Information Bulletin
Social Studies 30–2

Diploma Examinations Program **2026–2027**

Alberta

This document was primarily written for:		
Students		
Teachers	✓	of Social Studies 30–2
Administrators		
Parents		
General Audiences		
Others		

2026-2027 Social Studies 30–2 Information Bulletin

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Please note that if you cannot access one of the direct website links referred to in this document, you can find diploma examination-related materials on the Alberta Education and Childcare website.

Introduction

The *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination* is designed to reflect the issues-centred, multiple-perspectives approach and skills-based emphasis of the *Social Studies (10-12) Program of Studies*. In the Social Studies 30–2 program, the focus is on the key issue of "To what extent should we embrace an ideology?" In addressing this key issue, students will explore four related issues, four general outcomes, and numerous specific outcomes.

Diploma exams will be weighted at 30%, and the school-awarded mark will constitute 70% of a student's final mark.

Teachers are encouraged to share the contents of this bulletin with students.

For further information about program implementation, refer to the Alberta Education and Childcare website.

Examination Security

All diploma examinations will be held secure until they are released to the public by the Minister (i.e., no longer confidential). No secure diploma examination is to be previewed until it is released to the public by the Minister. No secure diploma examination is to be previewed, discussed, copied, or removed from the room in which the examination is being written. However, for the January and June administrations only, teachers will be allowed to peruse the diploma examination for review purposes 1 hour after the examination has started.

For mathematics and science diploma examinations, all diploma examinations must be kept secure before, during, and after administration, without exception.

For humanities diploma examinations, the humanities *Part A: Written Response* examinations in the January and June administrations must be kept secure until after they are administered. All other humanities *Part A: Written Response* examinations, and all humanities *Part B* examinations, must be kept secure before, during, and after administration, without exception.

For more information about teacher perusal and examination security, please refer to the Administering diploma exams web page.

Time Limits on Diploma Examinations

All students may use extra time to write diploma examinations. This means that all students have up to 5 hours to complete each part (*Part A* and *Part B*) of the *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination*, if they need it. The examination is nevertheless designed so that the majority of students can complete each part of it within 2½ hours. The examination instructions state both the designed time and the total time allowed.

Although extra time is allowed for diploma examinations in all subjects, the total time allowed is not the same in all subjects. For more information about accommodations and provisions for students, please refer to the Administering diploma exams web page.

Equating to Maintain Consistent Standards over Time on Diploma Examinations

A goal of Alberta Education and Childcare is to make scores achieved on examinations within the same subject directly comparable from session to session, to ensure fairness to students across administrations.

To achieve this goal, the examination has a number of questions in common with a previous examination. Common (anchor) items are used to find out if the student population writing in one administration differs in achievement from the student population writing in another administration. Common items are also used to find out if the unique items (questions that have never appeared in a previous examination) differ in difficulty from the unique (non-anchor) items on the baseline examination that sets the standard to which all students are held.

A statistical process called equating adjusts for differences in difficulty between examinations. Examination marks may be adjusted depending upon the difficulty of the examination written relative to the baseline examination. Therefore, the resulting equated examination scores have the same meaning regardless of when and to whom the examination was administered. Equated diploma examination marks are reported to students. More information about equating is available on the Administering diploma exams web page.

Because of the security required to ensure fair and appropriate assessment of student achievement over time, *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examinations* will be fully secured and will not be released at the time of writing.

Diploma Examinations: Multiple Forms

Some subjects may have two distinct forms (versions) of diploma examinations during major administrations (January and June). Like all other diploma examinations, the two forms are equated to the baseline examination to ensure that the same standard applies to both forms. Both forms adhere to the established blueprint specifications and are reviewed by a technical review committee.

To facilitate the analysis of school-level results, each school receives only one examination form per subject. In subjects offering a translated French-language examination, both forms are administered in English and in French.

For more information, contact the following:

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards, marking, and results reporting
Diploma.Exams@gov.ab.ca

or

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules, scheduling, and policy issues
Exam.Admin@gov.ab.ca

How to Get Involved

High-quality diploma examinations are the product of close collaboration between classroom teachers and Alberta Education and Childcare. Classroom teachers from across Alberta are involved in many aspects of diploma examination development, including the development of items; the building, reviewing, administering, and marking of field tests; the reviewing and validating of diploma examinations; the reviewing of support documents; and the marking of diploma examinations.

