

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board of Directors

Dr. Cameron Montgomery, Chair
January 31, 2019–January 30, 2022

Martyn Beckett
May 6, 2021–May 5, 2022

Serge Demers
August 6, 2020–August 5, 2022

Sarabjit Kaur
May 13, 2021–May 12, 2022

Kyle Wilson
June 18, 2020–June 17, 2022

Chief Operating Officer (Interim)

Laurie McNelles, Ph.D.

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), I am pleased to present the agency's annual report for 2020–2021. The agency is committed to supporting student learning and ensuring our publicly funded education system remains accountable to Ontarians.

During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, the global COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect our province. The Government of Ontario announced that EQAO's primary- and junior-division assessments would be paused during the 2020–2021 school year and that the secondary-level large-scale assessments would be administered online in the form of field tests. This allowed the agency to move forward with its modernization initiative by field testing a modernized and digital format of both the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test to support the continued development of this new e-assessment platform. To help the public acquire a better understanding of the new online system and its characteristics, EQAO publicly released several informational products and research documents while continuing to inform stakeholders and Ontarians about the agency's digitalization initiative through multiple channels.

Over the course of the fiscal year, the agency saw some changes in EQAO's governance and executive leadership. The EQAO Board of Directors welcomed new members Serge Demers, John Tibbits and Kyle Wilson and bid farewell to Gail Anderson, Roland Boudreau, Michael Bowe, Emily Brown, Abirami Jeyaratnam and Pierre Riopel, after several years of dedicated service and leadership. On behalf of EQAO, I would like to acknowledge their contribution to the board and to the education community at large through their commitment to the agency and their work for EQAO.

Throughout its history, EQAO has proactively collaborated with its stakeholders to ensure the agency's activities and operations provide data and research that accurately reflect student learning. The agency will continue to consult with partners and the public to modernize its structure and programs in accordance with its commitment to equity, diversity and the highest principles in large-scale evaluation, thus contributing important and objective insights to discussions that help foster positive outcomes for all students in Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Cameron Montgomery
Chair, EQAO Board of Directors

About EQAO

EQAO was established in 1996 following a recommendation of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. After consulting extensively with Ontarians and the education community, the Commission concluded that province-wide assessments would help address the desire among Ontarians for greater quality and accountability in the publicly funded education system. In August 2019, the agency's mandate was broadened by the government to include the development of a Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) for teacher candidates in advance of their entry to the Ontario College of Teachers.

EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the Ministry of Education that supports student learning in Ontario. Our data, research and resources empower parents and guardians, educators, policy-makers and others with the information needed to determine how best to strengthen student outcomes across the province. Throughout its work, EQAO is committed to anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion.

To help improve student learning, EQAO administers large-scale assessments that align with *The Ontario Curriculum*, contribute to education research and assist parents, guardians, policy-makers, Ontarians and the education community at large in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using EQAO data.

EQAO is currently pursuing a multi-faceted and multi-year modernization initiative that focuses on five distinct areas:

- large-scale assessments,
- reports,
- research,
- engagement with Ontarians and
- internal business processes.

The agency's goal is to provide evidence-informed insights into student learning to facilitate the success of each Ontario student. EQAO strives to continually enhance its high-quality large-scale assessment program to ensure it is equitable, inclusive and reflective of Ontario's diversity so that all students and teacher candidates can demonstrate their understanding of the provincial curriculum and pedagogy.

By assessing each student in relation to the learning expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*, EQAO offers independent data at key stages in students' K–12 educational journey. The agency provides schools and school boards with detailed reports about their students' achievement and a personalized report for each student who writes an assessment to help support individual student

learning. Additional contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires offers valuable insights into student experiences, and EQAO assessment data are used by educators to improve student learning.

EQAO's data, in addition to classroom and board information, helps the education community consider key trends through collaborative inquiries. Such insights help stakeholders make evidence-informed decisions when developing improvement plans that foster equitable and inclusive learning environments for students. EQAO's information also helps to guide the analysis and decisions of parents and guardians and policy-makers.

Through programs like the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement—named after the former Minister of Education and Minister of Colleges and Universities, the first woman ever to hold these positions—the agency builds capacity for the appropriate use of EQAO data. Through workshops, conferences, events and other resources, the agency provides tools that educators, parents and guardians, policy-makers, researchers and the education community at large can use to align their strategies with best practices in assessment and education, both nationally and internationally, helping to empower educators with the resources needed to support this practice and enhance positive outcomes for students.

Through research, EQAO investigates factors that influence student achievement, school effectiveness and best assessment practices. The agency also coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments (e.g., PCAP, PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS) that test students in mathematics, science, technology, financial literacy, collaborative problem solving, and reading and writing and that evaluate the general well-being of students in and out of the school environment.

Values

- EQAO values giving all students the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and well-being.
- EQAO values its role as a service to educators, parents and guardians, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- EQAO values credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success.
- EQAO values research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice.
- EQAO values the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.
- EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services by embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity.

Strategic Priorities

In accordance with direction from the board of directors, EQAO develops a new strategic plan every three to five years to deliver on the agency's mandate of supporting and guiding student improvement by providing credible information about the quality and effectiveness of the province's publicly funded elementary and secondary education system. The following strategic priorities directed the agency's work during the 2020–2021 fiscal year.

1. Assessment and Evaluation: EQAO will assess and evaluate important aspects of the quality and effectiveness of elementary- and secondary-school education.
2. Research: EQAO will conduct research into the factors affecting student achievement, equity and the quality of education.
3. Communication and Engagement: EQAO will help Ontarians better understand the role of the agency and the value of the information it provides, so they can use that knowledge to improve publicly funded education.
4. Business and Governance: EQAO will operate a responsible and effective organization.

Strategic Priority 1—Assessment and Evaluation

EQAO aims to assess and evaluate important aspects of the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary public schools in Ontario. The agency conducts and develops modern assessments with quality and integrity by leveraging technology to support the creation, administration and scoring of online assessments that reflect today’s educational and digital landscape.

K–12 Assessments

Through its large-scale provincial assessment program, EQAO administers full-census assessments at key stages in each student’s educational journey. This approach

- evaluates progress over time at the school, school board, provincial and individual student levels;
- fosters discussions about improvements to learning programs in schools and school boards across the province; and
- allows policy-makers to better understand system-wide trends and make student-focused and evidence-informed decisions.

