

Guidelines for Interpreting Diploma Exam Multiyear Reports

Multiyear reports are intended to help school authorities and schools report on the results of diploma exams and to facilitate analysis of results over time. As noted in the *Guide for School Board Planning and Reporting*, using the results achieved on diploma exams for planning and reporting is one of the keys to establishing processes that can lead to continuous improvements in education. School authorities and schools are to report results annually. Detailed reports are provided after each major diploma exam administration in January and June to help with analysis for improvement.

Provincial assessments are meant to complement day-to-day classroom assessment. As such, diploma exam results provide only part of the overall picture of the performance of the province, a school authority, or a school. Although provincial assessments are designed to assess the achievement of provincial standards, which are outlined in the Programs of Study, some learning outcomes cannot be effectively measured by timed, paper-and-pencil tests. In addition, many factors contribute to student achievement. The analysis, interpretation, use, and communication of diploma exam results needs to take these factors into account.

Schools and school authorities are in the best position to accurately interpret, use, and communicate diploma exam results as they pertain to the school or school authority. Wherever possible, information about a particular school or school authority's results should be obtained from that school or school authority. **Alberta Education does not endorse the production or publication of rank order lists of results.** The analysis, interpretation, use, and communication of results on diploma exams should adhere to provincial policy 2.1.3 *Use and Reporting of Results on Provincial Assessments*.

Seven versions of the reports in PDF format are provided for schools and school authorities at <https://education.alberta.ca/alberta-education/school-authority-index/>. Annual reports show the performance of all students in the school authority or school for the entire school year (November, January, April, June, and August administrations). To aid the review of school or school authority performance where summer schools are operated separately from a regular school situation, regular school reports provide the whole school year's data excluding the August administration of the diploma exams. In addition, November, January, April, June and August reports provide data on performance of students by administration. Participation data is reported only on the entire school year reports.

To facilitate the use of diploma exam multiyear data, annual reports at the province, school authority and school levels are also provided in Excel format at <https://www.alberta.ca/administering-diploma-exams.aspx#toc-2>. To gain a better understanding on each column header in the Excel files, please use the PDF version of the diploma exam multiyear reports as references.

Five-Year Diploma Exam Results: 2014/2015 to 2018/2019

1. For this report, each year's statistics are based only on the results of students who wrote diploma exams in that year with a school-awarded mark at the same sitting. Students writing an exam for a particular course more than once in a year, for whom there are school-awarded marks and diploma exam marks, are reported in all schools and school authorities. When reporting students with multiple writings within the same school year in the same school or school authority and at the provincial level, the results for the administration with the highest final mark is reported. Students writing French versions of the diploma exams are included in these statistics.
2. When reading this report, note the number of students who wrote the exam. The fewer the students, the more carefully the results must be interpreted. The overall results for small groups of students can be greatly influenced by the scores of one or two individuals.
3. Examine the results at the *standard of excellence* and the *acceptable standard*. A significance test is provided that indicates whether the percentage of students meeting standards on the exam is above, not different from, or below the previous 3-year average at the province, school authority or school level.
4. Starting in the 2018/2019 school year, a written-response component, worth 25% of the total exam mark, has been included in the Mathematics 30-1/ Mathematics 30-2 Diploma Exam.
5. For diploma exam courses in the years prior to the use of equating, do not directly compare percentages from year to year. However, it is possible to identify changes in the performance of a school authority or school by comparing its results to provincial results and looking for a pattern from year to year and across courses. These calculations are in the rows labeled "Authority (or School) Minus Province". A negative number indicates that the authority or school is below the province. Look to see if the school authority or school is consistently outperforming the province or consistently doing less well than the province.

When looking at the difference in percentage between the school authority or school and the province, estimate how many students are accounted for in the difference. For example, if the statistics are based on ten students, a 10% difference is equal to one student.

As a result of Alberta Education's effort to maintain consistent standards over time in diploma exams, direct comparisons of results are now possible for most courses. Specifically, direct comparisons of results may be made for the following courses: Biology 30, English 30-1, and English 30-2 since 2005/2006, Science 30 and Chemistry 30 since 2010/2011, Social Studies 30-2 since 2011/2012, Social Studies 30-1 since 2012/2013, Physics 30 since 2013/2014, and Mathematics 30-1 and Mathematics 30-2 since 2016/2017. For more information about equating, please visit the Alberta Education website at <https://www.alberta.ca/administering-diploma-exams.aspx#toc-3>

6. Starting in the 2017/18 school year, additional writing time is available for all students writing diploma exams without an application process. All students are permitted up to twice the official time limit to write the diploma exam, if they need it.
7. The difference between school-awarded and diploma exam marks also provides useful information. Look for a consistent pattern in the difference across courses. Again, when the number of students is small, one student can have a sizable effect on the average.
8. Results on provincial assessments for individual students and for groups of fewer than six students are not to be publicly released.

Five-Year Diploma Exam Participation: 2014/2015 to 2018/2019

1. A student who was over 19 years of age on September 1 of the current school year is not included in school, school authority, and provincial reports. Schools where 50% or more of the students were over 19 on September 1 of the current school year are not included in school authority and provincial participation figures.
2. Students in their third year of high school are those students registered in a school on September 30th of the reported school year who are classified as having been in Grade 10 two years earlier.
3. A course can be completed in the reported school year or in a previous year. A course is considered to be completed if a student has received a final mark from Alberta Education. This would include students involved in field testing new Programs of Study who have not written the diploma exam and special case students who were exempted from writing the diploma exam.
4. Students are reported in the authority in which they were registered on September 30th, regardless of where they actually completed the course.
5. The 2015/2016 results do not include students who were exempted from writing the exam because of the Fort McMurray wildfires.

For more information on the use of these reports please contact Deanna Shostak, Director of Diploma Programs or Gilbert Guimont, Director of French Assessment, Provincial Assessment at (780) 427-0010, toll-free at 310-0000, or by e-mail at Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca or Gilbert.Guimont@gov.ab.ca .