The development of test items from when they are written until when they appear on an examination takes at least one year. All items on *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examinations* are written and/or validated by Social Studies 30–2 teachers from across Alberta. After provincial implementation of the program of studies, items are field tested to ensure their reliability and validity. Diploma examinations are reviewed by editors and validated by working groups that consist of classroom teachers and curriculum staff.

Alberta Education and Childcare values the involvement of teachers and annually asks school authorities for the names of teachers who are interested in being involved in any of the development processes for diploma examinations. Teachers who are interested in developing items, constructing field tests, or reviewing and validating examinations are encouraged to talk to their principals about how they can submit their names for approval to be involved in these processes. Although the call for submissions for working groups occurs each fall, teachers are welcome to have their names submitted at any time.

Teachers may also be nominated by their school authority to mark written-response assignments for humanities and mathematics diploma examinations. The call for nominations of markers occurs in early September (for January and April marking) and again in February (for June, August, and November marking). Teachers who would like to be nominated to mark diploma exams are encouraged to talk to their principals.

Field Testing

Field testing is an essential stage in the development of fair, valid, and reliable provincial examinations. Field testing is a process of collecting data on questions before the questions become part of a diploma examination. Potential diploma examination questions are administered to students in field tests for diploma courses throughout the province to determine the difficulty and appropriateness of the questions. Each field test requires a large student sample to provide the examination developers with reliable information (i.e., statistical data and written validation comments from teachers and students).

How do field tests help teachers and students?

Teachers receive each student's score promptly, gaining useful information about their students' performance. Students benefit from writing a test that duplicates some of the experience of writing a diploma examination. Field tests provide students and teachers with examples of the format and content of questions that may appear on diploma examinations. Finally, because of field testing, students, teachers, and parents can be reassured that the questions on diploma examinations have undergone a rigorous development, improvement, and validation process.

How are field test data used?

The data received from field tests indicate the validity, reliability, and fairness of each question. Questions that meet specific standards are selected for use on future diploma examinations.

Some questions or sets of questions may not initially perform as well as we require. These questions may be revised and tested again in field tests. Revisions are influenced by the written comments of students and teachers, who provide valuable advice about the appropriateness of the questions, the adequacy of writing-time limits, test length, text readability, artwork/graphics clarity and suitability, and question difficulty.

Humanities field tests

Humanities field tests are available in digital format on the digital assessment platform.

Teachers are provided with data on how their students performed. Test items address learning outcomes in the program of studies, which allows teachers to use field test results to learn more about their students' strengths and areas for improvement.

The security of field test items remains vital to the administration of diploma examinations. Participating teachers must commit to maintaining the security of field test items.

More information about field test registration deadlines, administration, and security is available in the *Field Testing Guide 2026–2027* on the Teacher participation in provincial assessments web page.

How can teachers schedule field tests?

Field tests are offered digitally on the digital assessment platform. To schedule a field test, teachers must have a digital assessment platform teacher account.

For information about how to schedule and administer a field test, please refer to the *Field Testing Guide 2026–2027* on the Teacher participation in provincial assessments web page or contact Field.Test@gov.ab.ca.

Detailed instructions for how to schedule a field test can also be found on the digital assessment platform Help web page.

For more information, contact the following:

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards, marking, and results reporting
Diploma.Exams@gov.ab.ca

or

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules, scheduling, and policy issues
Exam.Admin@gov.ab.ca

Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise answering questions similar to those used on diploma examinations that address learning outcomes in the program of studies, Alberta Education and Childcare produces practice tests for subjects that have a diploma examination. Students can access these practice tests using Alberta Education and Childcare's digital assessment platform.

Special-format Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise answering questions similar to those used on diploma examinations that address learning outcomes in the program of studies in Braille, large print, or coloured print versions, Alberta Education and Childcare produces special-format practice tests for all subjects that have a diploma examination. Alberta schools with registered Alberta K–12 students may place orders for these tests. Braille versions are available in English and, by request, in French. All tests are provided free of charge, but limits may be placed on order volumes to ensure access for all students.

For the greatest benefit, special-format practice tests should be written under conditions similar to those of the corresponding diploma examination. The same rules regarding the use of resources and devices should be followed.

Braille versions must be returned to Alberta Education and Childcare after use.

For more information or to place an order, contact Field.Test@gov.ab.ca.

Audio Descriptions

A support document, *Examples of Descriptions Used in Audio-enabled Versions of Humanities Diploma Exams,* has been developed to assist teachers and students planning to use an audio version during the administration of a humanities diploma examination.

A Grade 12 Practice Test (machine scored) and humanities *Part A* (written response) practice tests with text-to-speech enabled can be accessed on Alberta Education and Childcare's digital assessment platform.

