



# Additional Qualification Course Guideline Special Education, Specialist

Schedule D – Teachers' Qualifications Regulation

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## **Preface**

Additional Qualification (AQ) course guidelines are designed following extensive consultation and feedback from course providers, course writers and members of the teaching profession.

AQ course guidelines serve as the framework for providers and instructors to develop courses.

AQ course guidelines are organized in the following two sections:

### **Section A: Additional Qualification Course Foundations**

This section outlines the fundamental contexts that are embedded in the content of the AQ course. Education in Ontario embodies these to support educator and learner well-being. These fundamental contexts are essential to foster safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environments for all learners and educators.

### **Section B: Additional Qualification Course Design**

This section identifies the core concepts and related elements that are accreditation requirements for all AQ courses. This section also outlines specific content that allows educators to gain in-depth knowledge and skills related to the AQ course.

In this document, all references to candidates are to educators enrolled in the AQ course. References to learners indicate those enrolled in school programs.

## Introduction

The Ontario College of Teachers (the College) is the self-regulating body for the teaching profession in Ontario and is responsible for:

- establishing and enforcing professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College
- providing for the ongoing education of members of the College
- accrediting Additional Qualification (AQ) courses.

The College supports teaching excellence by preparing educators to work in varied and diverse educational contexts and geographical settings:

- English language public school
- French language public school
- English language Catholic school
- French language Catholic school
- First Nations school
- Provincial and Demonstration school
- Private school
- Independent school
- Urban setting
- Rural setting
- Remote setting.

This AQ course guideline provides a framework upon which to develop courses that meet accreditation requirements established in Regulation.

## Section A: Additional Qualification Course Foundations

Placing each student's interests and well-being first is at the core of teaching in Ontario.

### Professional Learning in Ontario

Professional learning is an integral part of the teaching profession. Educators participate in ongoing professional learning with the goal of improving outcomes for Ontario learners.

Educators complete a four-semester, pre-service teacher education program to become qualified to teach in Ontario. Throughout their career, they continue to engage in professional learning offered in various formats such as sessions offered by Ministry of Education, School Board or community partners, professional reading and Additional Qualification (AQ) courses.

AQ courses are designed by educators to inform and enhance professional practice. These courses allow educators to deepen their knowledge and skills in design and delivery of specific programs. They also support professional practice by preparing educators for specific roles within the educational community.

### Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* describes opportunities and processes that support ongoing professional learning for educators. AQ courses offer an opportunity for educators to inform and advance their professional knowledge, skills, practices and values.

The AQ Course *Special Education, Specialist* reflects **adult learning theories and processes** that foster critical reflection, dialogue and inquiry. Instructors provide candidates with professional learning experiences related to teaching, learning and assessment of learners.

## Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession



## Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession



Standards based resources can be found on the [College web site](#).

## Ontario's Learning Context

Ontario educators recognize that learning is influenced by the individual student's strengths, needs, interests, lived experiences and identities. Education in Ontario is complex and dynamic. Ontario's schools are learning communities that reflect the province's diversity. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Education Act* serve as the foundation for equitable, inclusive and accessible education.

The teaching profession in Ontario continues to evolve in response to the current and everchanging diversity of learners. Thus, educators are called upon to follow foundational principles that inform instructional practice. Through ongoing professional learning, educators deepen their understanding of the principles outlined below. In so doing, Ontario educators enhance their professional practice to support each student's learning and well-being.

### **Anti-Oppression Foundation**

An anti-oppression foundation is an approach that supports ensuring that equity and human rights are foundational to all Additional Qualification (AQ) courses and programs available to Ontario educators. An anti-oppression foundation acknowledges that systemic manifestations of power and privilege have led to multiple forms of oppression, injustices, inequities and inequalities. Ongoing teacher education must recognize and address historical contexts which have contributed to various forms of oppression. An anti-oppression foundation recognizes that educator and student learning and well-being are impacted by biases and assumptions related to power and privilege. Educators have a shared ethical and professional responsibility to identify and challenge individual and systemic barriers to support the learning, well-being and inclusion of each learner.

### **Indigenous Histories, Cultures, Perspectives, and Knowledge Systems in Education**

Ontario's educators are responsible to uphold the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* and align their professional practice with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). They engage in authentic reconciliatory action by exploring and integrating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives and knowledge systems, in teaching and learning. Educators, as treaty partners, acknowledge that conversation and collaboration with Indigenous communities will guide them on the reconciliation journey.

### **Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)**

Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the French or English linguistic minority populations of a province the right to instruction in their own language.