EQAO K–12 Assessments	Grade of Administration	Subjects
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division	Grade 3 (Grades 1–3 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Junior Division	Grade 6 (Grades 4–6 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics	Grade 9 (Grade 9 curriculum)	Mathematics
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)/ Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (TPCL)	Grade 10 (literacy skills expected by the curriculum across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9)	Literacy

Over the past fiscal year, EQAO, alongside the rest of the education community in Ontario, has adapted to the unpredictable and unprecedented changes brought on by the COVID-19 public health crisis. In 2020, the Government of Ontario announced that EQAO assessments would be suspended during the 2019–2020 school year and would resume across the province in fall 2020, beginning with the agency’s secondary-school-level assessments, which would have a new online format. In accordance with this directive, EQAO designed, implemented and field tested both a new digital Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and a new online Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in the 2020–2021 school year for students studying in-person. Students in Grades 3 and 6 did not participate in EQAO assessments during the school year, in accordance with the Ministry of Education’s direction. Since EQAO’s K–12

assessments were administered as field tests during the fiscal year, which is a change from previous years, the agency did not release school, board and provincial reports; however, individual student reports were provided.

Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT)

In 2019, EQAO's mandate was expanded to include the development and scoring of a Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) for applicants to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). MPT-related activities also include identifying successful candidates to the OCT, conducting research on the results of the test and collecting information to assess the confidence and ability of the teacher applicants writing the test. A field test was successfully conducted in spring 2020 to ensure the reliability and validity of the online test.

During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, due to the global pandemic and public health measures that were taken to flatten the curve and stop the spread of COVID-19, the implementation of the MPT administration was paused. The Government of Ontario determined that three dates would be made available between winter 2021 and August 31, 2021, for test applicants to write the MPT. As with the field test conducted in spring 2020, these test administrations are part of an online MPT trial (i.e., beta phase) using remote live proctoring technology. EQAO will continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Ontario College of Teachers and faculties of education to determine future dates for the MPT administration while being mindful and responsive to the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digitalization and Modernization: Reimagining Large-Scale Assessments for Students

At the onset of its modernization initiative, EQAO recognized that the education system and the needs of its education partners were quickly evolving and that the agency needed to better align its assessment programs with the technological advances occurring across the education landscape to reflect today's digital world. This fiscal year, to meet the ever-changing demands created by the global COVID-19 pandemic and to adhere to the agency's mandate and actualize its modernization initiative, EQAO digitalized its operations. It became clear that educators and students would increasingly rely on digital tools for teaching and learning in virtual environments. The increase in remote learning across the province, among other technological changes, reinforced the need for large-scale assessments in Ontario to align with the realities of today's digital school experience and to incorporate digital tools that foster accessibility, engagement and equity. Assessments should reflect student experiences, all the while providing information and insights that improve student learning and outcomes through practical application.

This fiscal year, the pause in the administration and reporting of EQAO's full-census assessments allowed the agency to further pursue its modernization vision by field testing the agency's new digital platform for secondary-school students who were studying in-person in schools.

Digitalizing EQAO's K–12 Assessment Program

EQAO's digitalization initiative was developed to allow the agency to better support student learning by presenting stakeholders with increased flexibility in assessment administration and timely assessment results.

During the past fiscal year, EQAO launched and field tested computer-based secondary-level assessments: the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). The Grade 9 assessment was offered using a multi-stage computer adaptive testing (msCAT) model, where each student is presented with questions that are challenging yet align with the student's demonstrated skillset. During this type of adaptive assessment, modules increase or decrease in difficulty by one level at any stage, depending on the student's responses to the questions in the previous module. The online OSSLT was designed to be administered to students as a testlet-based linear on-the-fly (tLOFT) assessment. Each part of each module has corresponding items, or questions, that are mapped to a blueprint that identifies the skill, strategy, difficulty level and question type for each question. Groupings of items, called testlets, are generated in real time through the selection of pre-constructed and pre-equated groups of items, and, where applicable, an associated reading passage; the degree of difficulty is the same from testlet to testlet.

Each of these computer-based assessments has a set of accessibility tools and support materials embedded into the onscreen student toolbar, and alternative versions of the assessments within the e-assessment system are made available to students who require them. Third-party software currently supported by the e-assessment include Read&Write for Google Chrome, Dragon NaturallySpeaking and Kurzweil 3000; alternative secure access to the online assessment is also available if a chosen accessibility or accommodation software is not compatible with the e-assessment LockDown browser. Practice tests, along with frameworks and user guides that provide details on how each assessment maps to *Ontario Curriculum* expectations and on each assessment's administration procedures, were released by the agency and remain available on the EQAO website.

As per direction from the government, the elementary-level assessments for Grades 3 and 6 students were postponed for the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 school years. The online administration of these assessments is expected to resume during the 2021–2022 school year.

EQAO's Assessment and Reporting Process

To conduct assessments with integrity, EQAO ensures its processes meet the highest standards in technical quality. The agency follows a rigorous assessment-development process led by Ontario educators to ensure that selected materials and questions are linked to curriculum expectations and are appropriate for students across the province. The data that stem from all our assessments are analyzed in depth, and reports derived from full-census assessment results and data are produced to provide reliable insights into student learning.

Creating Modern Assessments to Serve the Education Community

EQAO assessments are created by Ontario educators who research, develop and select every assessment question (also known as an item). Throughout the creation process, EQAO assessments are developed in collaboration with psychometricians and experts from across the education field. These committees help to ensure that EQAO assessments remain aligned with *The Ontario Curriculum* and that the assessments are fair, equitable and inclusive so that each student who writes the assessments can fully participate and demonstrate their understanding of curriculum expectations.

Educators are selected to participate in EQAO activities based on the following criteria:

- diversity;
- geographic location, to ensure representation from all parts of the province and from both rural and urban regions;
- current elementary and secondary experience (i.e., teachers, administrators, subject experts and consultants); and
- expertise in evaluation and assessment, including large-scale assessment.

Once the items are approved by the committees, they are part of what is called an item bank. These items can then be field tested in schools across the province before they become part of the operational assessment—that is, the assessment administered to students on a large scale, where the items are counted in the calculation of the results. This process helps ensure that students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding when responding to items. The items that appeared on the 2020–2021 school year field tests of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test were mainly those that were either field tested previously or part of an operational assessment in a previous year.