Assessment Standards and Practices for Social Studies 30–2

Weightings	**The diploma examination mark constitutes** 30% of a student's final mark while the **school-awarded mark** constitutes 70% of a student's final mark in Social Studies 30–2.
Examination Format and Weightings	The *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination* is made up of two parts: ***Part A: Written Response* (50%)** and ***Part B: Sources and Questions* (50%)**.
Part A: Written Response Assignments, Scoring Categories, and Weightings	**Assignment I: Understanding and Evaluating Key Course Concepts (10%)** • Explanations and Support 8% • Communication 2% **Assignment II: Interpretation of Sources and Defending a Position (20%)** • Interpretation of Sources 8% • Defence of Position 8% • Communication 4% **Assignment III: Exploring an Issue and Defending a Position (20%)** • Exploration and Analysis 8% • Defence of Position 8% • Communication 4%
Part B: Sources and Questions	The *Part B: Sources and Questions* component, consisting of 60 questions, each worth one mark, is an assessment of students' abilities to apply their knowledge, understanding, and skills, as well as the processes identified in the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study. These questions provide students with response alternatives, of which only one is correct. A detailed description of the *Part B: Sources and Questions* blueprint can be found on page 29.
Examination Writing Time Allowed	**5 hours** is allowed for students to complete the *Part A: Written Response* component. **5 hours** is allowed for students to complete the *Part B: Sources and Questions* component.

Release of Examination Materials

Part A: Written Response for January and June 2027 administrations will be released immediately following the writing of the examination.

Part B: Sources and Questions **will be secured, without exception,** for the January and June 2027 administrations.

Part A: Written Response and *Part B: Sources and Questions* **will be secured, without exception,** for the November 2026 and April and August 2027 administrations.

Student Assessment

The nature of classroom situations permits teachers to assess students using a broad range of assessment instruments that reflect the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study.

Diploma exams are designed to match the program of studies of each subject, but what the diploma exams measure may not be the same in scope as what teachers measure. Diploma exam marks and teacher-awarded marks should reflect the same standard, however, because both assess students based on the same program of studies (curriculum). Alberta Education and Childcare works with teachers to set and maintain the standards of achievement for diploma exams. This information bulletin is intended to assist teachers in understanding the provincial standards for Social Studies 30–2.

A Guide for Students Preparing to Write the Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination and *Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing* are posted on the Writing diploma exams web page.

Part A: Written Response

Description

Part A: Written Response, worth 50% of the total diploma examination mark, consists of three writing assignments:

- Understanding and Evaluating Key Course Concepts
- Interpreting Sources and Defending a Position
- Exploring an Issue and Defending a Position

Authorized references

A dictionary and a thesaurus are available in *Part A: Written Response* examinations on the digital assessment platform for students to use during the administration of *Part A*.

Students writing *Part A: Written Response* are also allowed to use the following print references:

- An authorized English and/or a bilingual dictionary. (Students writing in French may use a French-language dictionary.)
- A thesaurus
- A writing handbook from the following list:
  - *A Canadian Writer's Reference* (D. Hacker), **2nd edition only**
  - *Checkmate: A Writing Reference for Canadians* (J. Buckley)
  - *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* (Alberta Education)
  - *Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing* (J. Buckley)
  - *The St. Martin's Handbook for Canadians* (A. Lunsford et al.)
  - *The Writing Process* (Gehle et al.)

The reference texts used must **not** contain appendices that include social studies content (e.g., historical timelines, the structure of the Government of Canada, Canada's court system, or the structure of international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO).

The following print dictionaries are also authorized for students to use while writing *Part A: Written Response*:

- *Collins Paperback English Dictionary*
- *Collins-Robert Paperback French Dictionary*
- *Gage Canadian Dictionary*
- *Harper Collins French Dictionary (French-English)*
- *Le Petit Robert 1*
- *Merriam-Webster's School Dictionary*
- *The Canadian Oxford High School Dictionary*
- *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*
- *The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*
- *The Oxford Dictionary of Current English*

Students and supervising examiners must ensure that extraneous material is not taken into the examination room.

Suggested word-count ranges

All Part A humanities written-response assignments contain a suggested word-count range. Students can use the suggested word-count range, along with the suggested time limit, as a guideline when responding to the assignment. The range is not a cap.

The suggested word-count ranges below are based on various sources, including the student exemplars chosen for the *Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing*, and on discussions with psychometricians and curriculum staff. Word-count ranges also reflect discussions with teachers during exam development regarding the expectations for each written-response assignment.