In Ontario, the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy* (PAL) outlines the unique mandate of French-Language schools. Educators act as ambassadors and model the French language and francophone culture for learners. Educators deepen their understanding of learners' linguistic and cultural francophone identity. They collectively develop a provincial, national and international sense of belonging to *la Francophonie*.

## Learning for All

Educators believe that each student can learn. Educators provide programs and services that respond to each learner's unique strengths and needs. Evidence-based teaching and learning practices that are learner-centred provide equitable opportunities for all. Inclusive learning environments respect the identities of each learner and support their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.

## Accessibility for All

Accessibility for all is informed by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Accessibility, inclusion and equity are fundamental to everyday practice for teaching and learning. Educators advocate for each learner to access and benefit from services and resources within the education system, understanding the unique needs presented by geographical and socioeconomic contexts. Educators design opportunities for each learner to showcase their abilities and fully participate in their learning. The implementation of adaptive strategies, such as assistive technology, accessible content and inclusive design for teaching and learning respects the strengths and needs of each learner.

## Special Education

Each learner has their own unique profile. Under the *Education Act*, a learner may be identified by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) as having behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be developed by an interdisciplinary team to reflect the learner's strengths, needs, and abilities, according to Reg. 181/98. As educators are responsible for instruction, assessment and evaluation of all learners, they provide accommodations, modifications, or alternative programming outlined in the IEP.



## Accreditation – Program of Additional Qualification

Accreditation requirements for Additional Qualification (AQ) courses are articulated in O. Reg. 347/02: *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs*, s. 24.

*A program of additional qualification may be granted accreditation under this Regulation if the following requirements are satisfied:*

1. The program content and expected achievement of persons enrolled in the program match the skills and knowledge reflected in the College's "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" and the "Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession" and in the program guidelines issued by the College.
2. The program satisfies the requirements of the teachers' qualifications regulation for entry of an additional qualification on the general certificate of qualification and registration of a person who successfully completes the program.
3. The program curriculum is current, references the Ontario curriculum, relevant legislation and government policies and represents a wide knowledge base in the program's area of study.
4. The course content of the program makes appropriate provision for the application of theory in practice.
5. The program's format and structure are appropriate for the course content of the program
  - 5.1 The program consists of a minimum of 125 hours of work acceptable to the Registrar
6. There is clear identification of the goals of the program, with a formal testing or assessment mechanism to determine the level of successful completion of the program.
7. The majority of the educators teaching the program have Ontario teaching experience relevant to the program.
8. The provider maintains adequate internal controls to preserve the integrity of student records relating to the program.
9. The provider is committed to continuous improvement and quality assurance of the program and, if the program is an existing program, has implemented measures demonstrating that commitment. O. Reg. 347/02, s. 24; 2009, c. 33, Sched. 13, s. 3 (2); O. Reg. 182/10, s. 8.

## Section B: Additional Qualification Course Design

Additional Qualifications (AQs) for educators are identified in O. Reg. 176/10: *Teachers' Qualifications Regulation*. This regulation includes courses that lead to AQs, the Principal's Development Qualification, the Principal's Qualifications, the Primary Division, the Junior Division, the Intermediate Division, the Senior Division, the Supervisory Officer's Development Qualification and the Supervisory Officer's Qualifications. A session of a course leading to an AQ shall consist of a minimum of 125 hours as approved by the Registrar. Successful completion of the course is recorded on the candidate's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.

### Additional Qualification – Schedule D, Part I/Part II/Specialist (Three Session)

Schedule D (see Appendix 1), three-session specialist Additional Qualification courses, allow educators to:

- enhance subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills as outlined in the *Special Education, Part I* course
- extend subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills in the design and implementation of learning opportunities as outlined in the *Special Education, Part II* course
- apply the subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills in a leadership role as outlined in the *Special Education, Specialist* course.

### Additional Qualification Course Requirements

The AQ course *Special Education, Specialist* enables candidates to advance their professional practice through focussed learning in the following areas:

- Curriculum Knowledge
- Pedagogical Strategies
- The Learning Environment.

This AQ course is designed and delivered using adult learning instructional practices.

The purpose of this AQ course is to enhance educators' knowledge, skills and professional practices related to teaching and learning in special education. The course enables educators to understand their ethical responsibilities and legal obligations in supporting learners with special education needs. The course will allow educators to further their professional practice to foster learner inclusion and belonging in collaboration with parents, families, guardians, caregivers and community partners.

