

THE PAN-CANADIAN, CANADIAN ADULT EDUCATION CREDENTIAL (CAEC), REPLACES THE GED®



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Introduction

The General Education Development (GED®) high-school-equivalency test is a joint venture between the American Council on Education and U.S.-based assessment company Pearson. The test is available in more than 85 countries, and completion is accepted by nearly all U.S. universities, and many worldwide, as meeting the basic equivalency of a high-school diploma for adult admission to post-secondary education. Although use of the GED® is widespread, most countries have developed their own high-school-equivalency tests and/or provide a variety of different pathways for adults to obtain their school-leaving certificate and/or continue with higher education/vocational training.

The following are brief overviews of approaches utilized by selected countries:

- In France, for example, the Diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires is a degree from a French university that provides an opportunity for adults who have not obtained a baccalauréat to pursue university studies.
- In Australia, adult education is offered via Vocational and Training (VET) and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges that provide training in specific skills for particular workplaces and an opportunity to complete a certificate equivalent to a high-school level of education. These college programs are quality controlled by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).
- In Germany, adults can do an adult education course to complete the level of "Abitur," which is the German school leaving certificate, in order to access post-secondary education/vocational training.
- Italy's Provincial Centres for School Education for Adults (CPIAs) offer certification in the acquisition of basic skills/competencies related to compulsory elementary education; vocational, technical and artistic high school diplomas; and Italian Language/Literacy certification at various levels.
- In the UK, adults can pursue the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) through adult education programs/evening classes. In addition, functional skills qualifications, covering subjects such as

English, mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), can be obtained at various levels via technical and vocational education and training programs.

The Canadian Transition

GED Testing Service had been in charge of distributing the examinations to testing centres across Canada for many years; however, in 2023, the service provider informed Canadian jurisdictions it would no longer offer the GED® examinations in the country, effective May 3, 2024. The main reason GED Testing Service gave for discontinuation of the service was that the Canadian version of the GED® (2002 series) required the maintenance of the legacy technology infrastructure (e.g., scoring system and delivery platform), and the cost to do so was prohibitive.

Interestingly, however, several years ago, the Canadian GED Caucus (a stand-alone group comprising GED® administrators in each province/territory where the GED® was administered) had identified the need to update or replace the 2002 Canadian Test Series. The main reasons were as follows:

- The constructs being assessed were no longer relevant in today's workplace environment (e.g., some questions were too knowledge-based; there was a need for greater emphasis on higher-order thinking skills).
- The premise or context of some questions no longer aligned with the perspectives of Indigenous, Francophone and multi-cultural groups or communities.
- There was a desire to modernize the assessment and leverage technology to administer more authentic, interactive and inclusive assessments that include tools and digital supports (e.g., text-to-speech).

The GED Caucus approached the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) to issue a call for proposals to conduct the work. Alberta Education submitted a proposal, which was selected by the CMEC, and active test development began three years ago. Alberta's procurement of a digital platform (which started in 2021-22) included requirements for the administration of an adult-based, pan-Canadian assessment.

About the CAEC¹

Credentialing and Development

Like the GED®, the Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) is designed for adults who do not have a high-school diploma and wish to attain a provincial high-school equivalency credential, as they seek access to employment, education and/or training opportunities. The new tests/credential will be available to both French and English candidates. For those adults who have previously passed the GED®, the credential continues to be recognized, and test-takers who have passed some of the five GED® test subjects can apply to have their results count toward CAEC tests in the same subjects for up to three years (until May, 2027).² In collaboration with national provincial and territorial partners (i.e., Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador), Alberta led the development of this high-quality, made-in-Canada, adult education credentialing system. The test questions were developed and validated by members of working groups for each subject area. The work is coordinated by the Alberta Education CAEC team but complemented by in-kind contributions from other jurisdictions for services such as translation and validation for cultural appropriateness. The CAEC Testing Service, which operates out of Alberta Education's Provincial Assessment Sector, and in collaboration with the province's technology partner, [Vretta](#), provides for the delivery and maintenance of the examinations across the country. Specifically, CAEC Testing Service is responsible for:

- Developing and marking of the CAEC tests
- Providing ongoing analytics
- Operating the digital testing platform, including the data management portal for participating jurisdictions and
- Reporting on test results

Services include:

- Test administration that supports both computer- and paper-based formats
- Marking written response questions
- Scoring and Reporting
- Maintaining the CAEC IT system

Content and Administration

The CAEC Test Administration Guide³ provides information about the policies and procedures of the CAEC Testing Service that offers the tests to all participating provinces and territories (listed previously). Among other things, the tests were developed to be:

- Tailored to the needs of Canadian adults
- Reflective of the diverse cultures and perspectives of Canadians, including those of Indigenous, Anglophone and Francophone, as well as multicultural communities
- Computer-based, with a paper option

The CAEC comprises the same five subject-matter tests as the GED®. The number of questions and time allotments are provided for each test in the table below:

The CAEC Testing Service administers the examinations in jurisdictional test centres, which may be operated by the participating province/territory or contracted to private organizations. The tests for mathematics, science, social studies and reading are selected-response and machine-scored, and all results for these tests are considered final. Candidates are able to access their test scores approximately two business days after test answers are submitted. The writing task is hand-scored; candidates are able to access their results within approximately 20 business days after writing a test. Candidates may request

¹ Alberta Education. (2024). *Canadian Adult Education Credential: About the CAEC Testing Service*. Retrieved June 13, 2024 from: <https://www.alberta.ca/information-for-testing-centres>.