Suggested word-count ranges for written-response assignments

Social Studies 30–2 Assignment I: 250–550 words
Social Studies 30–2 Assignment II: 375–900 words
Social Studies 30–2 Assignment III: 350–800 words

Description of Assignment I: Understanding and Evaluating Key Course Concepts

Assignment I: Understanding and Evaluating Key Course Concepts requires students to demonstrate understanding and to apply the skill of evaluation to social studies knowledge and understanding.

For this assignment, students must

- identify a characteristic or characteristics among those provided that are the most important to one of the key concepts of the program of studies
- explain why the characteristic or characteristics chosen are the most important
- support their response using their understanding of social studies

Students are expected to develop a response in paragraph form that reflects the quality of thought and communication expected of students completing Social Studies 30–2.

Value: 10% of the total examination mark (parts A and B combined)

Scoring: Scores contribute to the total examination mark in the following proportions:

Explanations and Support	8%
Communication	2%

Insufficient

Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality.** It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

No response

Students who do not provide a response will receive a **no response** score.

Description of Assignment II: Interpreting Sources and Defending a Position

Assignment II: Interpreting Sources and Defending a Position requires students to demonstrate the skills and processes of interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing through the application of social studies knowledge and understanding. Students are required to interpret three sources to identify what each source communicates about either the role of government or the role of individuals. Considering the three sources, students must then explain and defend a position on what the role of either government or individuals should be.

For this assignment, students must

- interpret each source to identify the ideas presented in each source about the role of either government or individuals in society
- explain and defend a position on what the role of either government or individuals in society should be
- support their response by referring to the sources and their understanding of social studies

Students are expected to develop responses in paragraph form that reflect the quality of thought and communication expected of students completing Social Studies 30–2.

Note: Students are not expected or required to identify or explain a relationship among the three sources.

Value: 20% of the total examination mark (parts A and B combined)

Scoring: Scores contribute to the total examination mark in the following proportions:

Interpretation of Sources	8%
Defence of Position	8%
Communication	4%

Zero

Responses that provide little or no attempt to address the Interpretation of Sources category or Defence of Position category may receive a score of **zero** in that category. Scores of **zero** in both the Interpretation of Sources category and Defence of Position category will automatically result in a score of **zero** in the Communication category.

No response

Students who do not provide a response will receive a **no response** score.

Description of Assignment III: Exploring an Issue and Defending a Position

Assignment III: Exploring an Issue and Defending a Position requires students to demonstrate the skills and processes of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing through the application of social studies knowledge and understanding. Students must respond to an issues-focused question. Several brief responses from fictitious citizens are provided to serve as a prompt for students.

For this assignment, students must

- explore an issue that is posed to them
- analyze various points of view on the issue
- explain and defend their position on the issue
- support their response using their understanding of social studies

Students are expected to develop a response in paragraph form that reflects the quality of thought and communication expected of students completing Social Studies 30–2.

Value: 20% of the total examination mark (parts A and B combined)

Scoring: Scores contribute to the total examination mark in the following proportions:

Exploration and Analysis	8%
Defence of Position	8%
Communication	4%

Insufficient

Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

No response

Students who do not provide a response will receive a **no response** score.

Social Studies 30–2 *Part A: Written Response* Blueprint

The *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examinations* are designed to reflect the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study. The blueprint below outlines the design of *Part A: Written Response* and describes the skills to be assessed, the assignments, and the categories of assessment. As well, the blueprint specifies the percentage that each section of the examination contributes to the total mark.

	Description of Skills	Description of Assignments	Assessment Categories
Assignment I	Demonstrate **understanding** and apply the skill of **evaluation** to social studies knowledge.*	Students will respond to an assigned task by demonstrating knowledge and understanding of social studies.	**10% of Diploma Examination Mark** **Explanations and Support** **/8** **Communication** **/2**
Assignment II	Demonstrate the skills of **interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing** through the application of social studies knowledge.*	Students will interpret each of three sources and use the details from these sources and their knowledge and understanding of social studies to defend a position.	**20% of Diploma Examination Mark** **Interpretation of Sources** **/8** **Defence of Position** **/8** **Communication** **/4**
Assignment III	Demonstrate the skills of **interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing** through the application of social studies knowledge.*	Students will explore an issue and analyze various points of view on the issue. Students will create a response that explains and defends a position on the issue.	**20% of Diploma Examination Mark** **Exploration and Analysis** **/8** **Defence of Position** **/8** **Communication** **/4**

