

# *Diploma Exam Accommodations and Provisions*

## **OVERVIEW**

Starting in the 2017-2018 school year, all students are eligible for accommodations and provisions to write diploma exams without an application process.

Most accommodations, for the purpose of writing diploma exams, are reviewed, managed and ordered at the school-level. The Special Cases and Accommodations team will review accommodation requests related to the following circumstances:

- Unique accommodations,
- Mature students not attending high school and
- Home schooled students

Students must understand, and adhere to, the accommodation and provision administration directives, rules and procedures of writing a diploma exam with the use of accommodations and provision(s).

## **Mature Students Who Do Not Attend High Schools and Home Schooled Students**

Mature students who do not attend a high school and home schooled students are eligible for all of the below accommodations and provisions. To ensure the writing centre is prepared for these students to write diploma exams with accommodations and provisions, they should be informed to contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team directly by emailing [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca). All requests for physical diploma exam materials (CDs, MP3s, large print, Braille, coloured paper) must be made by the deadline for each diploma exam administration (see *Schedules and Significant Dates* section).

## **ACCOMMODATION TYPES AND PROVISIONS**

Additional information for the use and administration of each accommodation and provision is provided below (see *Directives for Accommodations and Provisions*).

Students who use the accommodations or provisions listed below are required to indicate the use of the accommodation or provision(s) on their diploma exam according to the corresponding number.

<b>Accommodation or Provision</b>	<b>Eligible Population</b>	<b>Process Required</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. Audio (CD/MP3 version)	Any student with visual impairments and typically uses this accommodation	Schools order CD or MP3 file	Deadline to submit order is found in the <i>Schedules and Significant Dates</i> section
2. Audio (CD/MP3 version)	Student typically uses this accommodation	Schools order CD or MP3 file	Deadline to submit order is found in the <i>Schedules and Significant Dates</i> section
3. Additional Writing Time	All students		Students can take up to twice the official time limit to write the

			diploma exam, if needed. Students do not need to declare the use of this provision before writing a diploma exam.
4. Frequent Breaks	Student typically uses this accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	Timer is stopped by the diploma exam supervisor as student needs and is resumed following supervised break
5. Scribe	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
6. Large-print	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools order large-print version	Deadline to submit order is found in the <i>Schedules and Significant Dates</i> section
7. Braille	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools order Braille version	Deadline to submit order is found in the <i>Schedules and Significant Dates</i> section
8. Reader	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	It is recommended that Readers are only used when students are unable to use audio versions in any other format
9. Sign-Language Interpreter	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
10. Transcriber of Recorded Response	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
12. Coloured Paper and Overlays	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools order coloured paper version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Deadline to submit form is found in the <i>Schedules and Significant Dates</i> section</li> <li>•Students who use overlays for classroom testing may use the same overlays to write diploma exams</li> </ul>
13. Text-to-Speech	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
14. Speech-to-Text	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
15. Ambient Noise	Student typically uses accommodation	Schools implement this accommodation	
Writing in Isolation and Use of Computers	All students	Schools implement this accommodation	Writing in isolation and the use of computers are school decisions determined by internal school business processes, availability and supervision

Unique Accommodations	Unique accommodations are any accommodations not listed above (#1 – 15). The school personnel must apply for unique accommodations through the Special Cases and Accommodation team. Each case will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For additional information, please contact the Special Cases and Accommodation team by emailing <a href="mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca">special.cases@gov.ab.ca</a> <b>prior to the Special Format Materials request deadline</b> .
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## ACCOMMODATION AND PROVISION REQUEST PROCESS

### Terminology

- **School personnel:** Staff at the school who organizes the requests for both accommodations and provisions, provides students with notification of the status of the request and operates as school contact for all communication related to the requests. School personnel will act as the primary contact for students and parents, and are responsible for forwarding all inquiries to the Special Cases team.
- **Deficiency Notification:** The accommodation request has been received by the Special Cases and Accommodations team; however, the supporting documentation is incomplete. Special Cases and Accommodations team members will outline the specific materials needed to complete the review the request by email.
- **Case Suspended:** The material required for review has not been received by the deadline provided by the Special Cases and Accommodations team. An official case decision has not been rendered. Cases can be reopened once all additional information requested has been submitted.
- **Request to Reconsider a Case Decision:** Prior to appealing a case decision to Special Cases Committee, Special Cases and Accommodations team may reconsider the original decision with submission of new official documentation to support the request. School personnel must submit a *Request to Reconsider* form with the new information. This form can be obtained by emailing [Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca).
- **Appeal:** This is a formal appeal to the Special Cases Committee.

**Note:** Exemptions or partial exemptions will not be granted for students because they were not eligible for accommodations at the time of writing or denied their request for accommodations.

Prior to each diploma exam administration, the principal of the school shall:

1. Work with school personnel to establish and implement a process for ordering special format materials by the scheduled deadline.
2. Work with school personnel to establish and implement processes to ensure that students have access to a reader, scribe, sign language interpreter or transcriber of recorded response, if required.
3. Ensure that students and diploma exam supervisors are aware of, and understand, the rules, procedures, requirements and deadlines related to writing a diploma exam with accommodations and provisions.

**Alberta Education Unique** **Step 1:** School personnel collect all [Application for Unique Accommodations for Students with Special Diploma Exam Writing Needs](#) forms and supporting

**Accommodations Documentation and Review Process** documentation.

**Step 2:** School personnel forward forms and supporting documentation to the Special Cases and Accommodations team.

**Step 3:** The Special Cases and Accommodations team reviews, processes and communicates an official response for each request.

**Step 4:** School personnel communicate the official response to the student, and family members for students under the age of 18, in writing.

**Step 5: (Request for Reconsideration if required)** Special Cases and Accommodations team will only reconsider an official case decision if the reconsideration request includes (a) The *Request to Reconsider* form and (b) new supporting official documentation which meets the eligibility criteria and will assist the Special Cases and Accommodations team in the review to change the original status of the decision. This form can be obtained by emailing [Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca).