Administering Assessments

EQAO relies on the support and collaboration of educators to administer the assessments. This fiscal year, EQAO published for each assessment an online user guide for teachers, school administrators and school board IT professionals that includes detailed guidelines and clear steps to follow to ensure consistent administration across Ontario.

The agency's new computer-based assessments allow for more frequent assessment administration windows throughout the school year and provide school administrators with more flexibility when scheduling assessments. By the end of the fiscal year, approximately

- 33 school boards, 88 schools and 2592 students had participated in the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics field test, and
- 22 school boards, 82 schools and 9224 students had participated in the OSSLT field test.

Scoring Assessments

All EQAO assessment items are scored according to established criteria, which helps to ensure the integrity and reliability of EQAO data as well as the comparability of results from year to year. EQAO assessment items that are not scored electronically are scored by educators who have successfully completed specific and rigorous training requirements. Educators from across the province bring their knowledge of the curriculum and classroom to the scoring process.

EQAO's online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics is scored entirely automatically, which allows for rapid, automated multiple-choice question type data. The computer-based Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) requires educators to score open-response items, while the remainder of the OSSLT items are scored automatically. Training for potential scorers of digital assessments continues to follow strict procedures but is now self-directed through an online system. Scorers who train and successfully complete the qualification test are invited to participate in scoring at their chosen time and from any location, providing they meet the necessary technical requirements and qualifications. All the resources required for training are now available online through the e-assessment system.

Reporting Assessment Results

The agency endeavours to provide user-friendly access to the data derived from its large-scale assessment results.

All of the online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics item responses are machine-scored, and teachers have access to an automated report on the student's achievement shortly after the student completes the assessment. This report can then be forwarded to the student and the parents or guardians. The online Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) individual student results consist of the test-taker's outcome and a single literacy score (successful or not yet successful). Results of the OSSLT are released after the open-response questions have been scored by a trained scorer, and an individual student report is generated after the scoring of the whole assessment. OSSLT field-test scores were reported to school principals for the 2020–2021 school year.

Questionnaires created by EQAO are distributed during the assessment administration period to collect information on the factors inside and outside the classroom that may affect student learning and achievement. During the 2020–2021 school year, students were presented, at the end of their online assessment sessions, with a redesigned questionnaire that asked them about their attitudes and perceptions with respect to mathematics and literacy, and about their pre- and post-assessment mindsets. While EQAO assessment results are not reported for field tests conducted during the 2020–2021 school year, the data from participating students' questionnaires will provide crucial insights on students' experiences and perspectives during this extraordinary year and will help with continuous improvement of the e-assessment system.

Benefitting from External Expertise

EQAO uses multiple systematic quality-assurance processes to ensure the validity of its assessment data. Processes have been developed and are in place to support the validation of each of the agency's online field tests. The agency has closely collaborated with its digital assessment services vendor and large-scale assessment experts to ensure industry standards are met for the assessments' technical performance and the integrity of the resulting data. In preparation for the transformation of Ontario's approach to large-scale assessments, EQAO worked with national and international assessment, measurement and technology experts. The agency conducted simulation studies using existing EQAO data to evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of the e-assessment delivery model and its accuracy in classifying student outcomes and achievement levels. This engagement has helped validate key aspects of the transition to online adaptive assessments.

National and International Assessments

EQAO coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments on behalf of the provincial government. Those assessments are developed by external organizations and provide a benchmark of Ontario students' learning in relation to that of students in other education systems and jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. The results of these assessments contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Ontario and benefit both the public as well as education policy-makers and thought leaders. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, Ontario students did not participate in national or international assessments, as directed by the Government of Ontario in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategic Priority 2—Research

EQAO recognizes the need for a continued focus on conducting and collaborating on meaningful research studies to deliver effective and equitable educational experiences that support student learning and promote positive outcomes for all students in Ontario.

#DataInAction 2.0: A Renewed Research Perspective

The main objective of EQAO's #DataInAction research framework is to ensure that the agency's data are used for their primary purpose—improving student learning. EQAO believes evidence-informed decisions are beneficial to every student in the education system. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, EQAO redefined its research framework and objectives to be more representative of the current needs in education and research. The #DataInAction 2.0 framework focuses on the visualization of data and key takeaways (for instance, the agency's #StudentVoices campaign) while remaining grounded in the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion as well as leveraging existing research studies and available data to achieve EQAO's research aims. In addition, the agency created new student questionnaires to align with EQAO's digital assessments and their design and format. The questionnaires' new content allows the agency to get a better sense of each student's experience with the online assessment and students' perspectives on literacy and numeracy along with their current learning environment.

This year, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) selected an EQAO-developed video series that was based on the results of the agency's Student Voices research project on student engagement. The videos will be presented at AERA's annual meeting in April 2021. Additionally, in June 2020, the *Ontario Mathematics Gazette* published EQAO's paper "Fundamental Math Skills and Elementary Math Students in Ontario," which examined, through EQAO data, the overall success rate associated with mathematics skills in light of the importance of fundamental concepts and skills in student mathematics learning.

EQAO Statistical Standards and Data Quality Framework

In November 2020, EQAO published documents to better inform stakeholders and the public about the agency's data collection, reporting and research methods. The EQAO Statistical Standards and EQAO's Data Quality Framework fact sheets explain how data are produced, collected and shared, while also describing the quality and validity processes behind the data that are disseminated and used by the education community to support student outcomes.

Promoting External Research

EQAO's data informs discussions and research initiatives that pertain to the quality of education and the experience of students. During the fiscal year, the agency received and responded to 36 data requests that supported researchers and educators from local, national and international jurisdictions. Some of these requests came from EQAO partners in external research initiatives, such as the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University, the Ontario branch of the International Dyslexia Association, the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) and St. Michael's Hospital. The agency also provided media professionals with information to assist their journalistic pieces and provided other stakeholders with data to broaden their understanding of student achievement and learning in Ontario.