* Knowledge and understanding includes ideas, information, concepts, and issues identified and inherent in the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2026–2027 Assignment I

Explanations and Support (8 marks)

When marking **Explanations and Support**, the marker will consider the

- quality of explanations
- selection and quality of support
- understanding of the assigned task

Excellent **E**	Explanations are deliberate and comprehensive, revealing a perceptive understanding. Support is specific and accurate, and errors, if present, do not detract from the response. The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of the assigned task.
Proficient **Pf**	Explanations are appropriate and purposeful, revealing a clear understanding. Support is relevant and appropriate but may contain minor errors. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the assigned task.
Satisfactory **S**	Explanations are general and straightforward, revealing an acceptable understanding. Support is relevant but general and/or only partially developed and may contain errors. The response demonstrates an acceptable understanding of the assigned task.
Limited **L**	Explanations are overgeneralized and/or redundant, revealing a confused, yet discernible, understanding. Support is superficial, may not be always relevant, and may contain significant errors. The response demonstrates a confused, yet discernible, understanding of the assigned task.
Poor **P**	Explanations are tangential or minimal, revealing a negligible understanding. Support, if present, is minimal, may be marginally relevant, and/or contains significant errors. The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the assigned task.
Insufficient **INS**	Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

Communication (2 marks)

When marking **Communication**, the marker will consider the

- organization and coherence
- vocabulary (e.g., specificity, accuracy)
- sentence construction (e.g., clarity, completeness)
- grammar and mechanics (e.g., consistency of tense, punctuation, spelling, capitalization)

Proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response must be considered when awarding a mark for **Communication**.

Excellent **E**	The writing is fluent and effectively organized. Vocabulary is precise. The writing demonstrates confident control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors, if present, are inconsequential.
Proficient **Pf**	The writing is clear and logically organized. Vocabulary is appropriate. The writing demonstrates capable control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not interfere with communication.
Satisfactory **S**	The writing is straightforward and functionally organized. Vocabulary is adequate. The writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not seriously interfere with communication.
Limited **L**	The writing is awkward and uneven but discernibly organized. Vocabulary is imprecise and/or inappropriate. The writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors hinder communication.
Poor **P**	The writing is unclear and disorganized. Vocabulary is ineffective and/or incorrect. The writing demonstrates a lack of control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors impede communication.
Insufficient **INS**	Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2026–2027 Assignment II

Interpretation of Sources (8 marks)

When marking **Interpretation of Sources**, the marker will consider the

- quality of the interpretation of each source
- quality of evidence drawn from the sources
- quality of evidence drawn from knowledge of social studies
- understanding of the assigned task

Excellent **E**	Interpretations are insightful, comprehensive, and address all sources. Evidence is specific and accurate, and errors, if present, do not detract from the response. The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Proficient **Pf**	Interpretations are sound and purposeful but may not address all sources. Evidence is relevant and appropriate but may contain minor errors. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Satisfactory **S**	Interpretations are adequate but general and may contain misconceptions. Interpretations may not address all sources. Evidence is relevant but general and/or only partially developed and may contain errors. The response demonstrates an acceptable understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Limited **L**	Interpretations are overgeneralized and may contain substantial misconceptions. Evidence is superficial, may not always be relevant, and may contain significant errors. The response demonstrates a confused, yet discernible, understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Poor **P**	Interpretations are mistaken or irrelevant. Evidence, if present, is minimal, may be marginally relevant, and/or contains significant errors. The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Zero **Z**	Zero is assigned to a response that fails to meet the minimum requirements of the Poor category.

Defence of Position (8 marks)

When marking **Defence of Position**, the marker will consider the

- quality of argument(s) selected to support the position taken
- quality of evidence selected to support the position taken
- understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task

Excellent **E**	The defence of position is based on one or more convincing arguments. Evidence is specific and accurate, and errors, if present, do not detract from the response. The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Proficient **Pf**	The defence of position is based on one or more sound arguments. Evidence is relevant and appropriate but may contain minor errors. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Satisfactory **S**	The defence of position is based on one or more adequate arguments. Evidence is relevant but general and/or only partially developed and may contain errors. The response demonstrates an acceptable understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Limited **L**	The defence of position is based on oversimplified assertions and/or questionable logic. Evidence is superficial, may not always be relevant, and may contain significant errors. The response demonstrates a confused, yet discernible, understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Poor **P**	The defence of position is difficult to determine or little to no attempt is made to defend the position. Evidence, if present, is minimal, may be marginally relevant, and/or contains significant errors. The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Zero **Z**	Zero is assigned to a response that fails to meet the minimum requirements of the Poor category.