**Step 6: (Appeal to Special Cases Committee if required)** Special Cases Committee will make a final determination as to whether or not the student can be approved for the requested accommodation(s). The Special Cases Committee has authority to propose and facilitate alternate reasonable solutions in accordance with the principles outlined in this document and under the *Student Evaluation Regulation 177/2003*.

The Minister will only review the process undertaken in reviewing student cases including the Special Cases Committee process.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS

Criteria are dependent upon the student’s academic needs, however, in all cases the request for unique accommodation must directly correspond to the specialized assessment.

School administration should contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team well in advance of the accommodation request deadline to discuss unique accommodation options. Students with extraordinary accommodations in class, or who are believed to not achieve a diploma exam score comparable to the school-awarded mark, are not exempt from writing diploma exams.

## GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC LEARNING NEEDS THAT REQUIRE ACCOMMODATIONS AND PROVISIONS

**Ongoing medical conditions** Ongoing medical conditions refer to a condition which persists for an extended period of time and can be one month but usually more than 2 consecutive months.

The accommodation request should be supported by medical documentation clearly identifying the condition, the current functional impact and the current need for accommodation.

Students with ongoing medical conditions are **not eligible for exemption**

**Post-Concussion Syndrome** Every concussion is unique and symptoms will vary from student to student; therefore, managing a student’s return to the classroom following a concussion will require an individualized approach.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following accommodations for students experiencing post-concussion syndrome symptoms:

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>Potential Accommodation/Adjustment</b>
Headache	• Frequent Breaks
Dizziness	• Frequent Breaks
Visual symptoms: light sensitivity, double vision, blurry vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce exposure to computers and digital devices</li> <li>• Reduce brightness on screens</li> <li>• Audio version</li> <li>• Turn off fluorescent lighting</li> </ul>
Noise sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the use of earplugs</li> <li>• Isolated writing space</li> </ul>
Difficulty concentrating or remembering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra writing time - Provision</li> <li>• Defer exam until recovery</li> </ul>
Sleep disturbances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Late start of exam writing</li> <li>• Frequent Breaks</li> </ul>

## **ADMINISTRATION OF DIPLOMA EXAMS WITH ACCOMMODATIONS AND PROVISIONS**

All diploma exams administered with accommodation or provisions must comply with the general Exam Administration Directives, the Exam Administration directives below, review processes, exam procedures and the *Administration Directives* in this section.

### **ADMINISTRATION DIRECTIVES**

#### **Prior to Administration**

1. All rules and procedures related to the use of a specific accommodation or provision must be explained and discussed with the student before the officially scheduled diploma exam administration.
2. The principal shall ensure that all exam supervisors are appropriately prepared for diploma exams that are being written with accommodations or provisions. Exam supervisors must understand and implement all directives, rules and procedures for the administration of diploma exams using accommodations or provisions as well as all emergent situation protocols specifically related to, or not specifically related to, students with accommodations and provisions.
3. The principal shall ensure that facilities, equipment (for example, recording devices, headphones, microphones, computers, etc.), scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, transcribers of recorded response and materials used as diploma exam accommodations or provisions are supplied, by the school or school authority, and appropriately prepared for the administration of the diploma exams with safeguards to diploma exam security and minimize distraction to other students.

4. The principal shall develop and implement processes to ensure that special format materials are ordered prior by the deadline for each diploma exam administration (see *Schedules and Significant Dates* section).
5. The principal shall develop and implement processes to ensure that only those students who are granted an accommodation are permitted to do so.

**During the Administration**

1. Exam supervisors only permit students with granted accommodations the use of those accommodations.
2. Exam supervisors administer the diploma exam in accordance with the directives specific to the accommodation or provision and in accordance with the general diploma exam administration directives in this bulletin.

**After the Administration**

1. The principal shall ensure that all digitally recorded conversations and responses created during the administration of diploma exams are immediately deleted once they have been saved to a storage device for shipment to the Alberta Education marking centre.
2. All special format materials, including those in audio, large print and Braille format, must be returned to the Alberta Education marking centre with the regular return shipment of other diploma exam materials (including answer sheets) from the school.
3. All accommodations and provisions used must be recorded on the student's diploma exam materials and initialed by the supervisor.

**DIRECTIVES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND PROVISIONS**

**1 and 2 – Audio (CD/MP3) Version (for visual impairment, physical or learning disabilities)**

Students who typically use audio for their coursework are eligible to receive this accommodation when writing Diploma Exams. If a student uses a personal CD/MP3 player when writing a diploma exam, the exam supervisor must ensure that no prohibited material is brought into the diploma exam writing room or used in that CD/MP3 player before or during the scheduled diploma exam administration.

Since many schools do not have CD players, schools are able to request MP3 files. MP3 files can be requested using the *List of Special Format Materials* form.

To enable student access to the MP3 files, school technical staff can either:

- create a secure network location to store the MP3 files, taking the necessary steps to ensure only students who are writing that diploma exam can access the files or

- transfer the MP3 files to a portable device.

**3 – Additional Writing Time**

After the administration of the diploma exam, technical staff must ensure that all MP3 files are removed from either the network locations or storage devices. All students are permitted twice the official time limit to write the diploma exam, if they need it.

**4 – Frequent Breaks**

The student has permission to take breaks, as required. The format of the break may reflect time and/or movement; however, the student must be supervised by an approved supervisor at all times.

- The clock to begin writing may be started at any point as long as the student has been sequestered from the official start time.
- The exam supervisor must stop the clock each time the student takes a break.
- The clock continues once the student resumes writing.
- The student must remain under supervision during each break, to ensure all exam administration directives and rules are adhered.
- The student must not be allowed access to any materials (for example but not limited to paper, notes, books, computers, phones, electronic devices) while on break, to ensure all exam administration directives and rules are followed.