² TVO Independent Learning Centre. (2024). *The Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC): GED® Replacement Coming Summer 2024*. Retrieved June 12, 2024 from: <https://ged.ilc.org>.

³ Canadian Adult Education Credential/Certificat canadien d'éducation des adultes. (2024). *Canadian Adult Education Credential: Test Administration Guide*. Retrieved June 12, 2024 from: <https://www.alberta.ca/system/files/caec-test-administration-guide.pdf>.

Subject & Parts	Weight	Number of Questions	Time
Reading	100%	50 questions	75 minutes
Writing	100%	1 persuasive writing task	75 minutes
Math	100%	42 questions	120 minutes
Part 1: No Calculator	25%	12 questions	30 minutes
Part 2: Calculator	75%	30 questions	90 minutes
Science	100%	35 questions	90 minutes
Social Studies	100%	40 questions	90 minutes

to have their CAEC writing test re-scored, for a fee. Fees for the writing of CAEC tests vary across jurisdictions and test centres. For example, in Ontario, the CAEC will be administered by TVO's Independent Learning Centre (ILC), and the cost to test-takers will be \$100.⁴

Universal supports, special arrangements and accommodations are available for the CAEC examinations. Universal supports are tools that are embedded in the digital e-assessment platform and are available to all candidates writing the tests on a computer (the primary administration format). These include screen colour overlay, screen text highlighter, line reader and a zoom feature. (These supports are not available for the paper-based option.) Special arrangements are environmental conditions that make candidates feel more comfortable when sitting the test, without affecting test validity and integrity. Special arrangements include additional breaks, dictation (speech-to-text), audio (text-to-speech), separate/private writing space, privacy screens, noise blockers and large-print copies of paper tests. Provision of special arrangements is the responsibility of the CAEC testing centre; candidates must request special arrangements prior to taking a test; and the availability of such arrangements varies

among testing centres. Accommodations are supports that are available for candidates who have medically diagnosed conditions or special extenuating circumstances. Accommodations include input assistant/scribe and Braille format. Approval of accommodations is the responsibility of the CAEC jurisdictional administrators.

Writing Frequency

According to the aforementioned CAEC Test Administration Guide, candidates who do not receive a passing result for a CAEC subject may rewrite it. They may attempt any one subject test only once per calendar month and up to a maximum of three times per calendar year.

Marking

Candidate submissions for writing are marked independently by at least two CAEC Testing Service markers. If the score range is within two points, the average of the two scores is taken as the final result. If the scorers provide a range of marks beyond two points, the writing task is marked for a third time, and the two highest scores are averaged to calculate the final result.

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. (May 14, 2024). *Memorandum From: Assistant Deputy Minister, Workforce Policy and Innovation Division and Assistant Deputy Minister, Employment and Training Division, To: Employment Ontario Network*. Retrieved June 12, 2024 from: <https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/lbs-memo-caec-en.pdf>.

Reporting Scale

The following scale is used to report CAEC subject results.

Percentage Score	Reported Score
80 – 100%	Exceeds Minimum Standard (ES)
55 – 79%	Meets Minimum Standard (MS)
40 – 54%	Approaching Minimum Standard (AS)
0 – 39%	Does Not Meet Minimum Standard (DMS)

Prior Learning Assessment

Prior learning assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process that acknowledges equivalent learning that is attained outside of the CAEC process. Two potential sources of PLAR for the CAEC are prior GED® test results and high-school or adult education course equivalencies, as appropriate. Recognition of PLAR allows candidates to be exempt from writing up to a maximum of four CAEC subject tests.

Practice Test

CAEC practice tests can be accessed here: <https://caec.vretta.com/#/en/candidate-public-practice>.

Conclusion

Although the GED® is used widely to demonstrate high-school education equivalence, countries have developed a variety of programs and pathways to support adults in attaining the education credentials they need to open doors to higher education, training needs and pursue employment opportunities. Developed to replace the discontinued GED®, the Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) is a new, high-quality, Canadian-made, adult education certificate for adults who have not attained a high-school diploma. Candidates in participating jurisdictions who successfully complete the CAEC will receive high-school equivalency certificates. This testing program will be critically important to adults who are seeking access to employment, education and/or training opportunities, as they move forward with their careers. As the CAEC becomes more widely implemented across the country, a future article will describe the extent to which test-takers, and all stakeholders for that matter, perceive the program's degree of success, including the use/value of digital technology to deliver the program.

About the Author

Dr. Richard Jones has extensive experience in the fields of large-scale educational assessment and program evaluation and has worked in the assessment and evaluation field for more than 35 years. Prior to founding RMJ Assessment, he held senior leadership positions with the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in Ontario, as well as the Saskatchewan and British Columbia Ministries of Education. In these roles, he was responsible for initiatives related to student, program and curriculum evaluation; education quality indicators; school and school board improvement planning; school accreditation; and provincial, national and international testing.

Richard began his career as an educator at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. Subsequently, he was a researcher and senior manager for an American-based, multinational corporation delivering consulting services in the Middle East.

Feel free to reach out to Richard “Rick” at richard.jones@rmjassessment.com (or via [LinkedIn](#)) to inquire about best practices in large-scale assessment and/or program evaluation.

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