Communication (4 marks)

When marking **Communication**, the marker will consider the

- organization and coherence
- vocabulary (e.g., specificity, accuracy)
- contribution of stylistic choices to the creation of voice (e.g., sentence variety, word choice)
- sentence construction (e.g., clarity, completeness)
- grammar and mechanics (e.g., consistency of tense, punctuation, spelling, capitalization)

Proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response must be considered when awarding a mark for **Communication**.

Excellent **E**	The writing is fluent and effectively organized. Effective stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an engaging voice. Vocabulary is precise. The writing demonstrates confident control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors, if present, are inconsequential.
Proficient **Pf**	The writing is clear and logically organized. Appropriate stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of a distinct voice. Vocabulary is appropriate. The writing demonstrates capable control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not interfere with communication.
Satisfactory **S**	The writing is straightforward and functionally organized. Basic stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an adequate voice. Vocabulary is adequate. The writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not seriously interfere with communication.
Limited **L**	The writing is awkward and uneven but discernibly organized. Awkward stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an unconvincing and/or inappropriate voice. Vocabulary is imprecise and/or inappropriate. The writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors hinder communication.
Poor **P**	The writing is unclear and disorganized. Ineffective stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an unsuitable voice. Vocabulary is ineffective and/or incorrect. The writing demonstrates a lack of control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors impede communication.
Zero **Z**	Zero is assigned to a response that fails to meet the minimum requirements of the Poor category.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2026–2027 Assignment III

Exploration and Analysis (8 marks)

When marking **Exploration and Analysis**, the marker will consider the

- quality of the exploration of the issue(s)
- quality of analysis of various points of view on the issue(s)
- understanding of the assigned task

Excellent **E**	Exploration of the issue(s) is insightful and comprehensive. Analysis is thoughtful and thorough, and misconceptions, if present, do not detract from the response. The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of various points of view on the issue(s) and the assigned task.
Proficient **Pf**	Exploration of the issue(s) is sound and capable. Analysis is appropriate and purposeful but may contain minor misconceptions. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of various points of view on the issue(s) and the assigned task.
Satisfactory **S**	Exploration of the issue(s) is adequate but general and may contain misconceptions. Analysis is general and straightforward. The response demonstrates an acceptable understanding of various points of view on the issue(s) and the assigned task.
Limited **L**	Exploration of the issue(s) is superficial and may contain substantial misconceptions. Analysis is incomplete, overgeneralized, and/or redundant, but discernible. The response demonstrates a confused, yet discernible, understanding of various points of view on the issue(s) and the assigned task.
Poor **P**	Exploration of the issue(s) is mistaken or irrelevant. Analysis is minimal and/or tangential. The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of various points of view on the issue(s) and the assigned task.
Insufficient **INS**	Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

Defence of Position (8 marks)

When marking **Defence of Position**, the marker will consider the

- quality of argument(s) selected to support the position taken
- quality of evidence selected to support the position taken
- understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task

Excellent **E**	The defence of position is based on one or more convincing arguments. Evidence is specific and accurate, and errors, if present, do not detract from the response. The response demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Proficient **Pf**	The defence of position is based on one or more sound arguments. Evidence is relevant and appropriate but may contain minor errors. The response demonstrates a clear understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Satisfactory **S**	The defence of position is based on one or more adequate arguments. Evidence is relevant but general and/or only partially developed and may contain errors. The response demonstrates an acceptable understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Limited **L**	The defence of position is based on oversimplified assertions and/or questionable logic. Evidence is superficial, may not always be relevant, and may contain significant errors. The response demonstrates a confused, yet discernible, understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Poor **P**	The defence of position is difficult to determine or little to no attempt is made to defend the position. Evidence, if present, is minimal, may be marginally relevant, and/or contains significant errors. The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of applicable social studies knowledge and the assigned task.
Insufficient **INS**	Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

Communication (4 marks)

When marking **Communication**, the marker will consider the

- organization and coherence
- contribution of stylistic choices to the creation of voice (e.g., sentence variety, word choice)
- vocabulary (e.g., specificity, accuracy)
- sentence construction (e.g., clarity, completeness)
- grammar and mechanics (e.g., consistency of tense, punctuation, spelling, capitalization)

Proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response must be considered when awarding a mark for **Communication**.