**5 – Scribe,  
8 – Reader,  
9 – Sign Language Interpreter and  
10 – Recorded Response  
General Information**

Diploma exams that are administered with the support of scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, and transcriber of recorded response must take place in a separate writing area so that other students writing the diploma exam are not disrupted.

Scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, or transcribers of recorded responses must not be appointed when they are the relative, friend, a student peer at the school or attending another school, or a past or present teacher of the student writing the diploma exam.

Scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, or transcribers of recorded responses are expected to adhere to all diploma exam directives, rules and procedures outlined in this bulletin.

If the student has a question or a query, the student is to be directed to the supervisor.

Alberta Education is not responsible for the appointment of any support staff including scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, or transcribers of recorded responses nor is Alberta Education responsible for expenses incurred in appointing these individuals.

Once a diploma exam administration has commenced, a continuous recording of the complete communication that occurs between the individual students and their

appointed scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, and transcribers of recorded responses must be made. This recording must be of sufficient sound quality to permit clear understanding of the communication between the individual students and their appointed scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, and transcribers of recorded response.

**Note:** If a reader and a scribe have been approved concurrently, one recording may be used to capture the readings completed by the reader and the response dictated to the scribe by the student. In this situation, the exam supervisor must ensure that all communications are clearly heard and understood.

To ensure anonymity during marking, the identity of the student must not be revealed during the recording of the communications between the individual students and their appointed scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, and transcribers of recorded response.

Student responses and the recorded communication may be recorded using any audio format including digital audio files.

All storage devices containing scribe, reader, sign language interpreter, transcriber of recorded response and recorded response communication with a student must be clearly labeled:

- Name of Student
- Alberta Student Number
- Index Number
- Course Name
- School Code
- The words scribe, reader, sign language interpreter, transcriber of recorded response, recorded response

All scribed, transcribed recorded responses, reader and sign language interpreter communications must be immediately deleted from the recording device once they have been saved to a storage device for shipment to the Alberta Education marking centre.

## **5 - Scribe**

A scribe may record a student's response in handwriting or using a computer.

A scribe must record a student's response exactly as the student dictates. A scribe may not improve the student's response by rewording, correcting grammar, adding punctuation, indicating paragraphs, or otherwise changing a student's answer.

A scribe may confirm what the student has said by reading it back for clarification.



A scribe may not ask leading questions or provide suggestions or interpretations of any kind.

For written-response questions, students should be advised to indicate verbally when they have finished one assignment and are beginning the next one by saying, “I am now finished assignment one, and I am ready to begin assignment two.”

Students who are dictating their responses should be encouraged to do some rough work in the diploma exam booklet.

## **8 - Reader**

A scribe may only provide this accommodation to one student.

A reader must read in such a way that the student understands the beginning and end of each sentence and paragraph. Without leading the student, the reader must be aware of, and obey, all punctuation and must read in such a way that the student understands the use and purpose of the punctuation.

A reader must read the diploma exam verbatim; that is, exactly as it appears in the diploma exam booklet. A reader may not add emphasis, inflection, or read in such a way as to prompt or guide the student. A reader may not ask leading questions or provide suggestions, interpretations, or word definitions of any kind.

A reader may repeat readings as often as necessary and must read consistently each time.

A reader may only provide this accommodation to one student.

## **9 – Sign Language Interpreter**

To be appointed to support a student writing a diploma exam, a sign language interpreter must be a person who is fluent in American Sign Language or the manually coded English systems used by the student.

For purposes of interpreting for a diploma exam, a sign language interpreter may:

- voice what is signed by a student
- interpret all words spoken during the exam period that are intended for all students.

A sign language interpreter must not record a student’s responses. This is the role of a scribe or an individual transcribing a recorded response and is a support that must be approved by as a separate accommodation.

A sign language interpreter must interpret consistently, always conveying the content and spirit of the spoken word using the signed language most readily understood by the student. The interpreter must not provide definitions or interpret beyond conveying the spoken/written message.

A sign language interpreter must not counsel, advise, interject personal opinions or ask leading questions, provide suggestions, or provide coaching of any kind.

During the administration of a diploma exam, all questions raised by the student must be directed to the exam supervisor. In this case, the interpreter must interpret spoken and signed messages between the student and the exam supervisor.

**10 – Transcriber  
of Recorded  
Response**

Recorded responses must be transcribed before returning the student's diploma exam materials to the Alberta Education marking centre. The time required for transcription does not count toward the allocated writing time.

The student must verify, and edit if required, the text transcribed. The time required for verification and editing must be included in the allocated writing time.

**12 – Overlays**  
**\*NEW**

Students who use coloured overlays for classroom instruction may use the same overlays for writing diploma exams.

**13 – Text-to-  
Speech Software**

Written response diploma exams that are administered with the support of text-to-speech must take place in a separate writing area (isolated space) so that other students writing the diploma exam are not disrupted.

To ensure security, no secured paper format diploma exam material may be scanned for any purpose, including enabling the use of text-to-speech software.

Students may use text-to-speech software *only to read back their own responses*. No other use of such software is permitted.

When using text-to-speech software, features such as word prediction, word wizard, fact folder/finder and scientific calculator must be disabled. For specific diploma exam administration requirements related to the use of technology see *Using Computers* section.

**14 – Speech-to-  
Text Software**

Written response diploma exams that are administered with the use of speech-to-text software must take place in a separate writing area (isolated space) so that other students writing the diploma exam are not disrupted.

Students may use speech-to-text software *only for written response diploma exams*. No other use of such software is permitted.

For specific diploma exam administration requirements related to the use of technology see *Using Computers* Section.

**15 – Ambient  
Noise Audio**

Students using ambient-noise audio must use professionally/commercially recorded CDs intended for background sound.

