



# Policy on the Evaluation of Learning

Abridged Version

**Reach** for  
your **Dreams**

Québec 

# Policy on the Evaluation of Learning

Abridged Version

*Evaluation for Better Learning*



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## Introduction

The adoption of the *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* by the Ministère de l'Éducation reflects its desire to officially communicate its vision of evaluation for general education in the youth sector, general education in the adult sector and vocational training. The policy concerns all students, regardless of their specific needs, their abilities (students with handicaps, at-risk students, students experiencing difficulties) and the places where they received training (school, centre, home, business, etc.). The focus is on the learning requirements prescribed in the education programs for the youth and adult sectors and in the programs of study for vocational training.

The policy is intended firstly for the individuals and organizations involved in the evaluation of learning and whose responsibilities have been specified in the legal framework. It provides important information for students, parents (in the case of minors), and governing boards. It is also of concern to administrative and teaching staff at the college and university levels, and everyone responsible for providing initial and in-service training to school personnel. Lastly, the boards of directors of private schools and organizations that contribute to the mission of educational institutions or delivery of certain programs may find useful information in the policy.

The *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* presents the common guidelines for evaluation in all three sectors of education, together with the specific aspects of evaluation in each sector. Although the core information in the policy is presented in this abstract, the policy itself should be consulted to better understand the approach taken by the Ministère de l'Éducation with respect to the evaluation of learning.

The policy is accompanied by an implementation plan that deals with the strategies and measures chosen by the Ministère to support its application.

## A SHARED CONCEPTION OF THE EVALUATION OF LEARNING

*Evaluation is the process whereby a judgment is made on a student's learning on the basis of information gathered, analyzed and interpreted, for the purpose of making pedagogical and administrative decisions.*

Evaluation applies to the learning provided under the programs in general education in the youth sector, general education in the adult sector and vocational training. Learning is described in terms of competencies to be developed. The different definitions of "competency" vary to a certain degree according to the sector involved, but they do include certain common elements. A competency is the capacity to carry out activities or tasks by drawing on a variety of resources, including knowledge, skills, strategies, techniques, attitudes and perceptions. Thus, for the purposes of the policy, the evaluation of competencies involves all of these resources.

### A new way of looking at the evaluation of learning

#### *Changes to school organization and to the features of each sector*

For several years, the Ministère de l'Éducation has been undertaking important reforms to general education in the youth and adult sectors and to vocational training. Updating the curriculum, which is a central focus of any reform, has led to changes to the education programs for general education in the youth and adult sectors and to the programs of study in vocational training; education programs and programs of study will now be based on the development of competencies. Consequently, evaluation will also focus on competencies.

#### *Legislative and regulatory amendments*

The *Education Act* provides greater powers for the main stakeholders in schools and education centres. At the same time, the Ministère de l'Éducation has adopted the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education*, the special education policy *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students* and the *Policy Statement on Educational Integration and Intercultural Education*.

## *Changes in the theoretical bases for the evaluation of learning*

Recent developments in the evaluation of learning to take into account, among other things, the shift from a paradigm of teaching to one of learning have led different education systems to review their approaches to evaluation.

### **Understanding how the Ministère views the evaluation of learning: some guidelines for stakeholders**

#### *Evaluation of learning that is consistent with the approach adopted in the 1981 policy*

The policy builds on what has already been taking place in numerous school environments since the implementation of the 1981 policy. It therefore places increased emphasis on evaluation in the course of learning.

#### *Evaluation, one of the factors in achieving the objective of success for all students*

Evaluation of learning within the perspective of educational success means that the potential of evaluation must be tapped into to ensure that it is at the service of students to allow them to acquire learning that will contribute to their full intellectual, affective and social development, irrespective of their abilities or specific needs.

#### *Values as an essential foundation for quality evaluation*

Because of the importance of evaluation in the academic career of students, it must be based on values that ensure its quality. In keeping with the value of justice, the rights of students are recognized and respected in accordance with the applicable statutes and regulations; in keeping with the value of equality, the judgments made about students' learning are based on benchmarks and uniform criteria; in keeping with the value of equity, students' individual or group characteristics are taken into account to ensure that certain students are not placed at an undue advantage or disadvantage. Other values, coherence, rigour and openness, also help increase the quality of evaluation.