Strategic Priority 3—Communication and Engagement

EQAO is committed to helping Ontarians better understand the role of the agency and the value of the information it provides, so they can use that knowledge to determine how best to improve the publicly funded education system. Through the release of pertinent information about EQAO's activities and the promotion of evidence, such as data and insights collected from assessments and questionnaires, the agency hopes the public at large and members of the education sector alike can reflect on the quality of public education in Ontario and engage in a productive and collaborative dialogue about student learning. The agency's approach to integrated communications leverages multiple channels and fosters a partnership with schools and school boards and other stakeholders. EQAO receives queries from the public, news media, educators and researchers on various matters on a regular basis, and the agency provides answers and helpful guidance in a timely manner to facilitate a broader understanding of the agency's contributions to student learning and positive outcomes.

There are many channels through which the agency communicates and builds relationships with audiences, including

- EQAO's website;
- social media platforms;
- news media relations;
- EQAO's information centre;
- engagement with partners and stakeholders;
- presentations to schools, school boards, faculties of education, parents and guardians and other groups; and
- conferences and events.

Releasing Information to Foster Discussion and Engagement

EQAO's communication initiatives and campaigns provide information about student achievement and context for assessment results. These initiatives and campaigns also present information and insights in accessible and simplified ways to facilitate a greater understanding of student learning in Ontario, create opportunities to promote conversations about education and foster reflection about equity, quality and accountability in our public education system.

During this fiscal year, EQAO continued to execute wide-reaching bilingual communications initiatives, focusing for the most part on digital communications and stakeholder relations, to inform Ontarians about EQAO's activities, modernization and research products.

From April 2020 until March 2021, the agency

- conducted campaigns that increased engagement on the agency's English- and French-language social media channels and in their communities, which grew overall by 8%, or 385 followers (the increase was 3% on Twitter, 6% on Facebook and 15% on LinkedIn).
- disseminated public-friendly content and documents about EQAO's new online assessments and their design and characteristics.
- launched the #SupportStudentLearning series, which presented EQAO assessment items and their answers in a simple, inviting way to help parents and guardians keep their children engaged in learning at the onset of the global pandemic.
- executed the #StudentVoices social media series, which showcased the perceptions, attitudes and educational short-term goals of K–12 students from across the province.

Additionally, the agency released videos that leveraged results from its existing *Student Voices* study on students' educational experiences, which featured the perceptions of children and youth in their own words. These perceptions are grouped into three main points: students' need for an understanding educator, their need for a caring and safe school climate, and their need for independence, flexibility and choice in their learning development.

In December 2020, EQAO launched a new and redesigned bilingual website that met the January 2021 *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) compliance deadline for government agencies. EQAO's website continues to offer information related to the agency's mandate and operations. This information is now available in accessible formats, which can be viewed on a variety of platforms, to streamline Ontarians' access to EQAO and its programs.

Delivering Support to Education Professionals, Communities and the Public at Large

EQAO's information centre serves as a primary point of contact for not only the education community but also for parents and guardians, students, scorers, teacher applicants and members of the public. The centre responds to various queries and provides updates on assessment-administration procedures. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, the centre answered 2820 calls and replied to 2718 e-mails.

EQAO's School Support and Outreach team members work directly with educators and education partners in the sector. In the wake of the agency's launch of its new online assessments, EQAO sought to promote a better understanding of its digital assessments and their features and functionality through live webinars hosted by the agency's Outreach team. These webinars were developed specifically for teachers and principals involved in the administration of the online assessments, as well as for school board IT professionals responsible for the technical readiness aspect of EQAO's assessment administrations in schools. During the fiscal year, more than 3000 teachers, principals and school board IT staff members attended these interactive webinars in English and in French, and sessions continued to be offered weekly until the end of the 2020–2021 school year. Results of a survey sent to webinar participants showed that a large majority of respondents agreed that the webinars had answered their queries and helped them to administer the agency's new online assessments.

Strategic Priority 4—Business and Governance

EQAO recognizes the importance of being accountable to Ontarians and is committed to transparency and best practices in governance in order to operate as a responsible and effective organization. EQAO is an agency of the Government of Ontario and abides by the *Agencies and Appointments Directive* and its Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Education to ensure effective operations and stewardship of public funds.

This fiscal year, EQAO actively pursued the digitalization of its elementary- and secondary-level assessment program and continued to conduct its operations and activities with integrity.

Leading the Agency to Prepare for Tomorrow

EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, EQAO’s board of directors held eight official virtual meetings to oversee the work of the agency in alignment with its mandate as defined by the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996* (the *EQAO Act*). The board provided strategic direction and approved the agency’s business plan, financial statements, risk assessments, contract decisions and annual report in accordance with the agency’s *Delegation of Authority Directive*.

With the goal of establishing the future direction for the agency, the board of directors successfully established its strategic directions for the next three years.

Relying on Professional and Dedicated Staff

EQAO’s accomplishments are made possible through the dedication and support of its staff. The agency acknowledges the professionalism and expertise of each member of its staff as it pursues the modernization of the EQAO assessment program and activities to support Ontario’s public education system. The establishment of the digital field tests for EQAO’s secondary-level assessments is a testament to the dedication and expertise of staff from across the agency, who quickly adapted to a remote workplace when the pandemic measures were announced by the government.

Collaborating with Advisory Committees

EQAO's operational direction includes advice from external work groups, composed of knowledgeable experts and representatives, who help guide the agency's work and inform its thinking on different aspects of its activities:

- **EQAO Advisory Committee (EAC):** This committee provides advice on agency activities, policies and programs. Additionally, EAC works to find feasible solutions to challenges raised by its members.
- **EQAO Student Advisory Committee (ESAC):** This committee acts as a unique forum for students to share their ideas and experiences. ESAC represents student voice in the agency's activities, ensuring students are informing EQAO's thinking as the agency continuously improves its programs. ESAC is composed of 30 students from Grades 7 to 12 from across Ontario. These members offer insights on how EQAO can improve its assessments and programs and increase student engagement.
- **Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel (MMAP):** This interdisciplinary group helps shape the future operations of large-scale assessments and their scoring and reporting activities. The committee is composed of experts who examine facets of assessment programs, such as the experiences of assessment users, authenticity and equity, psychometrics and technology, and knowledge sharing and reporting.

Managing Public Resources Responsibly

EQAO is dedicated to effective business practices and monitors and evaluates business processes to promote the continuous improvement of its activities. In alignment with applicable government directives, the agency continues to ensure accountability in human resources, finances and procurement along with strong service delivery through all operations.