## *Separate Writing*

All Humanities diploma exams have two components. A student must complete both components of the diploma exam to obtain credit for a Humanities diploma exam course. If deferment of one component is anticipated a student may:

- Write both Part(ie) A and Part(ie) B of the diploma exam at a subsequent administration, or
- Write one Part(ie) of the exam in one administration and defer the second Part(ie) to a subsequent administration. This is referred to as a *Separate Writing*.

### **SEPARATE WRITING DIRECTIVES**

1. The student, using *myPass*, or school staff must register the student in the suitable administration on or before the registration deadline
2. School staff or the student must submit a [\*Notification of Separate Writing\*](#) form. This form informs the Special Cases and Accommodations team to manually blend the Part(ie) A and Part(ie) B results from the separate administrations. The transcript will be marked *incomplete* until the entire diploma exam has been written or blended and the official final mark is calculated.

## *Special Writing Centres*

### OVERVIEW AND SPECIAL WRITING CENTRES RULES

A Special Writing Centre is a site outside of Alberta that is temporarily approved to serve as a diploma exam writing centre for students outside of Alberta during the diploma exam administration. Special Writing Centres may be established for any diploma exam administration.

Permission to establish a Special Writing Centre for the purpose of writing a diploma exam may be granted to students, by Alberta Education Special Cases and Accommodations team, for one of the following reasons:

- The student lives outside Alberta and has completed a diploma exam course delivered through an Alberta Education approved distance learning program.
- The student is participating in a scheduled activity such as a national or international competition in athletics or music.

**Note:** Special Writing Centres will not be established for students who are outside of Alberta on vacation, to attend a family or other private event, to obtain or commence employment, on an organized tour, or other similar activity.

- The student has a right of access to education in Alberta under section 8 of the *School Act* and after completing instruction at an accredited high school they have moved from the province permanently and are unable to return to write the diploma exam.

**Note:** All students, including international students, studying a diploma exam course in Alberta are expected to remain in the province until the completion of their instructional program, which includes the writing of the diploma exam. Consequently, Special Writing Centres will not be established for students or international students if they leave Alberta early.

Special Writing Centres may be established for students who have no alternative but to write their diploma exam outside of the province due to one of the above circumstances. Special Writing Centres are not elective writing locations.

All requests to establish a Special Writing Centre must be made using the appropriate application forms by the specified deadlines outlined in the Schedule and Significant Dates.

- If you have applied outside of the identified business rule timelines due to extraordinary circumstances, please contact the Special Cases team at [Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca) or 780-427-0010 to determine your eligibility for future writing opportunities.

1. Special Writing Centres will not be established in jurisdictions in which there is an existing diploma exam writing centre. Alberta diploma exams are administered at writing centres throughout Northwest Territories, Nunavut and internationally at Alberta Accredited

International Schools. Students located in those areas during the diploma exam administration schedule are expected to write at an established diploma exam writing centre.

2. Students must have a final school awarded mark for the course for which the exam will be written, or be eligible to receive one by the date when the school is required to submit that mark before the student can be approved to write at a Special Writing Centre. Students who write diploma exams at Special Writing Centres in courses for which they have no school awarded mark will have those diploma exams invalidated.
3. Students are only permitted to rewrite a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre if they are currently retaking the course and will receive a school awarded mark in the current administration, or if the exam was previously written within one school year.
4. A proposed site must meet the conditions required to ensure the administration of diploma exams will be in accordance with diploma exam rules and written proof that the site has been procured for that purpose must be provided.
5. The proposed location must be an academic organisation or similar institution which fully adheres to all of the security provisions and general rules outlined in the Diploma Exam Administration Rules and Directives. Examples of locations include, but are not limited to, schools, post-secondary institutions, or public libraries. To be approved as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor, a person must be employed by that same academic organisation or similar institution and in a position of authority commensurate with teacher, assistant principal or principal and must provide written proof of that employment. The proposed supervisor must be able to administer exams which have been standardized and in adherence to all diploma exam rules in this bulletin.
6. To be approved as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor, a person must be fluent in reading and speaking English or French, depending on the language of the diploma exam(s) to be administered.
7. A Special Writing Centre Supervisor may not be a relative or friend, past or present teacher, or a past or present coach of the student.
8. To adjust for national and international time differences the following Special Writing Centre writing schedule will apply to all requests:

	<b>Time Zone 1hr behind Alberta (i.e., BC, west coast USA)</b>	<b>Canadian or American Time Zone is ahead of Alberta (i.e., Ottawa, Montréal, New York, Florida, Virginia)</b>	<b>Outside of Canadian and American Time Zones (Overseas)</b>
<b>Writing time</b>	9am local time (10am MDT)	9am MDT	Next day (24 hrs from scheduled exam date) at 9am local time to the

student

9. All exams administered at a Special Writing Centre will be administered in a digital format using Quest A+.

All students using Quest A+ to write a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre must adhere to the following:

- Be prepared to use Quest A+ on the day of the diploma exam. The student must complete at least one practice test and provide the Special Writing Centre School personnel a signed statement confirming that (a) the practice test has been completed, (b) the student was able to respond to questions and (c) end the session without complication.

***Exemptions will not be granted to students who are unable to use Quest A+ at the time of writing.***

- The PC or Mac OS computer used may belong to the student or the writing centre.

10. A student who is unable, or chooses not, to write a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre, after being approved to do so, must notify Special Cases and Accommodations team and the Special Writing Centre Supervisor, immediately.
11. If a Special Writing Centre Supervisor fails to adhere to the diploma exam rules and Special Writing Centre rules specified in this bulletin, any future request to serve in that capacity will not be granted.
12. Activities which interfere with the writing of the diploma exams will disqualify a student's eligibility to establish a Special Writing Centre in the current administration and potentially in future administrations. If a student who is approved to establish a Special Writing Centre fails to adhere to all of the directives, rules and procedures associated with that approval, all diploma exams written at that Special Writing Centre may be invalidated and any further requests to establish a Special Writing Centre by that student may not be granted.
13. No exemption or partial exemption will be approved for a student who was unable to write a diploma exam as a result of any and all of the following reasons:
  - His or her request to establish a Special Writing Centre was not granted
  - Technical issues prevented the administration and/or writing of the diploma exam
  - The supervisor withdrew their application or duty, provided misinformation or miscommunication and/or did not adhere to the directives, rules and procedures outlined in this bulletin and by the Special Cases and Accommodations team.

