

Diploma Requirements

The diploma requirements for students entering Grade 9 in September 2018, are described below. Any changes to the diploma requirements will be communicated to schools as soon as they are made available by the Ministry.

The Credit System

A credit is granted in recognition of the successful completion of a course that has been scheduled for a minimum of 110 hours. For the purpose of granting a credit, “scheduled time” is defined as the time during which students participate in planned learning activities (other than homework) designed to lead to the achievement of the curriculum expectations of a course. A credit is granted to a student by the principal of a secondary school on behalf of the Minister of Education.

Requirements for Ontario Secondary School Diploma

In order to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), a student who enters Grade 9 must earn a minimum of 30 credits, including 18 compulsory credits and 12 optional credits. Students must also complete 40 hours of community involvement activities and must successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

Effective September 2005, two co-operative education credits can be counted toward the 18 compulsory credits.

Note: Refer to page 2 for conditions under which a student may take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) in lieu of the test. Under special circumstances an adjudication process would be put in place. Eligibility is determined in consultation with schools.

Credits required – 18 compulsory credits

4 credits	English (1 credit per grade)*
3 credits	Mathematics (1 credit in Grade 11 or 12)
2 credits	Science
1 credit	The Arts
1 credit	Canadian Geography
1 credit	Canadian History
1 credit	French as a Second Language
1 credit	Health and Physical Education
.5 credit	Civics
.5 credit	Career Studies

An additional credit in one of:

(Group 1)
English or French as a Second Language**
Native Language
Classical or International Language
Social Sciences and the Humanities
Canadian and World Studies
Guidance and Career Education
Co-operative Education***

An additional credit in one of:

(Group 2)
Health and Physical Education
The Arts
Business Studies
French as a Second Language**
Co-operative Education***

An additional credit in one of:

(Group 3)
Science (Grade 11 or 12)
Technological Education
French as a Second Language**
Computer Studies
Co-operative Education***

* A maximum of 3 credits in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Literacy Development (ELD) may be counted towards the 4 compulsory credits in English, but the fourth must be a credit earned for a Grade 12 compulsory English course.

** In Groups 1, 2, and 3, a maximum of 2 credits in French as a Second Language can count as compulsory credits, one from group 1 and one from *either* group 2 or group 3.

*** A maximum of 2 credits in Co-operative Education can count as compulsory credits.

12 optional credits

In addition to the 18 compulsory credits, students must earn 12 optional credits selected from the courses listed as available in the course calendar.

The 12 optional credits may include up to a maximum of 4 credits earned through approved dual credit courses.

Additional Diploma Requirements

40-Hour Community Involvement

- Students develop an awareness and understanding of civic responsibility and the role they can play in supporting and strengthening their communities.
- Students can start accumulating community involvement in the summer prior to entering Grade 9.
- Students are responsible for finding and completing 40 hours of volunteer work. The school will not be directly involved in monitoring students while they are completing their volunteer work.
- Students are responsible for completing their 40 hours and submitting their completed form prior to their graduating year to ensure their transcript is updated prior to the end of the school year.
- The parent is responsible for checking potential placements before the student begins volunteering.
- The school is responsible for advising students of the requirements and procedures for completing the 40-hour community involvement requirement. Students will receive information and appropriate forms from their guidance office.
- For more information, including guidelines and *Your Time Counts* 40 hour tracking sheet for eligible activities, visit the Peel board website at www.peelschools.org, go to the “Students” section and click on the “40 hours” link.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

What is the OSSLT based on?

The OSSLT assesses whether students have the literacy (reading and writing) skills needed to meet the literacy requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)

- The purpose of the OSSLT is to determine whether a student has the literacy (reading and writing) skills required to meet the standard for understanding reading selections and communicating in a variety of writing forms expected by *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.
- In the reading component of the assessment, students use reading strategies to interact with a variety of narrative, informational and graphic selections to construct an understanding of the meaning of the texts. Students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of explicit (directly stated) and implicit (indirectly stated) meanings as well as to connect their understanding of the text to their personal experience and knowledge.
- In the writing component, students are prompted to write two short responses (short writing tasks), a series

of paragraphs expressing an opinion and a news report (long writing task) to demonstrate their ability to communicate ideas and information clearly and coherently. Since writing on large-scale assessments does not allow for a complete revision and refinement process, written work on the OSSLT is scored as first-draft (unpolished) writing. The written forms in which students are asked to write are representative of those expected across subject areas in *The Ontario Curriculum* up to the end of Grade 9.

Who is responsible for designing and assessing the OSSLT?

- The test is designed and marked by the Education Quality & Accountability Office (EQAO) with the assistance of practicing Ontario educators.
- The test is conducted once each year.

How does EQAO report results from the OSSLT?

