

KCSS student OSSLT Questions

Who creates the Literacy Test?

- EQAO (The Education Quality and Accountability Office) is responsible for creating the test. This is same organization that wrote the grade 3, 6 and 9 tests. The tests are written by teams of teachers in Ontario.

Why is the literacy test necessary?

- Functional literacy is a necessary skill both in secondary school and beyond. The OSSLT is one indicator that you have mastered the essential reading and writing skills.

What percentage do I need to get to pass this test?

- The test is scored out of 400. You must earn 300, or 75%. This is the provincial standard.

Why do we have to get 75% to pass instead of 50% like all other high school exams?

- In all of your courses, the Ministry of Education sets level three (70-79%) as the standard that students are expected to achieve. This test matches that expectation. Remember that the skills tested on the OSSLT are based on grade 9 expectations. You are not writing the test until mid-way through grade 10; your mastery should have continued to increase beyond 50%.

How does the literacy test benefit me?

- The test helps students to have a sense of the reading and writing tasks that are necessary in daily life. Students who are unsuccessful on the test are provided with additional literacy supports in their last years of high school.

Do I have to complete the OSSLT?

- If you intend to graduate from high school, you MUST write the OSSLT. If you are unsuccessful a plan will be put in place. This may include rewriting the test the following year, and/or taking the Ontario Literacy Course which will count as one of your 30 credits and the OSSLT graduation requirement. You may not proceed immediately to the OLC course without having written the test at least once.

I'm a grade 9 student in a grade 10 class; do I have to write the test?

- No. You write the test in your second year of high school regardless of what classes you are currently enrolled in.

Is this part of my English course?

- No. Literacy is a common expectation across all high school courses. The OSSLT is not a part of any one course.

Test Format

How big will the test be?

- The test will consist of four booklets - a question and an answer booklet that you will use before the break, and a second set that you will use after the break.

How many pages are in the booklets?

- The test can change slightly year-to-year, but the sample booklet provided by EQAO is:
 - Question Booklet 1 - 12 pages - Answer Booklet 1 - 10 pages
 - Question Booklet 2 - 14 pages - Answer Booklet 2 - 12 pages

Are there long answer, true or false, or fill-in-the-blank questions?

- There are two “long” answer questions - a one page news report, and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (minimum of three paragraphs). These long writing tasks are worth a high percentage of your final mark. Make sure you complete them thoroughly!
- There are no true or false questions.
- There are no fill-in-the-blank questions.

How many multiple choice questions are on the test?

- Slight changes may be made year-to-year, but the sample booklet has 45 multiple choice questions.

Logistics of the Literacy Test

When is the test?

- Wednesday, March 27th. This is the ONLY day the test is offered for the entire school year. Your attendance is essential.

How long will the test be?

- The test is based upon two 75 minute sessions with a break in the middle. Extra time is provided on an “as needed” basis.

Where will this be taking place?

- The test will be written on the first floor if you have not requested extra time, and the second floor if you have requested extra time. Student groupings and locations will be communicated prior to the test day.
- Students with either Special Education or ESL exceptionalities will write in alternate locations (e.g. MPR or Gym 3). This will be communicated to you ahead of time.

Can I get help during the test?

- All students can access the following assistance if it is part of their regular practice within the classroom:
 - Individual or small group setting
 - Preferential seating
 - Prompts from teacher for students with attention problems in order to refocus
 - Additional time

Can you ask your teacher questions if you do not understand what the question is asking?

- No.
- Here is what EQAO says:
 - “Once the test materials have been opened, no one may use information from the test to provide instruction on any concept or item being tested prior to, during or after the administration of the test.”
 - “During the test, no one may explain, define, translate or provide examples of reading vocabulary or writing terminology to students, including those with accommodations.”

- “During the test, nothing may be said or done to influence student responses, including, but not limited to, actions such as drawing a student’s attention to an unanswered question.”

Are open response questions (paragraph answers) written in the answer booklet or on a separate sheet of paper? Is there space to write the long answer questions inside the answer booklet?

- ALL ANSWERS MUST BE WRITTEN IN THE ANSWER BOOKLET ON THE APPROPRIATE PAGE. Space is provided for each question. Use the amount of space provided as a guideline to how much you should write.

Do I have to only write on the lines provided?

- Yes. (Additional space or paper is NOT provided. NO ANSWERS, OTHER THAN WHAT IS ON THE LINES PROVIDED WILL BE MARKED.)

Can we write in the empty sides of the answer booklet?

- You may use this space for brainstorming and planning notes, but IT WILL NOT BE MARKED.

What if my homeroom is a grade 11 class?

- We have a list of all students who are in grade 10, but may have grade 9 or 11 homeroom classes. You will be directed to the appropriate room to write the test.

Can we socialize on our break?

- You may socialize with the other students in your break area. NO CELL PHONE ALLOWED AT ANY TIME.

Do I have to take the test in Grade 12 if I take the OLC course?

- Every student who intends to graduate MUST write the test at least once. If you are unsuccessful in grade 10, you may be asked to write it again in grade 11 depending on your circumstances. Students who have not successfully completed the test by grade 12 will take the Ontario Literacy Course. This course will teach the foundational skills from the literacy test and students will be evaluated on this work. OLC counts as a replacement for passing the literacy test, and as a credit toward the 30 required for graduation.

