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**MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH,
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND LITERATURE
(ENGLISH EXIT EXAMINATION)
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
FROM A to Z**

1 DESCRIPTION AND MARKING OF THE EXAMINATION

1.1 WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE EXAMINATION?

The goal of the Ministerial Examination of College English (“the examination”) is to ensure that, by the end of the three English courses of language of instruction and literature (603-101, 603-102, 603-103) that are part of the general education component common to all programs, students have acquired a sufficient level of competence in reading and writing to understand literary texts and to express a relevant critical viewpoint using correct English.

1.2 WHAT DOES THE EXAMINATION INVOLVE?

Students have four hours in which to read the three texts provided and write a formal essay of 750 words about one of them.

The examination will be held on the same day, at the same time, for all students.

1.3 WHAT EVALUATION CRITERIA WILL BE USED?

Papers will be evaluated on the basis of the three main criteria in the evaluation checklist: Comprehension and Insight (Criterion I), Organization of Response (Criterion II), and Expression (Criterion III).

MARKING CRITERIA

CRITERION I COMPREHENSION AND INSIGHT

- recognition of a main idea from the selected reading
- identification of techniques and/or devices as employed by the author
- evidence of critical or analytical interpretation of the selection
- references which demonstrate understanding of the reading

CRITERION II ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE

- statement of a thesis about the text
- structured development of the essay
- use of supporting detail
- unified paragraph structure

CRITERION III EXPRESSION

- appropriate use of words
- varied and correct sentence structures
- correct grammar
- conventional spelling, punctuation, and mechanics

Students must get at least a “C” for all three criteria. Students who get a lower grade (“D”, “E” or “F”) for any one criterion will automatically fail the examination.

1.4 WHAT IS THE PASSING GRADE?

Students must get at least a “C” for all three criteria. A “C” corresponds to the level of competence that is deemed sufficient. Students who get a lower grade (“D”, “E” or “F”) for any one criterion will automatically fail the examination.

1.5 DO ALL OF A STUDENT’S ENGLISH EXIT EXAMINATION RESULTS APPEAR ON THE COLLEGE STUDIES TRANSCRIPT?

YES. Please note that each time a student writes the examination, the results (pass/fail only) obtained will appear on his or her college studies transcript.

1.6 WHAT HAPPENS IF A STUDENT WRITES FEWER THAN THE REQUIRED 750 WORDS?

If a student writes 600 or fewer words, the student fails the examination.

1.7 DO DIRECT QUOTATIONS COUNT AS PART OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS?

YES. However, if it appears that the word count for a student’s essay is inflated because of excessive use of quotations, the student risks failure in Criterion II, Organization of Response.

1.8 ARE STUDENTS PENALIZED FOR PLAGIARISM FROM A READING?

YES. Students who make extensive use of the language of a reading without quotation marks fail in objectives 1 and 4 under Expression.

1.9 ARE STUDENTS PENALIZED FOR CHEATING?

YES. Students are penalized for cheating, whether they are caught at the time of the examination or at the marking stage. They are automatically given a failing grade.

1.10 MAY STUDENTS USE REFERENCE BOOKS?

Students may use unilingual and bilingual dictionaries. They must, however, bring their own and not borrow from other students. Students may not use a thesaurus, an electronic dictionary, personal notes, course notes, handbooks or books on essay writing.

2 CONDITIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION AND REQUIREMENT TO PASS THE EXAMINATION

2.1 WHO IS REQUIRED TO WRITE AND PASS THE EXAMINATION?

Since January 1, 1998, all students enrolled in a program leading to a Diploma of College Studies under the College Education Regulations (CER)* must pass the examination in order to earn their diploma.

* The College Education Regulations (CER), which came into force on August 25, 1993, replaced the Regulation respecting the Basis of College Organization (RBCO) made in 1984.

Students admitted to a program under the RBCO who stay in that program until the end of their studies are not required to pass the examination.

2.2 WHAT CONDITION MUST STUDENTS MEET TO BE ADMITTED TO THE MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION?

Students must have passed two of the three courses (603-101, 603-102, 603-103) and be in the process of completing the third (603-102 or 603-103) when they register for the examination. Students who do not fit this profile may, however, be admitted to the examination following an evaluation of their student record by the college.

2.3 CAN PERSONS WITH PARTICULAR NEEDS REQUEST SPECIAL MEASURES FOR MINISTERIAL EXAMINATIONS?

In general, the purpose of these measures is to enable these students to write the ministerial examination under conditions similar to their classroom conditions.

What students qualify for special measures?

- Students with disabilities: a hearing impairment, a motor impairment, a neurological or organic impairment, a visual impairment, learning difficulties, mental health disorders or pervasive developmental disorders
- Aboriginal students: students whose mother tongue is an Aboriginal language and who completed part of their elementary-school education in this language
- Allophone secondary-school graduates from outside Québec: persons who entered the Québec college system through equivalency measures or who do not have a secondary school diploma issued by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec (MELS) and whose first language is neither English nor French

How does one go about requesting special measures?