## **SPECIAL WRITING CENTRE DIRECTIVES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Principals**

1. When recommending to a student that application should be made to establish a Special Writing Centre, a principal shall:
  - 1.1. Provide access to and explain to the student and his/her parents, all of the directives, deadlines, rules and procedures associated with the handling and administration of diploma exams at a Special Writing Centre.
  - 1.2. Review and sign all forms submitted in application of a request to

establish a Special Writing Centre.

2. **For students living outside of Alberta taking instruction with an Alberta Education approved distance learning program:** Prior to accepting a student's registration for a diploma exam course, the principal of a distance learning program shall ensure that a Special Writing Centre site and the services of a Special Writing Centre Supervisor, approved by Special Cases and Accommodations team, are available for that student by submitting the following forms to the Special Cases and Accommodations team ([\*Application to Establish a Pre-Approved Distance Learning Special Writing Centre\*](#) form and [\*Application to Serve as a Distance Learning Special Writing Centre Supervisor\*](#) form). Special Cases and Accommodations team does not guarantee the establishment of a Special Writing Centre if prior approval is not obtained.
3. If a student is eligible to apply to establish a Special Writing Centre, the principal shall designate an individual at the school to serve in the role of an application School personnel for the purpose of coordinating the application process.

#### **Students/Parents**

1. Before a student applies to establish a Special Writing Centre, his/her parent(s), in consultation with the student's school principal, shall identify an individual who is eligible to be a Special Writing Centre Supervisor and willing to serve in that capacity, if approved to do so by the Special Cases and Accommodations team.
2. To have a Special Writing Centre established on his/her behalf, **a student residing and studying in Alberta**, and his/her parents, are responsible for ensuring the accurate completion and timely submission of the following forms to the School personnel:
  - 2.1. [\*Application to Serve as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor\*](#)
  - 2.2. [\*Registration to Write a Diploma Exam at a Special Writing Centre\*](#)
  - 2.3. [\*Teacher Confirmation of Student Readiness to Write a Diploma Exam at a Special Writing Centre\*](#)
3. To have a Special Writing Centre established on his/her behalf, **a student residing and studying through a distance learning program outside Alberta**, and his/her parents, are responsible for ensuring the accurate completion and timely submission, as communicated in the *Schedule and Significant Dates*, of the following forms to the School personnel:
  - 3.1. [\*Application to Establish a Pre-Approved Distance Learning Special Writing Centre\*](#)
  - 3.2. [\*Application to Serve as a Distance Learning Special Writing Centre Supervisor\*](#)



- 3.3. [Registration to Write a Diploma Exam at a Distance Learning Special Writing Centre](#)
- 3.4. [Teacher Confirmation of Student Readiness to Write a Diploma Exam at a Distance Learning Special Writing Centre](#)
4. A student who is approved to write a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre, and his/her parents, shall assume responsibility for all costs payable to a Special Writing Centre Supervisor for procuring a diploma exam writing site and supervising the handling and administration of the diploma exam.
5. A student who is approved to write a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre shall comply with all of the directives, diploma exam administration rules and procedures associated with the establishment of a Special Writing Centre and the writing of a diploma exam. In the event of a contravention of rules, directives or procedures the diploma exam may be invalidated.
6. Students who have applied outside of the deadlines communicated in the *Schedules and Significant Dates* are required to contact the Special Cases Team.

**Application School personnel**

On behalf of a student requesting permission to establish a Special Writing Centre, the person designated to serve as the application School personnel shall:

- verify and confirm the accuracy and completeness of all information provided in support of that application
- coordinate and manage the application completion and submission process
- provide access and explain to the student and his/her parents all of the directives, deadlines, rules and procedures associated with the handling and administration of diploma exams at a Special Writing Centre
- provide access and explain to the proposed Special Writing Centre Supervisor all of the directives, rules and procedures associated with the handling and administration of diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre
- for **students living outside of Alberta taking instruction with an Alberta Education approved distance learning program**, upon course enrolment notify Special Cases and Accommodations team and submit the appropriate forms.

**Teachers of Students Writing Diploma Exams at a Special Writing Centre**

Teachers of students registering to write a diploma exam at a Special Writing Centre shall provide a statement about the student's readiness to write that diploma exam at the diploma exam administration proposed by the student ([Teacher Confirmation of a Student Readiness to Write a Diploma Exam at a Distance Learning/Special Writing Centre](#) form)

**Special Writing  
Centre Supervisor**

1. Prior to submitting an application form, a person applying to serve as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor shall:
  - review the directives, rules and procedures associated with the management and administration of diploma exams at a Special Writing Centre
  - identify and tentatively procure an appropriate site for the administration of diploma exams
2. A person approved to serve as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor shall administer the diploma exam(s) in accordance with the diploma exam schedules, directives, deadlines, rules and procedures specified in this bulletin
3. A person approved to serve as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor must become proficient in utilizing Quest A+
4. A person approved to serve as a Special Writing Centre Supervisor shall notify the Special Cases and Accommodations team of any changes to his or her ability to supervise the diploma exam(s).

**Submission of  
Special Writing  
Centre Request  
Applications**

All requests to establish a Special Writing Centre must be made using the appropriate application forms by the specified deadlines. All Special Writing Centre enquiries should be forwarded by email to [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca).