Level of Difficulty

Do my grade nine marks tell me how I will do - approximately?

- They can be a predictor, but remember that classroom assessments are more varied and not all “on demand” in terms of time. Your performance on your exams may be an indicator of how well you are likely to do. You can also go back to see how you managed in the Grade 6 EQAO assessments.

If I do well in English, is it likely I will pass the test?

- Literacy is taught across the curriculum. Your English mark will not be the only indicator of your success on the literacy test. [For example, the literacy test asks you to read a graphic text (table, chart, map, figures, etc.), something you might not do on a regular basis in English.]

Is it easy? How hard is it going to be?

- The OSSLT is based on grade 9 curriculum expectations. You write it mid-way through grade 10 so you have been developing these skills for a long time.

Test Preparation

What can I do to prepare and practice for the test?

- You have been preparing and practicing for this test for years as you have expanded your literacy skills in school everyday. However, as the test approaches, you may want to focus your attention to literacy in a more specific and guided way. Here are some suggestions:
 - Participate in the classroom sessions during the Lit Blitz . These sessions will target areas that students have found challenging in the past.
 - Access the student portal on the EQAO website (<http://www.eqao.com/Students/Secondary/10/10.aspx?Lang=E&gr=10>). The Planning and Preparation Guide is a great resource (<http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT/assessment-docs/getting-ready-guide-osslt.pdf>) .
 - Practice the tasks on the KCSS Literacy Moodle: “KCSS Literacy Learning”. The enrollment key is “kcss”.

Will studying help me pass the test?

- The OSSLT is a skills based test, not a knowledge based test. You do not need to “study”, but you will want to “practice”. Looking at the student sample answers and scoring guides will be very helpful.

What skills will we be learning in class?

- We will be focusing on areas that past students have found challenging. This will include: topic development, making connections, reading and understanding implicit details, and accurately decoding graphic texts such as tables, charts, etc..

Are there going to be any practice sessions or study guides? Will we get a package to take home, other than just the review days in class?

- We will have two assemblies, two in-class sessions, and a full day in-school event to help you prepare. At home you can use either the EQAO resources referenced above, or the KCSS Literacy Learning Moodle.

Writing Skills**Are there essay questions?**

- You are asked to write a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion. You will be given two lined pages to write your response. You must write a minimum of three paragraphs. This is similar to a short personal essay.

What is the longest question?

- There are two long-answer questions. There is a one-page news report, and a two-page series of paragraphs expressing an opinion. The series of paragraphs is the longest written response you will be required to give.

Is there a lot of writing?

- This is what is on the test:

| Reading | | Writing | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Reading selections: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information paragraph (225 to 250 words) • news report (225 to 250 words) • dialogue (225 to 250 words) • real-life narrative (550 to 600 words) • graphic text (fewer than 150 words) | Types of writing tasks and questions: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two long-writing tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – news report (one page) – series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (two pages) • two short-writing tasks (six lines each) • multiple-choice questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – developing a main idea with supporting details – organization of ideas – language conventions |
| Types of questions: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple-choice • open-response (six lines each) | | |

Why do we have to learn how to write a newspaper article?

- The reality is that most of you will not become journalists and will not write news reports after high school; however, writing a news report indicates a number of the writing skills that EQAO wants to be sure you have achieved. Your news report will demonstrate that you are able to make connections (between the headline and the photo provided), develop one topic with a consistent focus, provide supporting details, and that you can organize ideas in coherent manner. The news report allows you to write objectively about concrete, observable details (5W's + H).

Concerns Regarding Special Education and English Language Learners

Do you get extra time if you have an IEP?

- All students who need extra time may have it. In addition, you will receive the accommodations outlined in your IEP. E.g. You may use a computer or a scribe if your IEP outlines this as an assessment accommodation.

Will my IEP lower my required mark for passing?

- No. Every writer must achieve 300/400. This is a standardized test.

What level of ESL does a student have to be at to pass?

- Most students defer writing the test until they are in ESL “D” or “E”.

Marks and Report Cards

After the test will the mark that I receive on the OSSLT be on my high school transcript?

- Your transcript will indicate that you have successfully completed the OSSLT. No mark will be recorded.

Is my mark on the OSSLT going to appear on my report card?

- No.

What happens if you don't meet the 75% requirement? / What happens if you are unsuccessful on the test?

- You will need to write the test next year and/or you will need to take the Ontario Literacy Course in Grade 12.

Does the Literacy Test mark count toward your English mark?

- No. The test assesses literacy across the curriculum. It is not an English test.

Will post-secondary institutions be able to access these marks?

- No. They will see that you have successfully completed the OSSLT, but no mark will be indicated.

Do future employers see our marks?

- No.

What if you get 299/400? Would that technically be a failure?

- Yes. (Although in reality 295 is the highest mark you can score and still be considered unsuccessful. The “scores” are rubric based, and are calculated by level, not by individual numbers, so a score of 299 cannot happen.)

If a 74% is given, will the teachers be lenient?

- No. Different teachers mark different sections. In fact, each question is marked twice, by two different teachers. They have no knowledge of what marks you

earned on the other sections of the test. Each teacher's response is downloaded to a computer database and then final marks are calculated.