#### *Evaluation to support learning and recognize competencies*

In the course of learning, evaluation allows the teacher to verify the extent to which the pedagogical intervention has produced the expected outcomes on student learning and to make adjustments if necessary. The teacher regularly informs students about their strengths and weaknesses and proposes appropriate enrichment and support measures. The students use this feedback to gradually take charge of their learning.

Toward the end of a learning sequence, such as a cycle, module or course, evaluation aims at reporting the level at which competencies that have been the focus of learning have been developed. This evaluation refers to the requirements prescribed in the programs. The teacher verifies the degree to which a student has satisfied the requirements. End-of-cycle reports, the certification of studies and the recognition of prior learning all come under the heading of the recognition of competencies.

### ***A rigorous but flexible evaluation process to ensure the credibility of the evaluation***

Evaluation is a complex process that is largely based on the teacher's professional judgment. Consequently, the exercise of this judgment must be based on guidelines to maintain the credibility of evaluation activities. First, the planning stage involves establishing the goal of the evaluation, and then choosing the focuses, timing and methods for the evaluation. Next, the information-gathering stage involves collecting sufficient relevant information on each student's learning, and interpreting it. The information on the student's learning is compared with the expected outcome. This is referred to as criterion-referenced interpretation. Last, at the judgment stage, the teacher judges the student's progress and development of competencies. In a situation involving evaluation to support learning, judgment often consists of an informal assessment and the ensuing decision serves to regulate the teaching or learning process. In a situation involving evaluation to recognize competencies, decisions are more formal in nature and they can have serious consequences for students' educational plans.

In the current context of public management, accountability is an important concern. The information required to monitor the education system, at the local or central level, may come from regular evaluation activities for recognizing competencies or from specific evaluation activities.

### ***The orientations that express the Ministère's vision***

- Evaluation that is an integral component of all aspects of the learning process

Evaluation is not an end in itself. Students do not learn in order to be evaluated: they are evaluated so that they can learn more effectively. Evaluation complements all the means used to support students in their learning. The integration of evaluation into all aspects of the learning process allows teachers to gather information on learning regularly so that quick and effective intervention may take place, and allows students to make adjustments. Because of the opportunities for feedback and regulation during the learning process, evaluation is an excellent means of promoting educational success for all students.



- The importance of the teacher's professional judgment

By making the teacher's professional judgment the cornerstone of the evaluation of learning, the policy confirms that evaluation is a professional act of primary importance owing to the decisions that ensue from it. The act of evaluation cannot be reduced to applying a set of rules and conditions, although these are essential; evaluation must be based on the teacher's judgment. Exercising professional judgment is consistent with the responsibility conferred on teachers by the Education Act with regard to the evaluation of learning. Teachers base their decisions on shared references such as the policy, the regulatory framework, the standards and conditions set by each institution, and information on evaluation in the education programs and programs of study.

- Respecting differences

Students have different abilities and learning styles: they do not all progress at the same pace or in the same way. Differences are also a result of the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the environments in which students live. Taking into account these differences requires that teachers use pedagogical differentiation whereby students develop the required competencies but in different ways, and the methods used to evaluate learning must be adjusted accordingly. In the course of learning, the teacher plans certain situations that are the same for all students in a group, and others that are different to take account of the fact that certain students progress differently or have specific needs. In the case of evaluation for the recognition of competencies, respecting differences means that evaluation conditions may be adapted for certain students, providing that the standards are not changed.

- Conformity with the education programs and programs of study

Compliance with the programs prescribed by the Ministère de l'Éducation is essential to ensuring the coherence of the evaluation process. The programs define the expected outcomes at the end of the instructional period and they provide references for the evaluation of learning. Their prescriptive nature ensures that all Québec students are evaluated based on common references. Because the programs are defined on the basis of competencies, competencies are the main focus of the evaluation. The teacher evaluates complex work by students involving different productions or ways of doing things. However, emphasizing evaluation of competencies does not mean that evaluation of knowledge is excluded because knowledge is an integral part of competencies. Verifying knowledge has an important place in the evaluation of learning.