The large-scale assessment program that EQAO offers measures how well students across the province are meeting the numeracy and literacy expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages of their academic development. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, the agency's operations were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most significantly, the agency's assessments were cancelled for the year, due to the pandemic-related impact to the education sector, which included school closures. As such, EQAO's typical scoring and reporting activities were not conducted during the fiscal year. In alignment with government direction, EQAO transformed its secondary assessments from a paper-based model to a modern digital model, which allowed for greater accessibility and flexibility in administration. The Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the OSSLT were field tested to students studying in person across the province. The agency worked with the Ministry of Education to ensure it received the appropriate funding to

support operations, given the impact of the pandemic. Overall, the cost of agency operations for the 2020–2021 fiscal year was approximately \$19 million.

Additionally, on March 12, 2021, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario notified EQAO that it was deemed to be compliant with the *Travel, Meals and Hospitality Directive* since the review of agency expenses in April 2019.

During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, members of the agency’s board of directors received an annual remuneration according to government appointments and directives. Dr. Cameron Montgomery, full-time chair of EQAO, received \$140 000; Gail Anderson received \$4644; Michael Bowe and Emily Brown both received \$2175; Serge Demers received \$825; John Tibbits received \$0; and Kyle Wilson received \$825, respectively, for their governance work as part of the EQAO Board of Directors.

Mitigating Risk Across the Agency

EQAO ensures there are processes in place to control quality and mitigate risk that could affect the integrity of EQAO’s assessment data, which is key to fulfilling the agency’s mandate. Likewise, the agency’s enterprise risk-management program applies to all other aspects of its operations, and every key decision is made with the consideration of potential risks and their mitigation. Risk-mitigation strategies are in place across the agency and are reported to the audit and finance committee of EQAO’s board of directors quarterly and to the Ministry of Education annually. During this fiscal year, the agency focused on mitigating EQAO’s digitalization and modernization risks and establishing resilient IT infrastructure and systems. Additionally, EQAO continued to leverage external expertise in the areas of enterprise architecture, privacy and cyber security to ensure the agency’s programs adhere to the government’s technical standards (GO-ITS).

Financial Statements: Year Ended March 31, 2021

This section includes EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2021, which were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.

Financial Statements of

**EDUCATION QUALITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

And Independent Auditors' Report thereon

Year ended March 31, 2021



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors of the
Education Quality and Accountability Office

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (the Entity), which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2021
- the statement of operations and accumulated surplus for the year then ended
- the statement of changes in net financial assets for the year then ended
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies

(Hereinafter referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at March 31, 2021, and its results of operations, its changes in net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the "***Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements***" section of our auditors' report.

We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.



Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.



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- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

Vaughan, Canada

June 3, 2021

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2021, with comparative information for 2020

	2021	2020
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 4,115,251	\$ 2,670,114
Restricted investments - board restricted fund (note 2(b))	8,477,991	8,377,930
Accounts receivable (note 3)	257,853	1,296,128
	<u>12,851,095</u>	<u>12,344,172</u>
Financial Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,437,064	2,081,365
Net financial assets	11,414,031	10,262,807
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid expenses (note 4)	334,321	462,990
Tangible capital assets (note 5)	403,822	468,362
	<u>738,143</u>	<u>931,352</u>
Commitments (note 6)		
Economic dependence (note 11)		
Accumulated surplus (note 2)	<u>\$ 12,152,174</u>	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

On behalf of the Board:

_____ Chair

_____ Chief Operating Officer

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year ended March 31, 2021, with comparative information for 2020

	2021 Budget (note 10)	2021 Actual	2020 Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments (note 11)	\$ 21,071,495	\$ 20,224,072	\$ 32,405,308
Other	–	98,526	522,407
	<u>21,071,495</u>	<u>20,322,598</u>	<u>32,927,715</u>
Expenses:			
Service and rental	8,427,555	7,068,414	18,043,766
Salaries and wages	11,263,362	11,339,792	12,175,693
Transportation and communication	251,451	216,176	1,138,990
Supplies and equipment (note 5)	1,129,127	740,201	630,955
	<u>21,071,495</u>	<u>19,364,583</u>	<u>31,989,404</u>
Annual surplus	–	958,015	938,311
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	11,194,159	11,194,159	10,255,848
Accumulated surplus, end of year	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>	<u>\$ 12,152,174</u>	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>
Accumulated surplus comprises:			
Externally restricted		\$ 3,674,183	\$ 2,816,229
Internally restricted (note 2(b))		8,477,991	8,377,930
		<u>\$ 12,152,174</u>	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2021, with comparative information for 2020

	2021 Budget (note 10)	2021 Actual	2020 Actual
Annual surplus	\$ —	\$ 958,015	\$ 938,311
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	—	(139,684)	(142,793)
Amortization of tangible capital assets (note 5)	198,498	204,224	255,135
	198,498	64,540	112,342
Acquisition of prepaid expenses	—	(334,321)	(462,990)
Use of prepaid expenses	—	462,990	516,364
	—	128,669	53,374
Increase in net financial assets	198,498	1,151,224	1,104,027
Net financial assets, beginning of year	10,262,807	10,262,807	9,158,780
Net financial assets, end of year	\$ 10,461,305	\$ 11,414,031	\$ 10,262,807

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2021, with comparative information for 2020

	2021	2020
Cash provided by (used in):		
Operating activities:		
Annual surplus	\$ 958,015	\$ 938,311
Amortization of tangible capital assets which does not affect cash	204,224	255,135
	<u>1,162,239</u>	<u>1,193,446</u>
Change in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	1,038,275	(995,112)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(644,301)	(204,570)
Prepaid expenses	128,669	53,374
	<u>1,684,882</u>	<u>47,138</u>
Capital activities:		
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	(139,684)	(142,793)
Investing activities:		
Net change to board restricted fund	(100,061)	(460,884)
Increase (decrease) in cash	1,445,137	(556,539)
Cash, beginning of year	2,670,114	3,226,653
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 4,115,251</u>	<u>\$ 2,670,114</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2021

The Education Quality and Accountability Office ("The Agency") was established by the Province of Ontario by the EQAO Act, June 1996. The Agency was created to assure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education in Ontario. This is done through assessments and reviews based on objective, reliable and relevant information, and the timely public release of that information along with recommendations for system improvement.

