-owned PC or Mac OS devices.

- This school could use diploma exam accounts for 80 students and the remainder of the students could access Quest A+ using personally-owned devices.

To apply for to use Quest A+ and obtain access codes for humanities Part(ie) A written response diploma exams, complete the online request form located at:

<http://surveys.education.gov.ab.ca/novi/n/QuestDiploma.aspx>.

The deadlines for requests to use Quest A+ are as follows.

Diploma Exam Administration	Quest A+ Request Deadline
November 2017	October 3, 2017
January 2018	November 3, 2017
April 2018	February 22, 2018
June 2018	April 19, 2018
August 2018	July 6, 2018

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON USING TECHNOLOGY FOR DIPLOMA EXAMS**

A document, [\*Using Technology to Administer Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams\*](#), is available to assist school and technical personnel with decisions regarding the use of technology for students to write diploma exams. This document will be updated throughout the school year.