- Active role of the student

Students must be made aware of their characteristics as learners and be encouraged to exercise critical judgment. To participate in a meaningful way in monitoring their

competency development, students can learn to evaluate themselves and to participate in evaluation with their teacher or their classmates. However, student participation in evaluation in the course of learning in no way diminishes the teacher's responsibility to make judgments.

- Collaboration of all stakeholders

The complementarity of actions of all the stakeholders involved in the evaluation of learning must be consistent with the legislative and regulatory provisions that define their respective responsibilities. Teachers have the main responsibility for evaluating their students. School principals approve the procedures for the evaluation of learning, and provide pedagogical supervision. School boards ensure that schools evaluate student learning. The government and the Minister of Education are responsible for setting the rules that govern the evaluation of learning and the certification of studies, and for determining how the rules are applied. Other individuals and organizations may be involved in the evaluation of learning, even though their responsibilities are not indicated in the legislative and regulatory framework—professionals working with students and teachers, the parents of students who are minors, businesses and organizations that take in student trainees, and the rehabilitation centres that are entrusted with the care of some young people.

- Evaluation of learning based on ethical standards

Evaluation of learning leads to decision making that may have serious consequences for students. This is why it is essential that all the stakeholders apply practices based on jointly developed ethical rules. The rules ensure that stakeholders in evaluation exercise their collective responsibility, while enabling them to fulfill their own obligations and be accountable for their judgments.

- Improving the quality of the students' spoken and written language

Language is an important conveyer of learning, and all teachers, regardless of the subject they teach, must encourage their students to use quality language. Most programs contain evaluation criteria related to the quality of language. Regular feedback to students helps them improve their manner of expressing themselves.

- Certification of studies: upholding the value that society accords to official certification documents

The certification of studies is the mechanism by which the successful completion of studies is recognized through the awarding of diplomas, certificates and attestations by the Minister of Education. It is based on legislative and regulatory provisions that ensure that these certification documents are recognized within society. The certification of studies is part of a system and therefore takes into account the relationships among the different sectors and levels of education.

The requirements for obtaining official certification reflect the schools' mission and the expectations of Québec society in terms of qualifications. Consequently, the requirements are mainly based on the competencies defined in the education programs and programs of study. Although certification rules apply to all the students enrolled in a program leading to the issue of the same certification document, the evaluation conditions may be adapted for certain students with specific needs.

The certification of studies should be based on the reliable, rigorous, valid and equitable evaluation of learning and be consistent with evaluation generally used throughout the students' schooling.

- Recognition of prior learning

Learning may be acquired in a variety of settings, at different times and in different ways. Learning is no longer the exclusive domain of schools. This is why certain provisions of the Education Act and the various basic school regulations already deal with the recognition of prior learning. In all cases, individuals must provide the required evidence before their prior learning is recognized. Prior learning is usually recognized in accordance with the requirements of the various education programs or programs of study, even though the conditions of evaluation may be adapted.

# EVALUATION OF LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE YOUTH SECTOR

## Evaluation of learning where instruction is based on cycles and competency development

### *Concerted evaluation planning and judgments*

In cycle-based instruction, everyone who works with the students helps plan an overall strategy for evaluation. Agreement is reached on when and how evaluation will be conducted to account for student learning acquired during and at the end of a cycle. The school principal has an important role to play to ensure coordinated action. The planning includes finding the best way to differentiate evaluation in certain situations.

In a concerted approach to evaluation, it is sometimes necessary for teachers to consult with others who work with the student in order to make a judgment on learning progress. In the case of cross-curricular competencies, responsibility for the assessment of student progress may be shared by the different members of the cycle team and any other person working with the student. When preparing the end-of-cycle report, the cycle team must work together to make judgments on the development of subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies.

### *Learning and evaluation activities consistent with education programs*

To ensure that evaluation is carried out in conformity with the education programs, the planning process must include evaluation activities to measure student progress and recognize competencies. The activities must take into account all the competencies in the different subject areas, the broad areas of learning, the cross-curricular competencies, the end-of-cycle outcomes and the evaluation criteria presented in the education programs.

