



Digitalization and Modernization at EQAO

Transforming large-scale assessments
to improve student learning

March 2022





Who We Serve and What We Do

EQAO is a board-governed agency of the Ministry of Education that supports student learning and public accountability in Ontario's education system by assessing all students at key stages of their educational journey.

EQAO offers independent data in relation to the learning expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. These data are an important indicator of student learning that add to the available knowledge about how Ontario students are doing, and help Ontario's education sector with improving student achievement and well-being at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels.

EQAO supports parents and guardians, policymakers, other Ontarians and the education community at large in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using its data for improvement. Throughout its work, the agency is committed to anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion, and it continually strives to enhance its high-quality large-scale assessment program.





Why Modernize and Digitalize

EQAO strives for continuous improvement on its journey to support positive student outcomes. The agency's goal is to allow all students who take the assessments to demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum fully.

Modernization allows the agency to continue to be responsive to the needs of the province on matters of education quality and accountability—now and for years to come.

EQAO's online curriculum-based student assessment program consists of



the primary- and junior-division reading, writing and mathematics assessments administered to Grades 3 and 6 students, respectively,



the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, and



the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), administered to Grade 10 students.



Modernization and Digitalization at EQAO

EQAO's modernization enables responsiveness to the needs of the province on matters of education quality and accountability. The agency aims to provide evidence-informed insights into student learning to facilitate the success of Ontario students.

Modernization at EQAO is a multi-faceted and multi-year initiative that focuses on five distinct areas:



large-scale assessments



reporting of results



research



engagement with
Ontarians



supporting equity, diversity
and inclusion in education

EQAO's Online Assessments

Part of modernizing EQAO's operations and outlook means digitalizing the agency's large-scale assessment program. Digitalized large-scale assessments present several benefits over paper-based testing.

EQAO's digitalized assessments

- will continue to ensure students are at the centre of large-scale assessment and that the assessments are aligned with their education experience, including continued alignment with *The Ontario Curriculum*.
- increase flexibility in assessment administration throughout the school year and offer timely feedback to parents and guardians and educators on how students are doing.
- address accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion more effectively.
- incorporate digital tools, including accommodations, in their toolbar and menu to facilitate engagement for individuals taking the test.

EQAO continuously strives to enhance its high-quality large-scale assessment program to ensure it is equitable, inclusive and reflective of Ontario's diversity, so that all students can demonstrate their understanding of the provincial curriculum.

EQAO's Online Field Tests

The development and administrations of digital assessments became a reality during the 2020–2021 school year when EQAO launched digital versions of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) as field tests.



[2020–2021 EQAO Field-Test Findings](#)

Field testing the online assessments allowed students and educators to become familiar with the new testing model. It also supported the validation and continued development of the new online assessment and the digital platform.



[2020–2021 EQAO Stakeholder Engagement](#)

Stakeholder perspectives are important to EQAO and helped inform the agency's digitalization journey. The feedback from educators and school-board information technology (IT) staff who attended EQAO's information webinar sessions on the agency's e-assessments and their administration provided crucial insights on the online model.



[Digitalizing and Modernizing EQAO Assessments](#)

The agency adopted a two-part approach to ensure technical readiness before launching its digital assessment model. EQAO worked closely with school-board 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 ensure the privacy and security of all student data.





Collaborating to Improve Student Outcomes

To shift to digital assessments successfully, collaboration is key and, as always, the agency is committed to engaging directly with partners in the education sector and beyond.

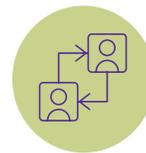
Throughout its modernization efforts, EQAO continues to acknowledge the need for thinking that employs expertise both internal and external to the agency and includes students' perspective. Several consultation groups and committees made up of external experts support EQAO's digitalization.



The [Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel](#) makes sure the agency's modernization initiative continues being effective through strong methodologies and analytics.



The [EQAO Student Engagement Committee](#) (formerly the EQAO Student Advisory Committee) promotes an open dialogue between Ontario's students and the agency. EQAO wants students to always have their voices heard as it continues to modernize and develop its e-assessment platform.



The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee reviews the content of all EQAO assessments to ensure that the assessments are fair, equitable and inclusive so that all individuals who take the assessments can fully participate and demonstrate their understanding of curriculum expectations.

EQAO has a School Support and Outreach team that works in partnership with schools and school boards to assist them in developing professional learning programs that leverage EQAO's latest research and data. The team also helps educators and administrators navigate the agency's modernized assessments and their digital platform to support student success.



EQAO's Modernization Outlook

EQAO envisions a future in which assessments reflect the lived experiences of all students, a future where assessment data are continuously leveraged to align with students' educational experience.

As we move forward, EQAO's modernization vision will enable the agency to fulfill its mandate of contributing to education quality and accountability more effectively. Modernization places classroom experiences at the very centre of the assessment process. Technology will be leveraged to assess students' understanding of the curriculum and to provide timely feedback to students, parents and guardians and educators so that stakeholders are able to use all EQAO assessment data more effectively.

EQAO is proud to be able to support student achievement in this new era along with the dedicated teachers, administrators, parents and guardians and other Ontarians who care about understanding how best to support positive outcomes for each student of the province today, and into the future.





Education Quality and Accountability Office
2 Carlton Street, Suite 1200, Toronto ON M5B 2M9
Telephone: 1-888-327-7377 | Website: www.eqao.com
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