Excellent **E**	The writing is fluent and effectively organized. Effective stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an engaging voice. Vocabulary is precise. The writing demonstrates confident control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors, if present, are inconsequential.
Proficient **Pf**	The writing is clear and logically organized. Appropriate stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of a distinct voice. Vocabulary is appropriate. The writing demonstrates capable control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not interfere with communication.
Satisfactory **S**	The writing is straightforward and functionally organized. Basic stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an adequate voice. Vocabulary is adequate. The writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors do not seriously interfere with communication.
Limited **L**	The writing is awkward and uneven but discernibly organized. Awkward stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an unconvincing and/or inappropriate voice. Vocabulary is imprecise and/or inappropriate. The writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors hinder communication.
Poor **P**	The writing is unclear and disorganized. Ineffective stylistic choices may contribute to the creation of an unsuitable voice. Vocabulary is ineffective and/or incorrect. The writing demonstrates a lack of control of sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics. Errors impede communication.
Insufficient **INS**	Insufficient is a special category. **It is not an indicator of quality**. It is assigned to responses that are off topic, do not contain a discernible attempt to address the task, or are too brief to assess in any scoring category.

Student Performance in Social Studies 30–2: Observations from Teachers Marking the Diploma Examination

The following observations made by teachers are presented here to illustrate areas of strength, areas needing improvement, and various approaches taken by students in writing the *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination*.

Assignment I

Students who score higher in Explanations and Support on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- one or more sophisticated/complex characteristic(s)
- little/no reliance on prompt
- thorough/comprehensive definitions and explanations
- sophisticated discussion and connection to one or more ideologies and/or theories
- an explicit and comprehensive explanation of relevance of selected characteristic(s) to key concept(s)
- a distinction between theory and practice of a system or ideology
- a selection of quality support that reflects specific and detailed evidence
- comprehensive conceptual evidence
- appropriately selected and applied ideas of key philosophers/leaders, historical/contemporary figures, and associated ideologies
- specific and accurate evidence
- varied examples (historical versus contemporary) that may include theoretical and practical evidence
- examples from curriculum/classroom and/or current events

Students who score higher in Communication on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- clear organization and coherence and writing may be concise
- a separation of ideas or a logical and progressive flow of ideas
- effective use of paragraphing and transitional devices to structure response
- precise use of specific and varied vocabulary and social studies terminology
- varied and complex sentence structure
- few grammatical or mechanical errors (i.e., evidence of proofreading)

Assignment II

Students who score higher in Interpretation of Sources on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- insightful, nuanced, multi-layered, and/or holistic interpretations demonstrating complex or sophisticated understandings
- interpretations that are developed through elaboration and explanation
- understanding of complexity or complexities of issues addressed in source(s)
- responses that consider the possible roles of individuals or government in society
- evidence that is purposeful and intentionally selected and logically connected to the role of individuals and/or government
- understanding of specific case studies, examples, ideologies, and/or theories to support ideas
- connections to role of individual and/or government that include relevant course content and concepts

Students who score higher in Defence of Position on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- a defence of position that is developed through elaborate and/or comprehensive explanation
- a defence of position that reveals complexity of understanding
- supporting arguments that explain causes, consequences, and/or correlations; consider implications; and may suggest novel solutions to issue(s)
- evidence that is specific and detailed
- application of relevant ideologies, examples, and/or case studies
- connections to relevant course content and concepts to support interpretations

Students who score higher in Communication on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- an approach that is varied and uses more sophisticated structure and organization
- a strong, engaging voice
- use of more formal language
- consistently effective, and, at times, eloquent use of specific social studies terminology and concepts
- varied use of vocabulary
- complex and varied sentence structure

Assignment III

Students who score higher in Exploration and Analysis on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- an exploration of the issue that is purposeful and deliberate
- connections to complex societal issues and/or ideologies
- an analysis of points of view that is thorough and specific, including, but not limited to, those presented in the prompt
- appropriate ideological connections that are explained in greater depth
- an explanation of underlying reasons/values or evidence for various points of view
- sophisticated understanding of the overall topic

Students who score higher in Defence of Position on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- convincing argumentation
- arguments that reveal deeper or greater understanding of the overall topic
- evidence that is specific and strongly supports the position taken
- evidence that is comprehensive and developed in-depth
- relevant concrete and/or theoretical evidence and specific case studies drawn from social studies knowledge
- understandings and relevant social studies knowledge beyond what is in the prompt

Students who score higher in Communication on this assignment tend to demonstrate

- fluent and coherent sentences and paragraphs
- effective organizational structure
- an engaging voice and sophisticated language
- effective, persuasive communication

Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing

Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing is posted on the Writing diploma exams web page. In this document, you will find examples of Social Studies 30–2 diploma examination written responses, taken from several *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examinations*, that received scores of Satisfactory (S), Proficient (Pf), and Excellent (E) in each of the three writing assignments. Accompanying each response are brief rationales that will help to show how the scoring criteria were used to apply the provincial standards to each example.