## Certification of studies

### *Certification of studies consistent with differentiated paths*

Successful completion of the secondary curriculum is certified by the issue of a Secondary School Diploma (SSD), on the conditions defined in the basic school regulation. The diploma reflects a broadening of the common requirements and consideration of diversified education. The SSD guarantees that graduates have acquired the subject-specific competencies in the different subject areas.

Certain students may achieve success through access to the diversified paths that may provide them with their first vocational qualification at the secondary level. By certifying these paths according to criteria specific to each of them, these students

may receive qualifications allowing them to enter the job market or continue their studies. For students enrolled in adapted programs, success may take the form of greater participation in society. For this purpose, social recognition of their educational path is equally important.

### ***Certification of secondary studies that promotes educational success and is in conformity with education programs***

Evaluation activities for certification purposes must take into consideration the components of the education programs, that is, the subject areas, the broad areas of learning and the cross-curricular competencies. Decisions concerning success must stem from the judgment made on all the competencies in a subject by referring to the end-of-cycle outcomes and the evaluation criteria. Evaluation procedures for certification purposes must be varied and flexible to take into account the specific features of each subject.

### ***Sharing responsibility for evaluation for certification purposes***

Legislative and regulatory provisions provide that the Ministère shares responsibility for evaluation for the certification of secondary school studies with educational institutions, in the manner specified for each certification document.

## **Instruments**

### ***Instruments in development and adapted to evaluation orientations***

Regardless of whether evaluation falls under the responsibility of the Ministère or schools and school boards, or of whether it is used as a support for learning or for the recognition of competencies, the evaluation instruments used must accurately reflect the complexity and diversity of student learning.

In the case of evaluation in the course of learning, teachers use formal and informal instruments. Learning and evaluation situations can be linked to one or more subject-specific or cross-curricular competencies. They make it possible to verify learning progress.

In the case of evaluation to recognize competencies, formal instruments must be used. The learning and evaluation situations include complex tasks that generally involve elaborate productions. The tasks can relate to one or more competencies, and make it possible to verify the level at which students have developed subject-specific competencies.

Other evaluation situations are integrative. They make it possible to verify the extent to which the students are able to make use of competencies in various subject areas and of cross-curricular competencies to solve problems or carry out tasks. The Ministère provides guidelines to support the schools and school boards in developing this type of evaluation situation.

## *Ministerial examinations*

- The uniform examinations used to certify secondary studies take the form of evaluation situations specific to each subject; they make it possible to render account of the level at which students have developed the competencies according to the outcomes prescribed by the education program. The results on the examinations may serve in making adjustments to the education system at the local and central levels.
- Complementary examinations are optional. They are intended to help make evaluation for certification purposes more uniform in schools and school boards, or to help them introduce a new program.
- Compulsory provincial examinations are imposed at the end of Cycle Three in elementary school in some subjects. They serve in making adjustments to the education system and in consolidating the introduction of the elementary curriculum.

## **Reporting of results**

### *The report card: an important communication tool between the school and parents*

In preschool, elementary and secondary school education, the report card makes it possible to follow a student's learning. During a cycle, together with other forms of communication such as portfolios, parent-teacher meetings, journals, and annotations on student work, the report card informs parents and students on learning progress and the difficulties encountered.

### *The last report card in a cycle: the end-of-cycle report*

The end-of-cycle report summarizes the development of competencies by a student, as compared with the expected end-of-cycle outcomes. Regardless of how the information is presented, it is important that it does not create any difficulties for a student who is transferring from one school to another or who is seeking admission to another sector or level of education.

### *In elementary school, a descriptive report card using ratings to express results*

In elementary school, the report card must be descriptive and emphasize qualitative results expressed as ratings (e.g. A, B, C, D). Depending on the needs of the school's community, results may also be expressed as grades at the end of a cycle.

## *A report card adapted to the particular context of secondary school*

To take into account the particular context of secondary school, the basic school regulation indicates the form that the report card should take and how results should be expressed.

### *The statement of competencies to recognize all forms of success*

To recognize competencies, regardless of the educational path or the level of studies completed, the Ministère de l'Éducation issues an official document, the statement of competencies.