## *Deferments, Partial Deferments, Exemptions and Partial Exemptions*

### **Deferments and Partial Deferments Principles**

The Diploma Program is dedicated to increasing opportunity and choice while maintaining excellence in the Alberta Education system. The increased frequency of diploma exam administrations means that deferring a diploma exam to a subsequent administration should, in most cases, be the primary response for students who are unable to participate in the current diploma exam administration.

On the *List of Students*, the Principal should note any deferred diploma exams by recording *deferred* next to the name of the affected student(s). Below is an example of how to note this on the *List of Students*:



### June 2015 Diploma Examinations LIST OF STUDENTS #8



School: 9999 The New Century School (403) 321-4321  
Authority: 0000 Alberta School Division No. 99

**NOTE: Alberta Student Numbers MUST be provided for all students who wrote diploma examinations.**

Alberta Student Number	Student Name Surname, Given Names	Sex	Birth Date	E – wrote English/F – wrote French			
				Math 30-1 F	Math 30-1	Math 30-2	Math 30-2 F
9999-9999-0	Banner, Bruce	M	2990-05-26	F ✓			
9999-9999-1	Kent, Clarke	M	2990-10-04	F ✓			
9999-9999-2	Kirk, James	M	2990-06-01		E <i>NW</i>		
9999-9999-3	Lane, Lois	F	2990-09-30			E ✓	
9999-9999-4	Organa, Leia	F	2989-09-12				F ✓
9999-9999-5	Prince, Diana	F	2990-02-03			E ✓	
9999-9999-6	Romanoff, Nathasha	F	2990-07-11		E ✓		
9999-9999-7	Stark, Tony	M	2990-01-02	F <i>NW</i>	<i>Deferred</i>		

Students who defer writing to the next diploma exam administration must register for the diploma exam by the registration deadline.

### **Exemption Business Rules**

1. All exemption applications are reviewed by, and official decisions are rendered by, Alberta Education staff only. School authorities and/or school administration staff are not eligible to grant exemptions from the writing of diploma exams.
2. Students applying for exemptions from the writing of diploma exams are expected to write all diploma exams if an official case decision has not been rendered by Alberta Education staff, and communicated to the student by, the diploma exam date and time. If a diploma exam exemption request has not been granted and the student has chosen not to write the diploma exam, he or she will be expected to write the diploma exam at the next scheduled diploma exam administration.
3. If a student has been granted a full or partial exemption from writing a diploma exam, the student is no longer required to write that diploma

exam at that diploma exam administration.

4. Exemptions and partial exemptions from diploma exams are administration-specific and cannot be carried forward to a future diploma exam administration. Once the diploma exam marks are released, exemptions and partial exemptions will not be reviewed or granted for that administration. If school-awarded marks are adjusted after the final official mark is calculated and released to students, the exemption and partial exemption mark will not be modified to reflect the new school-awarded mark.
5. If a student does not have a school-awarded mark in the course for that specific administration period, although he or she may be eligible for exemption, the exemption cannot be processed. Similarly, mature students who are challenging the diploma exam and students rewriting the diploma exam but not retaking instruction do not have the basis to have an exemption applied.
6. Students who are granted an exemption from a diploma exam and would like to write the diploma exam at a later date are required to pay an administration fee of \$26.25.
7. Parents or guardians of students under the age of 18 must be made aware of the exemption request from writing the diploma exam or diploma exams and must support the request.

**Full Exemption  
Business Rules**

The student's current school-awarded mark in the course, in relation to the current diploma exam administration, is used to replace the entire diploma exam mark when a full exemption is granted.

If a student does not have a passing school-awarded mark it would not be in the student's best interest to be exempted from writing the diploma exam. The final official mark for the course will reflect the failing school-awarded mark.

**Partial Exemption  
Business Rules**

For partial exemptions from writing either the Part(ie) A or B of an English Language Arts/Français/French Language Arts or Social Studies diploma exam, to derive the component exempted from writing, the average between the mark from the component completed and the student's school-awarded mark from the course is calculated.

For example,

- A student has a school-awarded mark of 80%
- The student wrote the written response component (Part A) of the diploma exam and achieved a mark of 70%
- School-awarded mark 80% + written response component mark 70% /2

= 75% multiple choice component (Part B)

- The diploma exam mark is calculated by taking the average between the written component and the multiple choice component  $70\% + 75\% / 2 = 73\%$  diploma exam mark
- The official mark for the course is calculated to be  $56\%$  school-awarded mark +  $21.9\%$  diploma exam mark =  $77.9\%$  rounded-up to  $78\%$

If a student would like to improve his or her overall diploma exam mark the entire diploma exam must be rewritten.

## Terminology

- **School personnel:** Staff at school-level who organizes the requests and operates as school contact for all communication related to the requests. School personnel will act as the primary contact for students and parents, and are responsible for forwarding all inquiries to the Special Cases team.
- **Deficiency Notification:** The exemption request has been received; however, the supporting documentation is incomplete. Special Cases and Accommodations team members will outline the specific materials needed to complete the review the request by email
- **Official Case Decision:** A decision to grant or not grant the request for exemption has been rendered and communicated to the School personnel
- **Case Suspended:** The material required for review has not been received by the deadline provided by the Special Cases and Accommodations team. An official case decision has not been rendered. Cases can be reopened once all additional information requested has been submitted for review
- **Request to Reconsider a Case Decision:** Prior to appealing a case decision to Special Cases Committee, Special Cases and Accommodations team may reconsider the original decision with submission of new official documentation to support the request. School personnel must submit a *Request to Reconsider* form with the new information. This form can be obtained by emailing [Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Special.Cases@gov.ab.ca).
- **Appeal:** This is a formal appeal to the Special Cases Committee

## Exemption Eligibility and Process

All applications for exemption from writing diploma exams must include the [Request for Exemption from Writing Diploma Exam](#) form and supporting documentation. The Special Cases and Accommodations team will not render an official decision until all required supporting documentation has been submitted for review. Specific information outlining the supporting documents requirements are detailed in the *Required Documents* section.