*Special Education, Specialist* applies the subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills in a leadership role in the following required elements:

### **Anti-Oppression Foundation**

- theories and pedagogies about multiple forms of oppression applied to the design, assessment and implementation of programs and practices
- addressing individual and systemic biases, discrimination and barriers as well as manifestations of power and privilege
- addressing disproportionate representation of learners from equity seeking groups within specialized programs
- critical pedagogy to address connections between forms of oppression and intersectionality of learners in special education
- strategies to address barriers that impact accessibility of special education programs and services.

### **The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession**

- significance of the Ethical Standards and the Standards of Practice as theoretical foundations within *Special Education, Specialist*
- ethical professional identity, knowledge, leadership, advocacy and collective practices to inform program planning
- role of the educator as a champion of inclusion
- ethical responsibilities associated with the protection of learners with special education needs (for example, dignity, vulnerability and privacy of information)
- strategies to support mental health and well-being of educators and staff working within special education.

### **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives and knowledge systems**

- meaningful inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives and knowledge systems in teaching and learning processes
- knowledge of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (TRC)
- awareness of *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP)
- culturally appropriate processes for identification of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners' special education needs that recognize community, language and the impact of past education experiences.

### **Current Ontario curriculum and related Ministry of Education policies, frameworks, guidelines, strategies and resources:**

- Ontario curriculum, policies, frameworks, strategies and resources related to *Special Education, Specialist*
- policies, processes and practices that foster openness to innovation, culturally inclusive pedagogies and the democratization of knowledge
- strategies that deepen understanding of curriculum and related policies to inform decisions related to learners' Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and outcomes (for example, accommodations, modifications and alternative programming).

### **Current Ontario legislation and regulation:**

- relevant legislation (for example, *Ontario Human Rights Code, Anti-Racism Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 15* and *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*) and policies at the municipal, provincial, federal and international levels that support human rights and privacy for all
- candidates' legal obligations and ethical responsibilities according to current provincial legislation, policies and practices
- legal obligations and policies specific to Special Education (for example Identification Placement Revision Committee (IPRC) process, implementation of IEP, privacy and protection regulations and placement decisions).

### **Learning for All**

- processes and program planning that provide equitable opportunities for each learner
- strategies that respond to the strengths, identities, needs and interests of each learner (for example, differentiated instruction, universal learning design, experiential learning, co-teaching and co-intervention)
- practices to understand learner's curiosities and experiences to empower them to reach their learning goals
- early and ongoing intervention approaches for the elementary and secondary panels (for example, attendance patterns and reading assessments)
- programs, services and resources to implement a tiered approach to ongoing prevention and intervention support system.

### **Accessibility for All**

- ethical responsibilities related to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act S.O., 2005*
- advocacy for resources and services that respond to the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and contextual needs of each learner

- adaptive strategies, assistive supports and technologies to facilitate learning and foster inclusion
- strategies to address ableism that exists in processes and practices
- educator role and responsibility in knowing each learner both individually and through related documentation, including within different contexts (for example, school, home and community)
- processes and strategies to promote accessibility of community services, programs and resources, including in remote areas and within minority groups
- access to, and applications of, assistive technologies within the school, board and community
- navigation of community services and resources that are culturally responsive (for example, provincial schools and alternative programs).

### Special Education

- ethical responsibilities related to learner's Individual Education Plan (IEP), safety plan and transition plan
- programs, strategies and services that support the identified learner in achieving individual goals outlined in their respective plans
- interdisciplinary teams to support learning, advocacy and transitions
- strategies to operationalize the principles of differentiated pedagogy as a precursor to initiating special education processes
- roles and responsibilities of board and school support staff, paraprofessionals and community partners
- processes to develop, update and monitor learners' IEP that include the voices and perspectives of learners, families, guardians and caregivers
- strategies to understand specialist reports that inform decisions related to learners' IEP, programs and placement (for example, psycho-educational assessment).

### Educational research

- current research and literature associated with professional practices, policies and pedagogies related to *Special Education*, *Specialist*
- research related to categories and definitions of exceptionalities (for example, dyslexia, behaviour exceptionality, communication disorder, and mild intellectual disability)
- research that reflects society's diverse changing nature and influence on learning and well-being

- theoretical foundation for the design, assessment and implementation of programs and practices in support of learning
- research on the historical impact of societal norms on special education (for example, institutionalization, community programming, and inclusion in school)
- research related to trauma-informed pedagogical practices as well as mental health resources
- research related to the impact of emerging technologies on teaching and learning in special education (for example, Artificial Intelligence and eye-gaze technology).