1. Significant accounting policies:

These financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, as established by the Public Sector Accounting Board of The Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada ("CPA Canada") and, where applicable, the recommendations of the Accounting Standards Board of CPA Canada, reflect the accounting policies set out below:

(a) Revenue recognition:

The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education in accordance with established budget arrangements. The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the fiscal year's approved budget. These transfer payments are recognized in the financial statements in the year in which the transfer is authorized and all eligibility criteria have been met, except when a transfer gives rise to a liability.

Other revenue is recognized at the time the service is rendered.

(b) Tangible capital assets:

Tangible capital assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortization. Tangible capital assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Computer equipment	4 to 10 years
Furniture and fixtures	5 years

For assets acquired or brought into use during the year, amortization is calculated from the month following that in which additions come into operation.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2021

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

The Agency considers the carrying value of tangible capital assets when events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable or when a tangible capital asset no longer contributes to The Agency's ability to provide goods and services. If The Agency expects an asset to generate cash flows less than the asset's carrying value, at the lowest level of identifiable cash flows, The Agency recognizes a loss for the difference between the asset's carrying value and its fair value.

(c) Measurement uncertainty:

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the year. Such estimates include providing for amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

2. Accumulated surplus:

(a) Externally restricted accumulated surplus:

The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the year's approved budget. Actual expenses incurred in the year could differ from the budgeted amounts. The difference between base allocation payments received and actual expenses incurred are tracked separately as externally restricted accumulated surplus.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2021

2. Accumulated surplus (continued):

(b) Internally restricted accumulated surplus:

A board restricted fund was established by a Board of Directors' ("Board") resolution for the purpose of examining assessment processes and researching emerging methodologies in large scale assessment in order to maintain Ontario's high quality assessment programs as best of class. As at year end, the balance comprised of \$2,449,171 (2020 - \$8,377,930) in cash and \$6,028,820 (2020 - nil) of guaranteed investment certificates with a maturity date of September 2022 and interest of 0.82% per annum. The Agency has the authority to retain any revenue that is not provincial funding according to the EQAO Act, June 1996, the Agencies and Appointment Directive and the Financial Administration Act.

	2021	2020
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 8,377,930	\$ 7,917,046
Appropriation of other income	32,745	265,802
Interest income earned on funds	67,316	256,605
Cost associated with fee-based administration (note 8)	–	(61,523)
Balance, end of year	\$ 8,477,991	\$ 8,377,930

In a prior year, the Board approved a motion to fully restrict the internally restricted accumulated surplus for the Board-approved IT strategy.

3. Accounts receivable:

Included in accounts receivable is a transfer payment in the amount of \$40,000 (2020 - \$1,136,298) due from the Ministry of Education.

4. Prepaid expenses:

Prepaid expenses are paid in cash and recorded as assets before they are used or consumed. As at year end, the balance is made up of the following amounts:

	2021	2020
Prepaid expenses	\$ 124,296	\$ 111,786
Prepaid secondees	210,025	351,204
	\$ 334,321	\$ 462,990

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2021

5. Tangible capital assets:

			2021	2020
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Computer equipment	\$ 1,400,561	\$ 1,011,558	\$ 389,003	\$ 429,235
Furniture and fixtures	433,759	418,940	14,819	39,127
	<u>\$ 1,834,320</u>	<u>\$ 1,430,498</u>	<u>\$ 403,822</u>	<u>\$ 468,362</u>

Amortization of tangible capital assets recorded in the current year amounts to \$204,224 (2020 - \$255,135).

6. Commitments:

The Agency leases premises under certain operating lease arrangements with expiry dates up to December 31, 2022. Under the terms of the leases, The Agency is required to pay an annual base rent, which is predetermined based on square footage rates plus operating and maintenance charges. Future minimum annual scheduled payments are as follows:

2022	\$ 1,360,258
2023	770,136
	<u>\$ 2,130,394</u>

7. Financial instruments:

The Agency's financial instruments consist of cash, board restricted investments, accounts receivable and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Financial instruments are recorded at fair value on initial recognition. The fair values of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values due to their short-term nature.

It is management's opinion that The Agency is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risk arising from these financial instruments.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2021

8. Allocation of expenses:

Incremental administration expenses are allocated to fee-based administration revenue. Expenses are allocated proportionately based on the number of individual student assessments administered.

9. Liquidity risk:

Liquidity risk is the risk that The Agency will be unable to fulfill its obligations on a timely basis or at a reasonable cost. The Agency manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its operating requirements. The Agency prepares budget and cash forecasts to ensure it has sufficient funds to fulfill its obligations.

There have been no significant changes to the liquidity risk exposure from 2020.

10. Budget:

The budget information has been derived from the budget approved by the Board on August 20, 2020.

11. Economic dependence:

The Agency derives substantially all of its income from the Ministry of Education in the form of base allocation payments. The Agency's ability to carry on operations, realize assets and discharge its liabilities depends on the continued financial support of the Ministry of Education.

Appendix A: Performance Targets, Measures and Analysis

Assessment and Evaluation			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct modern assessments with quality and integrity, leveraging technology to move the creation, administration and scoring of assessments online.	Ensure EQAO assessments, processes and results have the highest technical quality and meet national and international standards.	Achieve high-quality digital large-scale assessments by ensuring that educators are involved in all stages of assessment development and scoring processes, that all questions align to <i>The Ontario Curriculum</i> and with ministry policies and initiatives and that the assessments adhere to the agency's quality assurance practices.	Successfully finalized and implemented the field testing of the online Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), which were administered in participating English- and French-language school boards during the 2020–2021 school year.
		Implement the plan for a modernized assessment program.	Continued to develop a modernized assessment program by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing adaptive digital testing for the Grade 9 assessment (multi-stage computer adaptive testing); • implementing the digital OSSLT field test; • ensuring all online assessment questions are