## Process for Applying for an Exemption from Writing a Diploma

- Step 1:** The School personnel collects all forms and supporting documentation.
- Step 2:** The School personnel forwards the forms and supporting documentation to the Special Cases and Accommodations team.

## **Exam**

- Step 3:** The Special Cases and Accommodations team reviews, processes and communicates a response for each application to the School personnel.
- Step 4:** The School personnel communicates the response to the student **in writing.**
- Step 5: (Request for Reconsideration if required)** For the Special Cases and Accommodations team to reconsider an official case decision, the reconsideration request must include (a) A *Request to Reconsider* form and (b) **new** supporting documentation that meets the eligibility criteria.
- Step 6: (Appeal to Special Cases Committee if required)** The Special Cases Committee will make a final determination as to whether or not the student can be approved for the requested exemption from a diploma exam. The Special Cases Committee has authority to propose and facilitate alternate reasonable solutions in accordance with the principles outlined in this document and under the *Student Evaluation Regulation 177/2003*.

The Minister may review the process undertaken regarding a specific case heard through the Special Cases Committee process. Further information regarding the operations of the Special Cases Committee is located in the *Guide to Education, ECS to Grade 12* or contact the Special Cases Committee Executive Secretary by email at [special.cases@gov.ab.ca](mailto:special.cases@gov.ab.ca).

## **Group Applications**

In the event that a group of students are impacted and unable to access the writing of a diploma exam, a group application may be submitted to the Special Cases and Accommodations team. The group application must include the school code and school name, reason for the request for exemption, the list of impacted students (last name, first name and Alberta Student Number) and the diploma exam course name. It is the responsibility of the principal to contact students to inform them of the possibility of exemption. Principals and other school staff cannot apply for exemption on behalf of a student without consent.

## REASONS ELIGIBLE FOR EXEMPTION

When a diploma exam is available in the next administration, the normal response to extenuating circumstances is deferment (see deferment information above). In the event that the diploma exam is not available in the next administration, the table below can be used to clarify the reasons for exemption, the associated business rules, and the required supporting documentation.

Reason	Business Rules	Required Documents
<b>Acute Illness</b>	<p>An acute illness has a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rapid onset and</li> <li>2. Short course (as opposed to an ongoing course)</li> </ol> <p>The <a href="#"><u>Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam</u></a> form indicating an acute illness cannot be applied to an exam scheduled three weeks beyond the date of the medical consultation. Requests for exemptions for exams that are beyond three weeks of the original medical appointment are considered <i>ongoing medical conditions</i> (refer to Reasons Not Eligible for Exemption).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam</i> form.</li> <li>• <b>Important Note:</b> If a student becomes ill during the writing of the diploma exam at the school, a comment referencing the student’s illness on the <i>Principal’s Statement</i> will suffice as evidence of the illness. Students who are ill and call the school the morning of the diploma exam must complete and submit the <a href="#"><u>Physician’s Confirmation of Acute Medical Illness</u></a> form.</li> </ul>

## **Administrative Error**

Administrative error refers to an error in the administration of the diploma exam.

An example includes incorrect time permitted to write the exam. For advice regarding *what constitutes an administrative error*, contact the Special Cases and Accommodations team.

Principals are expected to establish, implement and communicate emergent response protocols which promote effective and efficient management of (a) unexpected non-crisis events such as loss of power or a misprinted exam booklet in accordance with the exam administration rules and (b) late course transfers to prevent the administration of incorrect diploma exams.

- A statement and documentation from the school administrator clearly describing the event.
- In the event that a group of students are affected during the writing of the exam, a group application could be submitted to Alberta Education Special Cases and Accommodations team.

## **Bereavement**

### **Death of an Immediate Family Member**

Students who experience the death of an immediate family member (parents, siblings and children) immediately before (within 3 weeks) of a diploma exam administration are eligible for exemptions from all diploma exams in that administration.

### **Death of a Non- Immediate Family Member and Friends**

Students who experience the death of a non-immediate family member (grandparents, uncles, aunts

- Obituary/death certificate/funeral announcement and/or,
- Funeral arrangement/services documentation outlining the date and time and/or,
- Travel information/flight itinerary

If outside of the identified business rule timelines, supporting documentation must clearly outline the current academic functional mental state of the bereaved student. To ensure the application for exemption for bereavement outside of the identified business rule timelines is complete, it is recommended that the [\*Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam\*](#) form is used a guideline for the physician.

The [\*Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a\*](#)



and cousins) or friend may be eligible for an exemption and may take up to three consecutive days starting from the day of passing for grieving.

[Diploma Exam](#) form must be submitted before the diploma exam marks are available on *myPass*.

In addition to the three days for grieving, students may take one day for the funeral services.

**Important Note:** The services must conflict with the scheduled exam to be an eligible reason for exemption from writing.

Additional consideration will be made for distance travelled for funeral services.

For the death of a classmate, Special Cases and Accommodations team will take into consideration the relationship between the deceased and the bereaved.

## Concussion

The Special Cases and Accommodations team evaluates and considers the mechanism of the concussion and the severity and symptoms experienced by the student. Diploma exams written over the extent of the administration may be considered separately depending upon the mechanism of the concussion.

**If the concussion or a post-concussion event occurred within three weeks of the scheduled diploma exam**

- [Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam](#) form that clearly includes the date and the specific cause of the concussion and the student's academic functional limitations at the time of writing.

## Inclement Weather

Inclement weather includes situations where the weather conditions prevent a student from being able to arrive safely at the nearest available writing location or where the writing locations have been closed

- AMA road reports or police accident report or bus company report validating that busses were not operating or tow truck report or school personnel reporting closure.
- **Note:** In the event that a group of students are impacted and unable to access the writing of a diploma exam as a result of inclement weather, a group application could be submitted to Alberta

Education.