Practice Tests

You can practise answering questions similar to those used on diploma examinations by accessing practice tests using Alberta Education and Childcare's digital assessment platform.

Part B: Sources and Questions

Description

Part B: Sources and Questions is worth 50% of the total diploma examination mark and consists of 60 machine-scored questions, each worth one mark. These questions provide students with response alternatives, of which only one is correct. Each question is classified according to the knowledge and understanding outcomes of each related issue as well as to the skills and processes outcomes related to either understanding and analysis or evaluation and synthesis. The examination blueprint that follows on page 29 illustrates the distribution of questions within these classifications.

Questions are based on the Social Studies 30–2 key issues and related issues, as well as specific outcomes from the *Social Studies (10-12) Program of Studies*.

The sources and questions (machine-scored) section of the examination requires students to apply their knowledge and skills. Students must demonstrate that they understand social studies concepts and apply requisite skills and processes.

Social Studies 30–2 *Part B: Sources and Questions* Blueprint

Part B: Sources and Questions is designed to reflect the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study. The blueprint for Part B is shown below.

	ITEM CLASSIFICATION BY RELATED ISSUE				
ITEM CLASSIFICATION BY COGNITIVE LEVEL	**Related Issue 1**	**Related Issue 2**	**Related Issue 3**	**Related Issue 4**	**Total Questions**
Apply social studies knowledge and understanding* and skills and processes to items of understanding and analysis.	2–6	10–13	10–13	2–6	24–38
Apply social studies knowledge and understanding* and skills and processes to items of evaluation and synthesis.	2–6	10–13	10–13	2–6	24–38
Total Questions	**4–12**	**20–26**	**20–26**	**4–12**	**60**

*Knowledge and understanding includes ideas, information, and concepts identified and inherent in the Alberta Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 Programs of Study.

Note: Item classification is not an indicator of item difficulty.

Website Links

Alberta Education and Childcare

Curriculum and Programs of study

General Information Bulletin
contains specific directives, guidelines, and procedures of diploma examinations

Diploma exams

Writing diploma exams
contains Guides for Students, exemplars, and other support documents

Digital Assessment Platform
contains practice questions and questions from previous diploma examinations

Help page
contains guides to help users of digital assessments access and administer secured tests and exams

Teacher participation in provincial assessments
contains information about marking, field testing, item development, and examination validation

Contacts 2026–2027

Provincial Assessment

Provincial Assessment,
Alberta Education and Childcare
44 Capital Boulevard
10044 108 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5J 5E6

Alberta Education and Childcare website: alberta.ca/education-and-childcare

Provincial Assessment

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules, scheduling, and policy issues
780-427-1857
Email: exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Results statements and rescores
780-427-1857
Email: exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Special cases, accommodations, and exemptions
780-415-9242
780-427-4215
780-427-9795
Email: special.cases@gov.ab.ca

Field testing
Email: field.test@gov.ab.ca

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards, marking, and results reporting
Email: diploma.exams@gov.ab.ca

Digital Assessment
780-641-8987
780-415-0824
Email: online.assessment@gov.ab.ca

***myPass* Access**
Alberta Education and Childcare Help Desk
780-427-5318
Email: AE.helpdesk@gov.ab.ca

Inquiries about transcripts, credentials, detailed academic reports, and rewrite fees
780-427-5732
Email: studentrecords@gov.ab.ca

Inquiries about student enrollment and marks and mature student status
780-422-9337
Email: studentrecords@gov.ab.ca

For a toll-free call to any Alberta government office, dial 310-0000 followed by the 10-digit phone number of the office that you would like to reach.

When contacting Alberta Education and Childcare, please include your name, title, school name, school code, and, if referring to a student, include the student's Alberta Student Number.

Contacts 2026–2027

Diploma Programs

*NEW **Corey Baker, Director**
Diploma Programs and Canadian Adult Education Credential
780-422-3256
Email: Corey.Baker@gov.ab.ca

Diploma Exam Leads

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Senior Manager of Humanities
Diploma Programs
780-422-4631
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780-422-4478
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*NEW **Andrew Olasker**
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Français 30–1, French Language Arts 30–1
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