			<p>aligned to <i>The Ontario Curriculum</i> and ministry policies and initiatives, including the new curriculum that was implemented during the school year;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the involvement of educators in item and assessment development, as well as in scoring activities, which are now offered through a digital platform; and • supporting professional development training in national and international digital assessment standards for staff directly involved in assessment development.
		<p>Continuously improve educators' experience with EQAO assessments, as indicated by a decrease in the number and type of administration issues and inquiries to the information centre during the assessment periods.</p>	<p>Completed and released updated user guides in a digital and accessible format for secondary-level assessment educators and IT professionals to provide a more user-friendly and inclusive experience. Supported the development of live webinars for educators</p>

			and IT school board professionals on the new digital secondary-level assessments.
		Inform the modernization of EQAO's large-scale assessments through interdisciplinary collaboration by continuing to consult with subject-matter experts on alternative assessment and psychometric models and on reporting models.	Continued meeting virtually with national and international jurisdictional partners and with the Ministry of Education regarding best practices in online assessment. Continued collaborating with psychometric and measurement experts to support the transition to digital assessments and the validation of psychometric practices and methodologies.
		Continue to incorporate industry standards for data quality, analytics, data science and IT.	Conducted privacy and security assessments on e-assessment and IT systems. All recommendations have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. Worked with the e-assessment vendor so that it could provide quality data to EQAO through the secure transfer of assessment data. Analyzed available results from online field tests to ensure data quality and to

			<p>provide insights on student experience with the digital platform.</p> <p>Created Power BI reports to monitor the results from the online field tests and the technical readiness of schools and boards, which is in line with the agency's monitoring and evaluation plan.</p>
		<p>Develop and implement the Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) in accordance with <i>Ontario Regulation 271/19</i> and <i>Ontario Regulation 272/19</i>.</p>	<p>Continued to ensure the validity and technical stability of the MPT during the pandemic, as the administration of the test was delayed.</p> <p>Upgraded the MPT system to support remote proctoring.</p> <p>Updated the MPT website content to reflect the most recent information for test applicants in accordance with the Ministry of Education announcements.</p>
Research			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct and commission meaningful research studies.	Facilitate the linking of EQAO assessment data to data from other sources in the broader education sector.	By March 2021, contribute to the body of knowledge, particularly related to student learning, success and well-	Developed and implemented the new secondary-level student questionnaires, which include questions on well-

		<p>being, through the maximized use of EQAO questionnaire and achievement data.</p>	<p>being and equity and about the online-platform experience. Continued examining the relation between education and health outcomes by collaborating with partners such as St. Michael's Hospital, the Offord Centre for Child Studies and the TARGetKids! (The Applied Research Group for Kids) study at SickKids. Published the <i>#DataInAction 2.0</i> framework, along with EQAO Statistical Standards and the Data Quality Framework. Had a research article published by the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education in the peer-reviewed <i>Ontario Mathematics Gazette</i>. Submitted the Student Voices video series to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to be presented at its April 2021 annual meeting.</p>
		<p>In consultation with the Education Equity Secretariat and the Anti-Racism</p>	<p>Utilized existing EQAO data to inform improvements to the identity-based elements of</p>

		Directorate, establish a data collection and reporting framework for Indigenous and equity-seeking groups.	EQAO's student questionnaires, in alignment with Ontario's Anti-Racism Data Standards.
Communication and Engagement			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Report the results of EQAO's assessments, evaluations and research.	Provide user-friendly, interactive and technically supported access to EQAO results.	Engage the education community in using EQAO data to foster continuous improvement in the outcomes of students, schools and school boards across Ontario.	<p>Launched the Power BI EQAO call-centre dashboard to provide interactive monitoring of queries received by the call centre by phone.</p> <p>Provided teachers with immediate access to individual student results after each student's completion of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics.</p> <p>Developed the process for the creation of AODA-compliant materials.</p> <p>Developed and designed an AODA-compliant Power BI digital visualization platform to support schools' and school boards' access to EQAO data. The platform is scheduled to launch in the next fiscal year.</p>
		Increase public awareness of the value of EQAO results and research.	Developed and shared on social media the #SupportStudentLearning daily

			<p>question series for parents and guardians, students, educators and the education community at large. (This was in response to the pandemic-related cancellation of the EQAO assessments for the 2019–2020 school year.)</p> <p>Developed and launched a new accessible EQAO website, which received 111 254 visits and had 533 551 pages viewed since its launch (from December 2020 until the end of the fiscal year).</p> <p>Created bilingual public-facing research and assessment documents that illustrate complex concepts to streamline information about EQAO activities.</p> <p>Developed a content pipeline for a future Instagram presence.</p>
		Highlight EQAO’s role and purpose via social media.	<p>Executed the #SupportStudentLearning, #DataInAction 2.0 and #StudentVoices 2.0 campaigns on social media, and commemorated relevant calendar moments to promote</p>

			<p>interaction with stakeholders online.</p> <p>Continued to regularly inform stakeholders about EQAO's role and purpose by actively promoting the agency's engagement activities and by posting appropriate responses to online discussions.</p> <p>Increased EQAO's social media followers by 8% overall.</p>
	<p>Engage stakeholders in the appropriate use of EQAO data and research to support accountability and evidence-informed decision making.</p>	<p>Ensure that key stakeholders are appropriately informed and engaged in the current and future work of EQAO.</p> <p>Raise awareness among key audiences of relevant research products involving the use of EQAO data.</p>	<p>Continued to engage with the education sector through virtual meetings developed for specific stakeholders, including local school boards and faculties of education.</p> <p>Tailored social media content and campaigns to the latest research and assessment-related documents published by the agency.</p> <p>Developed and provided Power BI training for EQAO staff to improve and increase their knowledge and understanding of the use of EQAO data to better support stakeholders.</p>
		<p>Improve relationships with targeted stakeholders</p>	<p>Held five virtual meetings with the EQAO Student Advisory</p>

