

## Universal Supports for Provincial Assessments – Questions & Answers

### General Questions:

Q1. What prompted this change? Who was asking for it?

A1. Alberta Education has always offered accommodations for students who require them to write diploma exams and Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). Over time, the processes to request accommodations have become more decentralized – however, stakeholders have indicated that the processes are time consuming, may be expensive, and may direct resources away from students. Students who use accommodations throughout the school year (such as listening to audio recordings of test questions) no longer need to go through a qualification process to access the accommodation for PATs or Diploma Exams.

Q2. Why are students being given extra time to write all the exams?

A2. Performance should be a reflection of a student's knowledge and abilities rather than a result of how quickly a student can complete the task. Time should not be a limiting factor on a student's ability to complete an assessment. This approach is supported by Alberta's education stakeholder organizations as well.

Q3. How did accommodations work last year?

A3. Previously, students needed to qualify for accommodations such as extra writing time, audio, etc. Alberta Education published criteria for students to qualify for accommodations. The criteria needed to be documented on student's learning plans or individual student plans. Schools also had to provide evidence that students actually used the accommodations throughout the school year. Sometimes, schools would even commission expensive psychoeducational assessments to substantiate the need for certain accommodations, sometimes just for the purpose of accessing accommodations for PATs and Diploma Exams. Most requests for accommodations were reviewed by school authority personnel, and this was a time consuming process for them.

Q4 Should students be allowed extra time for their classroom assessments?

A4. Alberta Education does not provide directives for classroom assessment practices. Decisions about assignments, tests and grades are made at the local level, and many schools and school authorities have policies that govern classroom assessment methods and tools.

Q5. Will Alberta Education monitor how many students are using extra time?

A5. Students will be asked to respond to a time-survey question at the end of each diploma exam and PAT. Alberta Education will use the data to monitor how many students are using extra time to complete their exams. The information from the data survey will not be considered in the scoring of Part A written responses, nor will it affect student marks. Alberta Education has done time surveys in the past with certain diploma examinations and also gathers data relative to time on some field tests.

### Extra Time Provision – Administrative Questions

Q1. Are students who previously had the extra time accommodation eligible for double the extra time provision?

A1. No. The maximum time any student can take to complete the diploma exam is indicated on the instructions page of the diploma exam.

Q2. Do students need to indicate ahead of time that they plan to take extra time to write a diploma exam?

A2. No. However, students who do take extra time must note this on the back of their exam booklet.

Q3. Currently, Physics and Science 30 are written on the same day. With the extra time provision for all students, are there plans to have only one exam per day now?

A3. No. Alberta Education has worked closely with CASS and other stakeholders to shorten the overall diploma exam administration schedule so that teachers have more instructional time with students.

Q4. How will students who are writing both Physics 30 and Science 30 on the same day be eligible for the extra time provision?

A4. Principals may decide to start the administration of the diploma exams early when more than one diploma exam is scheduled on one day. **Students writing the morning diploma exam cannot be dismissed until 10:00 A.M. and students writing afternoon diploma exam cannot be dismissed until 2:00 P.M. Please note that the order of the exams that are scheduled on the same day cannot be changed.**

Physics 30 is offered five times a year (November, January, April, June & August) and Science 30 is offered four times a year (January, April, June & August), so students may be able to plan their schedule so that they do not write both Science 30 and Physics 30 on the same day.

Q5. Will students be allowed the extra time provision when they are writing a field test?

A5. If extra class time permits and students need more time, an extra 15 minutes may be provided. However, students who are unable to complete the entire field test should not be instructed to guess the remaining answers as this does not represent genuine authentic information on student performance. Teachers may create a mark for the student based on the number of questions the student completed and note the entire field test.

Q6. Does this mean the marking session for Humanities Part A will be longer?

A6. The expectations for the written responses on the Humanities Part A remain the same. Alberta Education will continue to monitor the effect that extra time has on student responses. If necessary, the marking schedule may be adjusted.

Superintendents are encouraged to nominate a sufficient number of qualified teachers to help ensure that students writing diploma exams will have their responses marked consistently and fairly using established provincial standards. Alberta Education will continue to use Standards Confirmation processes to ensure that standards remain fair.

### Audio

Q1. Can students use audio on the diploma exam without having used audio on their classroom assessments?

A1. If students typically use audio for their classroom assessments, their teacher can order audio for the diploma exam by the deadline specified in the *General Information Bulletin*.

Q2. Some of my students like to listen to music while they are working in class. Can they listen to music during the diploma exam?

A2. No.