The statement of competencies replaces the statement of marks given to students in Secondary IV and V. The statement of competencies differs from the statement of marks in that it is not reserved exclusively for students in Secondary IV and V and the results are not limited to the subjects considered for the certification of studies. In addition, students who interrupt their studies or change their educational path receive a statement of competencies that indicates the subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies that have been fully or partially acquired.

The relationships to be established between the statement of competencies and other documents used to report on student learning are set out in the basic school regulation.

Because the statement of competencies provides a profile of a student's education, it facilitates decisions regarding orientation and admission to vocational training, general education in the adult sector or college. For students who interrupted their studies, the statement makes it easier for them to return to school. The statement is also useful for students entering the job market.

## **Recognition of learning achievement**

The *Education Act* recognizes the right of young people to have their learning achievement recognized. Even though this recognition is formulated differently, it corresponds to the recognition of prior learning. Some students acquire learning during workplace, volunteer or recreational activities, and depending on the education program concerned, this learning may be recognized.

# EVALUATION OF LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE ADULT SECTOR

## Evaluation consistent with the competency-based approach

With the updating of the programs in general education in the adult sector, learning is now described in terms of competencies. Consequently, competencies are the focus of the evaluation. The evaluation of competencies requires the use of a greater variety of evaluation instruments, conditions, processes and procedures at the beginning of, during and at the end of the learning, as well as for the purpose of recognizing experiential learning.

## Certification of studies

*Documents to certify successful completion of secondary studies and to enter the job market*

Students usually take general education courses in the adult sector to obtain a Secondary School Diploma (SSD). The conditions for obtaining an SSD in the adult sector have been harmonized with those in general education in the youth sector.

The Ministère awards other certification documents in general education in the adult sector. These documents may be used by their holders to enter the job market, and may also encourage adults to pursue their secondary studies for the purpose of obtaining an SSD. These documents are as follows:

- the sociovocational integration services certificate
- the Attestation of Equivalence of Secondary Studies (AESS)
- the *General Educational Development Testing Service (GED)* diploma

## *Sharing responsibility for evaluation for certification purposes*

The Ministère imposes examinations for certain programs and courses in order to ensure uniform evaluation conditions for certification purposes. Adult education centres are charged with producing other examinations.

## Instruments

### *Observation instruments for evaluation in the course of learning*

Evaluation performed during training serves as support for learning. Evaluation activities help establish the level of learning and determine whether students are using competencies in real-life situations. Observation instruments are adapted to facilitate the judgment that the teacher must make on the results obtained and on the learning strategies used by the student.



## *Examinations for the purposes of certification*

An examination for certification purposes is scheduled for each course. Evaluation for certification purposes takes place regularly, as examinations in general education may be administered by adult education centres at any time during the year. The examinations under the responsibility of adult education centres are developed in accordance with the definitions of the domain, thereby ensuring compliance with provincial standards.

## *Evaluation for placement purposes*

Evaluation for placement purposes plays a diagnostic and preventive role. It is necessary in the adult sector whenever an adult's schooling is interrupted. Placement practices are undergoing a major change of orientation.

## **Reporting of results**

### *The statement of learning achievement*

Students enrolled in general education in the adult sector receive a statement of learning achievement four times a year. The results are dichotomous (pass/fail) or are presented as a percentage mark.

### *The statement of competencies*

The Ministère intends to replace the statement of learning achievement with a statement of competencies. The statement of competencies will provide information on the results for each course and in the context of the recognition of scholastic or experiential learning. It will also render account of the learning level attained with respect to the programs of study. It will therefore facilitate the pursuit of the personal learning plan and give more autonomy to adults enrolled in continuing education and training.

## **Recognition of experiential learning**

### *The recognition of experiential learning: an essential component of general education in the adult sector*

The recognition of experiential learning is part of an overall strategy for implementing adult education. It relates to training content, programs and other references. It may also relate to the competencies formulated in references put forth by educational partners in Québec and elsewhere. It can help identify continuing education needs. The procedures and instruments used must be adapted to the various learning situations.