### Application of theories of learning and teaching

- theories and practices related to pedagogy and andragogy that support learning within an inclusive environment
- theoretical frameworks and fundamental principles underpinning *Special Education, Specialist*
- theories of development and identity formation that support learner well-being, efficacy and agency
- learning theories to develop learner's profiles and identities
- theories of cognitive processes specific to learner development (for example, literacy skills, working memory and executive functioning skills).

### Supports for learners

- policies, processes, practices to support learners cognitive, social, emotional and physical development
- programs that respond to learners' lived experiences, identities, needs and well-being
- practices that respond to linguistic abilities of learners (for example, English language learners, multilingual learners and learners who are non-verbal or use alternative communication methods)
- critical pedagogies and practices to monitor and support learners' well-being and efficacy
- processes and practices to address comorbidity within categories of exceptionalities (for example, impact of mental health)
- integration of processes and supports for learners with special education needs (for example, design thinking, scaffolding, sensory supports, response to intervention process, and physical spaces).

## Teaching, assessing and evaluating

- program design and implementation that align with the principles and processes of Ontario curriculum and related policies
- culturally inclusive processes and practices to provide learning opportunities that respect the learning styles, voices and perspectives of each learner
- assessment and evaluation processes and practices to:
  - provide feedback to learners and adjust instruction (assessment *for* learning)
  - develop learners' capacity to be independent, autonomous learners (assessment *as* learning)
  - make informed professional judgments about the quality of learning (assessment *of* learning)
- instructional strategies to emphasize the importance of inquiry-based learning and transferable skills
- evidence-based instructional strategies that align with each learner's needs (for example, dyslexia, speech and language development, giftedness and sensory perception)
- strategies to develop learning skills and work habits of learners with special education needs
- pedagogical resources that enable learners to access curriculum (for example, reading materials in braille format, use of sound amplification systems and communication tools and apps)
- processes to differentiate identification of English language learners, English Language Development and special education needs, including relevant assessments, programs and supports
- processes and strategies to differentiate assessment and evaluation using an assets-based approach that respond to learners' profiles, strengths and needs
- literacy programs that respond to learner's language and literacy needs
- selection of strategies and practices based on learner data to align instruction with individual learner profile
- early and ongoing screening processes and strategies to inform instructional practices and identified needs of each learner.

## Pathway and transition planning

- processes and practices to support all transitions
- curriculum design using learners' career and life goals
- programs and learning opportunities for all pathways

- practices that develop the transferable skills to support lifelong learning
- federal and provincial policies and programs as well as community partnerships for post-secondary pathway planning (for example, Disability Services Ontario, community living agencies and health care providers)
- importance of pathway planning from Kindergarten to post-secondary (for example, entry to school, Ontario Secondary School Diploma/Certificate, destreamed courses and Specialist High Skills Major programs)
- health and safety considerations responsive to learner's transition needs
- internal and external processes that support transitions (for example, cross-panel/division meetings, and 4-step inquiry process)
- inclusion of learners, families, guardians and caregivers in the development and updating of learners' transition plans, including micro and macro transitions.

### **Safe, equitable and inclusive learning environments**

- policies and processes to create and maintain inclusive learning environments that respect diversity and encourage critical thinking (for example, gender neutral language and resources in various formats)
- inclusive learning environments that facilitate learning, foster learner agency and perspectives
- practices that support safe and healthy learning environments for learners as well as families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians
- processes and protocols to develop data-informed learner safety plans and plans of care
- resources to support implementation of learner safety plans and plans of care (for example, Applied Behavioural Analysis [ABA], Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training [ASIST], and safe talk)
- design of differentiated learning environments to foster inclusion (for example, multisensory tools, and calming spaces)
- how identity, relationships and intersectionality impact individuals with exceptionalities
- strategies to foster inclusion of specialized classrooms within the whole school environment.

### **Teaching and learning through e-Learning principles**

- integration of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning
- technological and communication resources to enhance professional knowledge in support of learning and agency
- ethical use of technology in support of learners' safety, privacy and well-being



- integration of technological tools and digital resources in program planning for learners with special education needs
- processes and strategies for teaching and learning in a virtual learning environment allowing learners with special education needs to access the curriculum (for example, synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities).

### **Culturally responsive and relevant pedagogical practices**

- culturally responsive and relevant practices that reflect understanding of learners' diverse identities
- culturally inclusive resources that support learning to foster engagement and well-being
- awareness of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation
- impact of linguistic insecurity and cultural belonging on teaching and learning
- professional responsibility related to diverse cultural perceptions, beliefs and values in special education
- culturally responsive approaches to communication with families and caregivers.