All requests must be made by the person responsible for the examination in the institution attended by the student, **following the procedure described in the *Guide: special measures for students with special needs***, which is available on the secure Web site of the Ministère.

2.4 DOES A STUDENT WHO HAS PASSED THE EXAMINATION IN A GIVEN LANGUAGE AND WHO CHANGES FROM THE ENGLISH TO THE FRENCH SECTOR OR VICE VERSA HAVE TO REWRITE THE EXAMINATION IN THE OTHER LANGUAGE?

NO. Students who change from the English to the French sector or vice versa have to pass only one of the two examinations.

2.5 WHICH MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION SHOULD STUDENTS WHO CHANGE FROM THE ENGLISH TO THE FRENCH SECTOR OR VICE VERSA WRITE?

The ministerial examination is related to the language of instruction, not the student's mother tongue. For example, a student who has successfully completed the three courses in the General Education component in English: Language of Instruction and Literature **must** write the ministerial examination in English. To write the equivalent ministerial examination in French, the student would have to successfully complete at least one course in the General Education component in Langue d'enseignement et littérature and be enrolled in the equivalent of one term of full-time studies (at least 4 courses or at least 180 periods of instruction) in French. It is up to the college to determine, with the student, which examination he or she should take.

2.6 MAY STUDENTS ASK THE COLLEGE TO POSTPONE THEIR REGISTRATION FOR THE EXAMINATION?

YES. To do this, they should apply to the person responsible for administering the examination at their college.

2.7 MAY STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE EXAMINATION REWRITE IT?

YES. Students may rewrite the examination at a later session, i.e. in December, May or August.

Students may rewrite the examination as many times as necessary.

2.8 MAY STUDENTS ASK THE COLLEGE TO REGISTER THEM AGAIN EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE ALREADY PASSED THE EXAMINATION?

NO. Students who have already passed the examination may not rewrite it.

2.9 CAN STUDENTS BE EXEMPTED FROM TAKING THE EXAMINATION?

NO. Colleges cannot exempt students from the obligation to take the examination imposed by the ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Under section 21 of the CER, colleges may exempt students from courses but not from examinations.

2.10 MAY STUDENTS WRITE THE EXAMINATION IN A COLLEGE OTHER THAN THE ONE THEY ARE ATTENDING?

YES. In exceptional circumstances, students may write the examination in another college, which is then referred to as the “examination centre.” Students must, however, register at their own college and specify where they wish to write the examination.

However, because the examination is scheduled in the academic calendar, a request to write the exam elsewhere because a student has finished his or her courses and wishes to leave the college early is not considered an exceptional circumstance.

3 ADMISSION TO UNIVERSITY

3.1 DO THE UNIVERSITIES HAVE ACCESS TO THE RESULTS OF COLLEGE GRADUATES APPLYING FOR ADMISSION?

YES. The universities have access to the final outcome (Pass or Fail).

3.2 WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WHO PASS THE MINISTERIAL EXAMINATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH AND WISH TO ATTEND A FRENCH UNIVERSITY IN QUÉBEC?

Those wishing to attend a French university in Québec must meet the language skill requirements set by Québec's French universities, since the *Test de français* is no longer administered. They must contact the university of their choice for information on its language requirements.

4 RESULTS AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

4.1 ARE STUDENTS INFORMED OF THEIR EXAMINATION RESULTS IN FULL DETAIL?

YES. Students receive a ministry-prepared grade report through their college. Since January 1998, the final outcome (Pass or Fail) appears on the college studies transcript.

N.B.: The ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) does not mail results directly to students.

4.2 MAY STUDENTS ASK FOR A REVIEW OF THEIR RESULTS?

YES. Students may apply for a review by writing to the MELS. The application procedure is explained on the back of the grade report.

They must include either a postal money order or certified cheque made out to the Minister of Finance for \$10 to cover review costs. If the outcome of the review is in the applicant's favour, the postal order or cheque will be returned to him or her.

If the failure decision is maintained, a copy of the examination will automatically be returned to the student.

Please note that when results are reviewed, the decision is final.

4.3 CAN STUDENTS OBTAIN COPIES OF THEIR CORRECTED PAPERS?

YES. Students must follow the procedure explained on the back of the grade report. Any person requesting access to his or her paper is subject to the *Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information*. Applications must provide the information required to recover the copy, and must be sent in writing to the MELS. The information required is outlined on the back of the grade report. **It should be noted that student booklets are destroyed two years after the examination.**

With their grade report, students receive a document that clearly explains their results. MELS staff will not provide pedagogical support to students who want further explanations. Students must seek this type of support from **teachers or academic advisers at their educational institution.**

5 FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 IS IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE EXAMINATION?

YES. Further information can be found on the MELS Web site at: www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/epreuves

Students may also consult *Exit with Success!*,¹ available in college bookstores.

Students should also check resources available at their colleges.

1. (Davis, F. and S. Woodruff. *Exit with Success! A Manual for Students Preparing to Write the Ministerial Examination of College English*. Sainte-Foy: Les éditions Le Griffon d'argile, 2001.)