### *Instruments and services to meet a range of needs*

- the Prior Learning Examination
- the fields of generic competencies
- secondary studies equivalency tests
- the tests of the General Educational Development Testing Service (GED)

## EVALUATION OF LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

### The evaluation of learning where instruction is based on the acquisition of competencies

Since 1986, vocational training programs have been competency-based. Beginning in 1986, young people and adults have had access to the same programs. Partners in the workplace and educational institutions contribute, along with the Ministère, to identifying the competencies to be included in the programs of study. During and at the end of each program, the general and specific competencies required to perform a job are the focus of evaluation activities.

### Certification of studies

*Two ministerial certification documents provide access to the job market: the Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) and the Attestation of Vocational Specialization (AVS)*

Young people and adults in vocational training are awarded the same diplomas. All the competencies of a vocational training program must have been acquired before a diploma is awarded, guaranteeing that the graduate concerned has acquired all the competencies necessary to exercise a skilled occupation.

### *Sharing responsibility for evaluation for certification purposes*

Responsibility for evaluating learning for certification purposes is shared. The Ministère, in collaboration with the education milieu, sets the criteria that will be used to measure the acquisition of each competency. The marks allocated to each criterion depend on its relative importance (criterion-referenced evaluation). A minimum performance standard is set for each competency.

The Minister may impose examinations to uphold the value that society accords to the official certification documents awarded by the Ministère. The educational institutions, though, are responsible for developing most of the examinations. The values and orientations set out in the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning serve as references when the examinations are developed and used.

### Instruments

### *Observation instruments for evaluation in the course of learning*

During the training period, evaluation must be at the service of learning. Evaluation activities make it possible to verify the level of competency development during the basic learning phase and during the practice of complex aspects of the competency as well as to verify that the competency can be transferred to a similar situation.

Teachers use observation instruments adapted to the objective pursued, that is, the evaluation of theory, of the student's participation, of the process used or of the product obtained. The evaluation enables the teacher to make a judgment on the results obtained as well as on the learning strategies used by the student.

### *Examinations for the certification of studies*

The criteria selected to verify the attainment of a competency are presented in the form of *Tables of Specifications* or *Analysis and Planning Tables*, and serve as references for developing evaluation situations, which must reflect the actual conditions in which the competency will be applied in the workplace. The situations must require students to use the different facets of the competency, that is, knowledge, behaviours and know-how.

## **Reporting of results**

### *A statement issued periodically*

Students enrolled in vocational training periodically receive from the Ministère a statement that indicates the results obtained in the evaluation of all the competencies. Minors who pursue their education in both general education and vocational training, and their parents, receive the types of communication provided for in general education in the youth sector.

### *The statement of competencies*

A statement of competencies indicates all of a program's competencies and is issued to students who earn a DVS or an AVS. The result is either a "pass" or a "fail" (a dichotomous expression of results).

## **Recognition of prior learning**

Individuals who can demonstrate that they have acquired competencies targeted by a program without having enrolled in the program are entitled to have their prior learning recognized. The evaluation of learning thereby contributes to the recognition by society of competencies acquired outside the school system, regardless of where or how the learning has been acquired or the circumstances involved. The evaluation conditions must be flexible, while remaining rigorous and reliable. The evaluation instruments must recognize the competencies already acquired, but also identify those that need to be developed.

## Conclusion

In adopting the policy on the evaluation of learning, the Ministère de l'Éducation recognizes that evaluation is a major component of the curriculum in general education in the youth sector, general education in the adult sector and vocational training. The ministerial vision presented here places evaluation at the centre of learning. This constitutes a powerful factor in helping students learn and supporting teachers as they guide students in their learning.

By issuing an evaluation policy for the three sectors of education, the Ministère clearly indicates its choice of a unified vision for evaluation. The Ministère does, however, acknowledge that each sector has specific characteristics.

Because the responsibility for evaluation of learning is shared by the educational institutions—which are the main players—and by the Ministère de l'Éducation, it is especially important that all collaborate in establishing conditions conducive to the educational success of all students in Québec, in particular, by utilizing the potential that evaluation of learning offers.

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initiative  
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RESPONSIBILITY  
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