

## **Learner Assessment Online (LA Online) Frequently Asked Questions**

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### **Test Administration**

1. How does my school obtain the supervisor PINs and start codes for LA Online?

In early June, supervisor PINs and start codes will be sent to schools that have grade 9s.

2. What do the PINs and start codes do?

The start code is a four-digit number that will be used to begin the test. The PIN is a supervisor code. This supervisor code is used to unlock extra time for students who have a time accommodation. No code is needed to submit the test.

3. On the day of the test, what information should my students have?

Students will need to enter their Alberta Student Number correctly for the LA Online program to work. The test invigilator must have this information for the students. They will also be required to enter their name and birth date.

4. Do I need to pre-register my students to use LA Online to complete their PATs?

Students are automatically registered in both the print and online modes of the test, therefore no pre-registration of LA Online users is required. However, it is recommended to contact Learner Assessment to let us know that your school will be using LA Online. The purpose behind this is for us to have a contact name and number in your school in the event that your school needs technical assistance. Contact Dan Karas, Coordinator of Online Assessment, at [Dan.Karas@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Dan.Karas@gov.ab.ca) to let Learner Assessment know of your schools' intention to use LA Online.

Principals are required to accurately complete the *List of Students* that communicates to Alberta Education not only who wrote or did not write but how they wrote. It is critical that the *List of Students* is completed accurately because this is the document used by Alberta Education to make decisions about students for reporting purposes. Errors in this document will lead to errors in the reports sent to schools. Currently, principals use the following symbols on the *List of Students* (√ - present, E – excused, A – absent, T – transferred) and you may now use O for online.

5. If my school decides to have students use LA Online, do all grade 9 students need to participate using this mode?

All students in a school need not participate in PATs using only one mode. It is entirely possible for a school to have a group of students completing the PAT online and another group of students writing the paper version of the test.

6. If a student uses LA Online to complete one test, does this same student need to use LA Online for the rest of the subjects?

A student need not use one particular mode for all of the tests. For example, a student may prefer to use LA Online to write Science and Social Studies, but use paper and pencil for Math and Language Arts. The mode that the student uses to complete the test must be communicated accurately on the *List of Students*.

7. Can home schooled or virtual students use LA Online for PATs?

Students who have been home schooled or are virtual students can use LA Online in their homes to complete the PATs provided that appropriate supervision is present. As in a regular school setting, LA Online would need to be downloaded to the home computer and the school code would need to be entered.

8. What happens if a student began a test using LA Online, but changes his or her mind during the test and would like to use the paper version?

During the PAT, a student can opt to revert to the paper copy of the PAT at any time. If this situation arises, the student should inform the test invigilator that a switch is desired. The test invigilator would need to adjust for the amount of time required for the student to transfer responses from the computer to the machine score sheet. This event is also to be recorded on the Principal's Statement.

9. I like the idea of LA Online, but my students have been taught test taking strategies using pencil and paper tests. Is it alright if students using LA Online be given a paper copy of the test too?

Each school is sent sufficient paper copies for every student registered to write PATs. If the teacher feels that it is in the students' best interests to receive a paper test to write on in conjunction with the online test, it is acceptable to do so. The paper copy would not require any stickers or identification on it since the PAT responses would be entered using LA Online. This is an interim measure only and may not be allowed on future PAT administrations.

10. Who makes the decision as to whether students use LA Online or not?

The decision to use LA Online is a school-based decision. If the administration of the school determines the online test not to be in the best interests of their students, they reserve the right to not have LA Online used in their school. On the same note, if classroom teachers do not think that their students should use this technology, they can also opt to remain with the paper version of the test. If both the administration and teachers in the school would like to use LA Online to write PATs, the student will have the choice as to the mode of delivery they would like to use.

11. Will my students be able to use LA Online for the readings booklet for Language Arts Part B?

The readings booklet for Part B of the Language Arts PAT will remain exclusively in paper format. Research suggests that students fare better when multiple page passages are presented on paper rather than on screen. Students are better equipped to exercise positional memory skills when reading on paper.

12. Some of my students have a CD accommodation. Can they still use LA Online?

At this time, it is recommended that students who will use a CD accommodation not use LA Online for Math or Science PATs. LA Online numbers the questions in serial order, regardless of whether the question is a multiple-choice or numerical-response item. The CD is read according to exactly how the print version of the PAT appears, not the LA Online version. Therefore if a student wrote a Math or Science PAT where numerical responses were included, the CD would read, for example, “numerical response one” while the online version may have this item as “number six”. In both versions, **the order of the questions remains the same**, but the numbering scheme differs.