		(students, educators, teacher candidates, parents and guardians).	<p>Committee to discuss students' experiences with recent EQAO initiatives and with the new online assessments.</p> <p>Developed and conducted live webinars in English and in French on EQAO's new e-assessments; the webinars were attended by approximately 3000 educators and professionals from schools, school boards and board IT teams. Feedback showed that more than 75% of participants agreed that the webinars answered their questions and helped them feel comfortable with the components of the online system and assessments.</p>
Business and Governance			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Provide effective governance for the agency.	Ensure that the internal governance and operational policy frameworks support the agency's operation.	Renew the agency's strategic direction and priorities for the next three to five years by undertaking a strategic planning process led by the board of directors.	Renewed the strategic directions that were subsequently approved by the EQAO Board of Directors, and submitted the agency's business plan to the Ministry of Education, in accordance

			with the <i>Agencies and Appointments Directive</i> .
		Improve agency operations by aligning them with EQAO's governance and policy framework.	<p>Reviewed policies, procedures and guidelines to verify alignment with provincial directives and legislation and then updated governance, accessibility and operational policies.</p> <p>Communicated to staff and implemented the measures given by the Secretary of the Cabinet. This included apprising staff of COVID-19 updates, reviewing the internal security policy (that describes safeguards to maintaining a safe workplace) and leading the creation of a secure process for sharing governance materials.</p> <p>Ensured compliance with the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</i> by the January 1, 2021, deadline.</p> <p>Continued to implement an enterprise risk-management program across the agency by establishing an enterprise risk framework and submitting the Agency Risk Assessment Tool</p>

			to the Ministry of Education for review.
Ensure effective business practices.	Ensure financial and acquisition accountability and exceptional service delivery.	<p>Maintain accurate and timely financial reports based on Public Sector Accounting Board guidelines, and have them validated by an external audit process.</p> <p>Monitor and report expenditures monthly and conduct analysis of variances quarterly.</p>	<p>Followed all regulations pertaining to financial and procurement accountability, and ensured accounting files were reviewed by auditors, which is the agency's regular practice.</p> <p>Provided quarterly financial reports to the board of directors.</p> <p>Arranged for externally audited financial statements to be approved by the board and submitted to the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Ensured that the Ministry of Education was aware of the agency's financial position, and adjusted transfer payments in accordance with agreed-upon timelines.</p> <p>Tracked and reported expenditures monthly and analysis of variances quarterly.</p>
		Review and renew EQAO's procurement policy and procedure to ensure that procurement activities adhere	Renewed EQAO's procurement policy and procedure document, which was established in accordance

		<p>to the applicable areas of the <i>Ontario Public Service (OPS) Procurement Directive</i> and the government's Interim Procurement Measures.</p> <p>Maintain high-quality standards in procurement-related activities.</p>	<p>with the <i>OPS Procurement Directive</i>.</p> <p>Conducted 28 procurement awards and extensions during the fiscal year in accordance with the <i>OPS Procurement Directive</i> and internal procedures. Submitted a three-year planned procurement report to the Ministry of Education, as requested. Developed an annual procurement plan and award log, which were approved by the board of directors.</p>
	Monitor and evaluate business processes to promote continuous improvement.	Maintain updated business architecture and ensure technological and process updates are captured in order to support program and process improvement.	Continued to update enterprise architecture during the modernization of the agency's operating model.
		Strengthen the agency's I&IT infrastructure and related privacy and security posture by migrating the current data centre to the OPS IT	Continued complying with applicable Government of Ontario Information and Technology Standards (GO-ITS) and Government of Ontario

		<p>infrastructure, as directed by the Minister of Education.</p> <p>Mitigate risks identified as part of EQAO's onboarding to the Guelph Data Centre (GDC).</p>	<p>policy and processes in IT operations.</p> <p>Collaborated with partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for EQAO IT operational services.</p> <p>Identified and mitigated the majority of risks related to EQAO's onboarding to the GDC. EQAO will complete the risk mitigation in the next fiscal year.</p>
		<p>Explore digital workflow solutions to improve efficiency and reduce the paper-based workflow for business operations.</p>	<p>Secured and then initiated the implementation of a project management software to support the transition from paper to a technology-based management system in order to improve the efficiency of project management and departmental initiatives.</p>
		<p>Align IT policies, practices and processes to industry and GO-ITS, to secure EQAO networks and protect privacy.</p>	<p>Assessed all work against applicable government IT standards.</p> <p>Aligned IT policies, practices and processes to the GO-ITS.</p>
		<p>Identify a digital platform for the development of HR and office administration procedures and processes.</p>	<p>Developed virtual processes for the recruitment and onboarding of new staff to ensure business continuity</p>

		<p>Monitor and maintain facilities as necessary to ensure a safe and healthy workplace environment for all staff.</p>	<p>while working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Created and communicated informational documents to staff on COVID-19-related updates and procedures.</p> <p>Identified areas of need in the office by evaluating health and safety risks. Monitored COVID-19 measures and expectations from the City of Toronto, the Ontario Public Service and the office building property managers, and then developed a plan to ensure a safe and healthy physical workplace that will promote overall employee wellness upon an eventual return to the office. Completed a virtual walk-through with Infrastructure Ontario to provide background on the needs of the agency for future workspace planning.</p>
<p>Foster a strong organizational culture.</p>	<p>Lead and encourage employee engagement, collaboration and inclusion throughout the agency.</p>	<p>Promote cross-agency collaboration and alignment of work to the agency's strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Provided virtual events and sessions (including Lunch and Learn sessions and all-staff meetings) by Zoom and</p>

			<p>Microsoft Teams to increase EQAO staff knowledge of departmental functions, the use of digital resources, equity and inclusion practices and work-life balance.</p> <p>Created and shared instructions and tip sheets on how to set up virtual meetings in Teams and Zoom to increase team and inter-departmental collaboration while working remotely due to the pandemic.</p> <p>Continued to support staff professional development around equity through webinars, online courses and presentations on the Positive Space Champion program, anti-racism and Truth and Reconciliation.</p>
		<p>Improve engagement for new staff in accordance with EQAO's mandate by modernizing the employee orientation program and showcasing the work undertaken across all departments of the agency.</p>	<p>Created a virtual onboarding process for new staff, which has resulted in a more effective and efficient delivery of onboarding services to new employees, and enriched employee engagement, collaboration and</p>

			inclusiveness within the agency.
		Develop activities to ensure employees are engaged in the agency's mandate and feel their needs are being met.	Continued to provide professional learning opportunities for staff through external webinars, free workshops and circles, and OPS learning events. Facilitated interdepartmental meetings so that individual staff members can engage with other teams and learn about departmental projects and initiatives in a more direct manner. Developed and organized social outlets during the pandemic-related remote work period to encourage staff to engage meaningfully outside of formal work meetings and to support workplace engagement and morale during the pandemic. Engaged teams in reviewing and providing feedback on the results of OPS and internal employee surveys to reconcile any gaps in identified areas. Improved communication to all staff with respect to agency

			developments and future activities through regular e-mail updates and interactive virtual meetings.
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