- Each student who participates in the OSSLT will receive an Individual Student Report that indicates whether he or she has successfully completed the OSSLT. Students who receive an “unsuccessful” result will be sent detailed feedback. Students may re-take the test. No limits have been established regarding the number of re-takes allowed.

Who is required to write the OSSLT?

- Students who began Grade 9 during the 2000-2001 school year and those who began it thereafter are required to write the OSSLT, according to *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* (2011). These students (and any others who are placed in one of these cohorts) are required to complete the test or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) successfully in order to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Students normally participate in the test when they are in Grade 10. Students who do not participate in the OSSLT in the year following the year in which they entered Grade 9 require a deferral or an exemption.

- **Note:** As stated in *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12 Course Descriptions and Prerequisites* (2011), “a student who has been eligible to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) at least twice and who has been unsuccessful at least once is eligible to enroll in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). A student may be permitted to take the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to take the OSSLT, if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the

student to do so. Under special circumstances, and at the discretion of the principal, a student who has already met the literacy requirement for graduation purposes may be eligible to take the course. A mature student may enroll directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT (for the definition of the term *mature student*, see Policy/Program Memorandum No. 127, “The Secondary School Literacy Graduation Requirement”, August 7, 2009)” (p.43).

Mature students may enroll directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT. A mature student is a student who:

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Which students can be deferred and exempted?

- If a student is working toward an OSSD but either has not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English advanced enough to complete the OSSLT successfully or is unable to write the test because of illness, injury or other extenuating circumstances, the principal may grant a deferral for the current year in accordance with the EQAO deferral policy. The student will need to complete the OSSLT or the OSSLC successfully in order to earn an OSSD.
- Students who have an Individual Education Plan that indicates that they are not working toward an OSSD may be exempted from writing the OSSLT. Exemptions must be documented according to EQAO's administration guide.
- Accommodations recommended by the school will be acceptable to EQAO, in accordance with Programs/Policy memorandum 127, and must be outlined in the individual student's Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.). These outlined accommodations need to be implemented as part of the student's daily program throughout the school year. Accommodations should not exclusively be for the purpose of the OSSLT test. Accommodation recommendations will be communicated by letter to parents/guardians in advance of the test.
- Deferrals will be considered in individual circumstances. The consideration for a deferral may be initiated by a parent/guardian or by the principal. The principal will make a decision in consultation with the student's parents/guardians and appropriate school staff. A letter outlining the reason for the deferral will

be sent home with the student for the parent/guardian signature in advance of the test.

- A student that is deferred must still attempt to write the test once.
- A student, at the principal's discretion, may enroll in the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to write the test.
- Participation in the writing of the OSSLT may be deferred only until the next administration. If a deferral is required again, the process must be repeated.
- There is no limit to the number of deferrals a student may be granted, but he or she must be advised that a deferral will result in fewer opportunities to take the test.
- A deferral is not considered an opportunity to write. An opportunity to write the test means that the student has actually completed the test (pen and paper or online).
- A student will only be exempted from the test if he or she is not working towards an OSSD.

How can one access OSSLT test materials?

- Sample test materials are available at www.peelschools.org or www.eqao.com.

The Ontario Secondary School Certificate

The Ontario Secondary School Certificate will be granted on request to students who leave school before earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma provided they have earned a minimum of 14 credits distributed as follows:

7 compulsory credits

- 2 credits in English
- 1 credit in Canadian Geography *or* Canadian History
- 1 credit in Mathematics
- 1 credit in Science
- 1 credit in Health and Physical Education
- 1 credit in The Arts *or* Technological Education *or* Computer Studies

7 optional credits

- 7 credits selected by the student from available courses

Certificate of Accomplishment

Students who leave school before fulfilling the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma or the Ontario Secondary School Certificate may be granted a Certificate of Accomplishment. The Certificate of Accomplishment may be used to recognize achievement for students who plan to take certain vocational programs or other types of further training, or who plan to find employment after leaving school.

Tracking of Credit Accumulation

Ontario Student Record (OSR)

This is the official record for a student. The OSR contains achievement results, credits earned, diploma requirements completed and other information important to the education of the student.

Ontario Student Transcript (OST)

The OST is an official and consistent summary of a student's achievement in Ontario secondary school credit courses. A current, accurate and complete copy of the OST will be included in the Ontario Student Record.

Substitutions for Compulsory Courses

To meet individual student needs, the principal may replace up to three compulsory courses. The decision to make a substitution will be made only if the student's educational interests are best served by such a substitution. Each substitution will be noted on the student's Ontario Student Transcript.

External Credits

Students who complete Royal Conservatory Certification (or other equivalents) may qualify for a maximum of two external credits that can be used for OSSD purposes. Documentation should be provided to the guidance office.