### **Social justice and democratic citizenship**

- policies related to democratic citizenship within local, national and global contexts
- processes and practices that foster learners' voice and choice, respect diversity and promote social justice
- strategies for consensus-building, participatory democracy and empowerment within schools and the community
- addressing barriers to facilitate participation of learners with special needs in school activities (for example, extra-curricular activities, field trips and recess).

### **Environmental sustainability**

- shared responsibility and partnership to foster ecological justice
- integration of environmentally sustainable policies, pedagogies and practices
- processes and strategies that engage learners with special education needs as active global citizens in supporting environmental sustainability
- program planning for experiential, land-based and play-based learning opportunities for learners with special education needs.

### Shared responsibility for learning

- processes and practices to foster communication and collaboration with learners, families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians, agencies and the school community to support learning
- partnerships with families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians that value shared decision-making, confidentiality, advocacy and leadership
- processes to engage staff in a whole school approach to special education
- strategies to build and maintain authentic relationships between school and communities, highlighting socio-cultural awareness about special education.

### Communities of professional learning

- professional learning communities that promote critical pedagogy and collective efficacy (for example, strategies that promote self-care and capacity building)
- research and leadership to advance professional practice through ongoing collaborative inquiry, dialogue and innovation
- strategies to build collective capacity in the principles of evidence-based pedagogical practices related to special education (for example, formal and informal coaching and mentorship).

### Resources

Resources to support the development of the AQ Course *Special Education, Specialist* can be found on the [College](#) website and the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#) website.

## Appendix 1

### Continuum Of Learning in Schedule D Additional Qualification (AQ) Courses

#### Considerations

- Consistency across the three Schedule D sessions to:
  - support the development and progression of knowledge, implementation and leadership
  - support candidates who take the sessions from different providers
- Candidates' professional experience and learning needs in relation to the required elements of the AQ course.

#### Schedule D, Part 1

#### Schedule D, Part 2

#### Schedule D, Specialist - Leadership

#### Learning and Applying



#### Applying and Extending



#### Leading and Researching

What do candidates need to know about the subject matter? – Develop content knowledge



What more do candidates need to know? – Deepen knowledge and implementation strategies



How do candidates become leaders in the subject area? - Develop leadership skills

Instructor (expert in the subject area) driven



Instructor and candidate driven



Candidate driven supported by instructor

Instructor leads co-construction of learning goals



Instructors and candidates share responsibility of the learning goals related to the subject matter



Candidates develop learning goals to bring their knowledge to others

Understand pertinent legislation and policies



Dig deeper/Investigate into pertinent legislation and policies



Analyze pertinent legislation and policies and measure impact at school and system level



## Continuum of Learning in Schedule D Additional Qualification (AQ) Courses

*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Compliant Text:*

### **Schedule D, Part 1**

*This is the first level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.*

#### **Learning and Applying**

- What do candidates need to know about the subject matter? – Develop content knowledge
- Instructor (expert in the subject area) driven
- Instructor leads co-construction of learning goals
- Understand pertinent legislation and policies
- Apply curriculum and policies to candidates' teaching contexts
- Understand the learning context of subject matter (for example, examine Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Read research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter
- Apply subject content research to the candidates' teaching context.

### **Schedule D, Part 2**

*This is the second level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.*

#### **Applying and Extending**

- What more do candidates need to know? – Deepen knowledge and implementation strategies
- Instructor and candidate driven
- Instructors and candidates share responsibility of the learning goals related to the subject matter
- Dig deeper/Investigate into pertinent legislation and policies
- Extend curriculum and policies to problems of practice in the field and implementation in professional learning communities
- Engage with the learning context of subject matter (for example, apply Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Expand scope of research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter (for example, candidates establish subject-specific research goals)
- Extend the application of subject content research
- to the teaching context of the candidate and beyond (for example, school, Board, community).

## **Schedule D, Specialist – Leadership**

*This is the third level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.*

### **Leading and Researching**

- How do candidates become leaders in the subject area? - Develop leadership skills
- Candidate driven supported by instructor,
- Candidates develop learning goals to bring their knowledge to others
- Analyze pertinent legislation and policies and measure impact at school and system level
- Lead change related to curriculum and policy implementation
- Lead innovation in teaching and learning in the learning context (for example, investigate Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Develop leadership strategies to further research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter
- Apply leadership strategies and subject content research to lead instructional practice.



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