**Parent Illness**

In the event that a parent falls seriously ill or is diagnosed with a terminal illness within three weeks of the diploma exam administration, the student may be eligible for exemption based on the student's mental state.

- [Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam](#) form indicating the academic functional and/or cognitive limitations of the student at the time of writing.

**School or community emergency or crisis**

School or community emergency or crises interfere with school operation immediately before, during or after the administration of a diploma exam. Such events might include natural disasters or other events that might necessitate school closures or the unexpected dismissal of students from the school or diploma exam writing area. In the event that the removal of students from the writing location is temporary, school personnel are expected to maintain security of diploma exam materials and allow the students to return to the diploma exam administration. **Students in these situations must be allowed the full time allotted for the exam.** Students should not be permitted access to digital devices during this time and must be sequestered.

- If a group of students has been impacted, a group application could be submitted to the Special Cases and Accommodations team.
- Principals must notify the Director of Exam Administration and/or the Senior Manager, Business Operations and Special Cases of any irregularities that occurred during the diploma exam administration. If the students impacted by the event may be eligible for exemption, a copy of the *Principal's Statement* should be sent directly to the Special Cases and Accommodations team.

**Subpoena to attend court**

A subpoena to attend court scheduled at the same time as a diploma exam is not sufficient for requesting an exemption. Generally, court dates can be postponed at the

In the event that the student must attend court that is scheduled at the same time as a diploma exam, the student must:

- demonstrate that he/she attempted to postpone the court appearance,
- validate the court appearance and,

request of the student if requested in a timely manner for events such as diploma exams.

- provide official evidence that he or she was in attendance.
- a. **Civil Court (adults only):** *Notice of Hearing* and *Notice to Attend*, if official documentation is not available a statement confirming attendance must be obtained from a person of authority commensurate with a court clerk, judge or lawyer.
- b. **Criminal Court:** there is no standard form, the student can request a photocopy of court documents verifying attendance or a statement confirming attendance must be obtained from a person of authority commensurate with a court clerk, judge or lawyer.
- c. **Family & Youth Court:** since there is no form, a statement confirming attendance must be obtained from a person of authority commensurate with a court clerk, judge or lawyer.
- d. **Citizenship:** a Citizen certificate or a statement confirming attendance must be obtained from a person of authority commensurate with a court clerk, judge or lawyer.

## Surgery

Students who are scheduled to have surgery are eligible for exemption if the surgery is scheduled at the same time as the exam, occurs as planned and is not re-scheduled.

Students may also be eligible for an exemption if the recovery from the surgical procedure covers the time during the diploma exam administration. Medical guidelines for recovery should be followed.

Supporting documentation must validate that surgery took place at the same time as the diploma exam

- **For surgery:** [\*Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam\*](#) form or medical discharge papers indicating the surgery took place on the scheduled date.
- **For recovery from surgery:** [\*Physician Confirmation of Acute Medical Condition or Illness Affecting the Writing of a Diploma Exam\*](#) form indicating the:
  - anticipated recovery period
  - functional limitations of the student following surgery and
  - medication and number of refills permitted.

## **REASONS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR EXEMPTION**

### **Ongoing Medical Conditions**

If a student with an ongoing medical condition experiences a medical crisis immediately before or during a particular diploma exam, he or she may apply for an exemption or partial exemption from that exam in the same manner in which all students may apply on the basis of an **acute medical condition**.

### **Concussion if the student is experiencing symptoms more than three weeks prior to the scheduled diploma exam:**

Students experiencing ongoing symptoms related to concussions dated more than three weeks prior to the scheduled diploma exam must utilise the accommodations and provisions put into place for classroom instruction and classroom testing. See *Diploma Exam Accommodations and Provisions* above.

### **Parent Illness (more than three weeks prior to the exam administration)**

In the event that a parent falls seriously ill or is diagnosed with a terminal illness **prior to** three weeks of the diploma exam administration, the student may be eligible for accommodations and provisions based on the learning plan created by the school personnel to assist the student during this period of crisis. The learning plan must contain a list of the accommodations and provisions provided to this student.

### **Severe Test Anxiety and Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

Students identified with severe test anxiety or Generalized Anxiety Disorder may be eligible for accommodations and provisions based on the learning plan created by the school personnel to assist the student in managing their anxiety. The learning plan must contain a list of the accommodations and provisions provided to this student.

### **Planned trip or work**

Students anticipating to be away and unable to write a diploma exam as a result of events such as weddings, vacations, work onset, family event or any other planned absence are not eligible to be exempt from the writing of diploma exam(s). The

writing of the diploma exam must be deferred to a subsequent administration.

### **Computer Failure/Power Outage and Not Saved Work**

In co-operation with the principal and technical personnel, exam supervisors shall develop an exam administration contingency plan that can be implemented, as required, to address unexpected issues or problems that arise while exams are being written using computers.

In the event of a power or computer/network failure, students are to be directed to complete the diploma exam by handwriting.

### **Late Course Transfer**

Exemptions will not be granted for students who write the incorrect diploma exam because they transferred courses after the deadline and were not registered for the correct diploma exam by the registration deadline.

Principals must develop and implement a process which allows for diploma exam supervisors to provide the correct diploma exam to the student if that student is not registered by the registration deadline. Principals are encouraged to print out a list of students using PASIprep, on the scheduled administration date, for a more current record.

### **Misprinted Booklets**

If a school receives misprinted booklets with missing pages or questions, the school is permitted to:

- Photocopy an intact copy and provide the copies to students who have a misprinted booklet
- Permit students additional writing time equal to the amount of time lost due to photocopying logistics

If an intact copy is not available at the school, contact Exam Administration and a team member will work to resolve the issue.

Misprinted booklets are not an eligible reason for an exemption from writing the diploma exam. For the above circumstances, the principal shall document the event on the *Principal's Statement*.