13. I do not have enough computers in my school for all Grade 9 students to write on computers. How can I deal with that?

In situations where the number of students wanting to write on computers exceeds the number of computers available, it is possible to alter the writing schedule into two writing sessions. For reasons of fairness to the students and test security, it is imperative that the two groups of students be separated and not have contact at any time during the test administration. To alter the schedule, please contact Michele Samuel, Director, Examination Administration by telephone at (780) 422-0724 (toll-free in Alberta at 310-0000) or by email at [Michele.Samuel@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Michele.Samuel@gov.ab.ca).

## **Preliminary Reporting**

14. When will my school know the results of the tests that students complete using LA Online?

On the Extranet, the machine-scored parts of the PATs will become available within 24 hours of the test administration. The Extranet can also be used to generate a PDF for each student which can serve as a preliminary report for parents.

15. Does my school have to use the Extranet to report preliminary machine scored results to parents?

If a school has another method of reporting preliminary machine-scored results to parents, they are not required to use the Extranet template.

16. What does the Extranet generated preliminary report look like?

A sample of a preliminary report has been made available on the LA Online website.

## **Technical Issues**

17. Is there a specific version of LA Online that needs to be used for the PATs in June?

Over the past few months, LA Online has gone through several developmental stages. The version which can be obtained from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/laonline/> is the version which will be used in June. Its version number is 1.6.0. There will be no further updates to the LA Online program during this school year.

18. When should LA Online be installed on my schools' computers?

On April 3, 2008 the final update for LA Online was posted on the LA Online website. To ensure LA Online works properly on your schools' computers, it is imperative that LA Online be used with practice tests by students prior to the date of the PAT.

19. How does my school know if LA Online is installed properly and will communicate with Alberta Education?

If the computer LA Online is installed on can access and successfully load practice tests, it has been properly installed and can be used for PATs. However, it is imperative that the correct school code be in place so that the program can download PATs from Alberta Education.

20. When I installed LA Online, I mistakenly placed the wrong school code in the program. What can I do to repair this issue?

If you email Dan Karas (Dan.Karas@gov.ab.ca) or Brian Schroter (Brian.Schroter@gov.ab.ca), they can issue an administrator code which will allow the user to change the school code in the program.

21. Is LA Online secure?

LA Online is a secure program. During a test, the application blocks out all other programs except for itself. It also blocks all other internet traffic asides from itself. When the test has been submitted to Alberta Education, there is no trace of the test left on the computer.

22. My school uses Apple computers. Can the test be done on an Apple?

If the Apple computers in your school are equipped with a PC emulator, they should work properly with this application. Learner Assessment staff will work with your jurisdiction technology staff to determine if the test application will work effectively on your Apple computers.

### **General Topics**

23. Will LA Online look different next year?

Plans are in place for LA Online to be web-based instead of software-based. The feel and functions will remain the same. Instead of downloading the application onto a local computer, the program would now be available to any computer that could access the internet through a browser. Apple computers would no longer need an emulator, as the program would be web based.

24. What does the “LA” in LA Online stand for?

LA Online stands for Learner Assessment Online. It is not to be confused with it being solely “Language Arts” Online.

25. Can students use LA Online at home to access practice tests?

Students can download and install the application from the LA Online website to practice from home. To access practice tests, a correct school code need not be in place.

26. How will my students know how to operate LA Online?

It is strongly recommended that students complete at least one practice test using LA Online prior to using this application to complete a PAT. By doing so, students can become familiar with the features of the program prior to the date of the PAT.

27. Is LA Online available exclusively for grade 9s?

Currently, only grade 9 PATs are available to be completed using LA Online.

28. I would like my students to become familiar with LA Online and complete a practice PAT, but it is early in the year and they have not covered a lot of the curriculum yet. Is there another way for my students to gain familiarity with the program?

The Science practice tests for both grades 6 and 9 have been broken down into their respective units. It is conceivable that a teacher could have students use LA Online to complete these practice unit tests during different times of the year to reflect the order of teaching the units.

29. If a student moves to my school from another province and does not have an Alberta Student Number (ASN), can this student still write PATs online?

Students without an ASN will need to write paper versions of the PATs. Students moving within Alberta that have an ASN can write the online version of the PATs.