



2020–2021 EQAO Field-Test Findings

December 2021

Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) provides large-scale assessments that produce objective and reliable information to support student success.

During the 2020–2021 school year, EQAO field tested the online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) with secondary-school students who were attending school in person.

The goal of field testing these new digital large-scale assessments was to gather information to support the continued development of the e-assessment model and platform. Individual student achievement results were made available to teachers, students and principals. As the field tests progressed, EQAO used stakeholder feedback to enhance the e-assessment system.



The field tests are part of EQAO's ongoing modernization. To learn more, please see the following:

[EQAO's Modernization](#)

[EQAO's Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel](#)

Field Test of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics

The Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics assesses the knowledge and skills defined in the Grade 9 mathematics curriculum, which students are expected to have learned by the end of their Grade 9 mathematics course.

For its field test of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, EQAO introduced multi-stage computer adaptive testing (MsCAT). In this model, questions are grouped together in modules according to their level of difficulty (low, medium or high). Students begin in a module with a medium overall difficulty; their achievement on the first module determines the level of difficulty of their next module. Students receive questions that are challenging but that also align with their proficiency in mathematics. EQAO plans to move computer adaptive testing forward in a measured way as the de-streamed curriculum is launched and psychometric properties of items are understood.

The field-test results were not used in the determination of students' final course mark, except in cases where the teacher, the student and the parent or guardian all agreed that the results would support the student's success.

The field test of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics took place from November 2020 to April 2021. A total of 4592 students participated.

Field Test of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

The OSSLT measures whether students are meeting the minimum standard for literacy across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.

The field-test model for the OSSLT that EQAO administered was a testlet-based linear on-the-fly (tLOFT) model. In a tLOFT assessment delivery method, test forms are generated in real time through the selection of pre-constructed and pre-equated blocks of items and, where applicable, the associated reading passages. Each group generated under this model is mapped to a blueprint specifying criteria for the items to be selected. Since students see different combinations of questions, the assessment can be administered to small groups of students at different times with very low risk to test security. This flexibility lets schools determine when to administer the test within the time window set by EQAO.

Students who were successful on the OSSLT field test were credited with the literacy requirement on their transcript. Students graduating during the 2020–2021 school year were exempted from the literacy graduation requirement.

The OSSLT field test took place from March 23 to June 4, 2021, and a total of 15 581 students participated.

Field-Test Technical Readiness

The agency adopted a two-part approach to ensure e-assessment technical readiness before launching its digital assessment model. EQAO worked closely with school board information technology (IT) teams along with government and IT security partners to establish assurances aimed at providing a successful and secure assessment experience. The agency also made sure it aligned with the Ontario government’s IT standards to guarantee the privacy and security of all student data.

[Digitalizing and Modernizing EQAO Assessments](#)

Enhanced Student Experience

Before writing EQAO’s digitalized assessments, students complete an onboarding module to familiarize themselves with the e-assessment platform. Accessibility features, such as a text-to-speech feature, are built into the e-assessment platform, and the platform also interfaces with other accessibility software tools commonly used by students. Other features (such as highlighting, line drawing and eraser tools) are available to all students as they write the assessments.

Promoting student well-being and mental health is a priority for all educators and at the core of the new Ontario elementary and secondary mathematics curricula. The e-assessment system includes breathing and visualization exercises designed to support students as they begin the assessments. EQAO also introduced technologically enhanced items designed to engage students as they write the online OSSLT. Multiple-choice items use devices such as drag-and-drop, drop-down menus and checklists to make the assessment more interactive for the student.



Student Feedback on the OSSLT

The questionnaire results for the OSSLT field test are based on 10 606 English-language and 1152 French-language students who provided feedback through the questionnaire that was distributed at the time they took the OSSLT. Responses from both first-time eligible and previously eligible students were combined in the analysis.

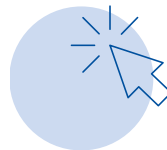


The feedback received from students who completed the questionnaire indicated that

76% of the English-language and
66% of the French-language
students agreed that they liked the look
and feel of the online platform.

Student Feedback on the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics

The questionnaire results for the field test of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics are based on 1491 English-language and 315 French-language students who provided feedback through the questionnaire that was distributed at the time they took the assessment. Responses from both applied and academic students were combined in the analysis.



The feedback received from students who completed the questionnaire indicated that

81% of English-language and
70% of French-language students
agreed that it was easy for them to
navigate between questions.

Educator Feedback

Stakeholder engagement is a key pillar of EQAO’s field-test process. Based on the results of a survey directed at educators, school principals appreciated the flexible timelines for administering the field test. According to this survey, 89% of English-language and French-language principals indicated that they agree that the length of the window for administration of the assessment gave them flexibility for scheduling test sessions. Most principals also provided positive feedback about the e-assessment platform’s usability and the support resources provided by EQAO.

[2020–2021 EQAO Stakeholder Engagement](#)

Feedback from Principal and Teacher Questionnaires

A total of 205 school principals and 928 teachers administered the field tests and had an opportunity to respond to an end-of-year educator questionnaire.

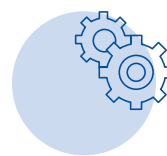
Feedback received from teachers who administered the field tests shows that most found the e-assessment system easy to access and navigate. Teachers also provided positive feedback about the new assessment features for students.

Of the **56** school principals (**27%**) who completed the educator questionnaire,



85% of English- and French-language principals indicated they agree that they had the technical support needed to configure their school’s devices to run the online assessment.

Of the **181** teachers (**20%**) who completed the educator questionnaire,



71% of English-language and **74%** of French-language teachers indicated they agree that the interface was intuitive, and



64% of English-language and **77%** of French-language teachers indicated they agree that the onboarding module helped them prepare students for the assessment.



Continuous Improvement

The work of students, educators, administrators and board staff across Ontario made this year’s field test possible. The agency will continue to analyze the data collected to make further improvements to the system for the 2021–2022 assessments.

Thank you for participating and for your continued support, especially during these unique and challenging times. EQAO values your commitment to student learning and to supporting the modernization of the EQAO assessments.

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