

# A Guide for Students

Preparing to Write the Diploma Examination



## Social Studies 30–2



Some information in this document may be subject to change due to COVID-19. See the Alberta Education website for updates.

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	
Administrators	
Parents	✓
General Audience	
Others	

Alberta Education, Government of Alberta

2020–2021

*A Guide for Students Preparing to Write the Diploma Examination  
Social Studies 30–2*

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This guide has been prepared by Provincial Assessment Sector staff at Alberta Education. We develop the diploma exams and are involved in the assessment of thousands of high school students each year. The purpose of this guide is to provide students with information that will increase their likelihood of success on the diploma exams in Social Studies 30–2.

Guides for Students for diploma-exam subjects other than Social Studies 30–2, as well as additional materials on how to prepare for diploma exams, can be found on the Alberta Education website at [education.alberta.ca](https://education.alberta.ca).

This guide and all other diploma examination-related materials produced by Provincial Assessment Sector staff are identified with the following logo:



You can find diploma examination-related materials on the [Alberta Education website](https://education.alberta.ca).

# Understanding the *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination*

Your school-awarded mark is worth 70% of your final mark in Social Studies 30–2. Your *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination* mark is worth the other 30%. Information regarding exceptions to the application of this policy is found in the [General Information Bulletin](#).

The *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination* has two parts—*Part A: Written Response* and *Part B: Multiple Choice*.

<i>Part A: Written Response</i>	<i>Part B: Multiple Choice</i>
<b>Part A: Written Response</b> requires students to complete three writing assignments. The written-response part of the examination is worth 50% of the total <i>Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination</i> mark. This examination was developed to be completed in 2.5 hours; however, you may take up to 5 hours to complete the examination, should you need it.	<b>Part B: Multiple Choice</b> consists of 60 multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice part of the examination is worth 50% of the total <i>Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination</i> mark. This examination was developed to be completed in 2.5 hours; however, you may take up to 5 hours to complete the examination, should you need it.

Special accommodations are available to students. For more information, contact your school administration or counselling department.

# Preparing for the *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination*

The skills that you practise when you participate in class and complete your assignments are the same skills that you need to successfully write your *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination*. The most effective way to prepare for your diploma examination is to be actively involved in your Social Studies 30–2 classroom experience. Be sure to:

- **Attend** class regularly
- **Participate** in classroom activities
- **Complete** all assignments
- **Learn** the course materials
- **Improve** your reading and writing skills
- **Ask** for help if you are having difficulty

# Suggestions for Completing

## *Part A: Written Response*

During a number of marking sessions, we asked participating teachers to submit tips or advice they would give their students about completing the writing assignments. The following points represent a summary of some of the responses to that request.

### Understand the scoring criteria

Make sure that you are familiar with the **scoring criteria** because they are used by experienced Social Studies 30–2 teachers to mark your examination. The scoring criteria are available in the [Social Studies 30–2 Information Bulletin](#) on our website. Being knowledgeable about the **scoring criteria** will also help you to fulfill the writing requirements for the examination.

### Use your time wisely

Budget your time so that you can:

- **Read** the assignments carefully
- **Think** about what you are being asked to do
- **Plan** your writing so that it will focus on the topic and make sense to your reader
- **Reread** your writing and ask yourself whether you have communicated clearly
- **Correct** your mistakes

If you hurry through the examination, there is a greater chance that you will misread instructions or leave work incomplete.

### Take advantage of the design of the diploma examination

You are encouraged to use information provided in the examination to help you complete your writing assignments—but be careful: it is best to choose information that you can confidently incorporate into your written response.

If you do choose to use information provided in the examination, remember that it is provided to help stimulate your response, not to be your response. A written response containing information only from the examination, strung together into a few sentences, is not as good as a written response that contains information from the examination that has been carefully chosen to add support to well-thought-out ideas and explanations.

### Read each assignment carefully

It is well worth your time to carefully read all the instructions and information provided. By using a highlighter pen to emphasize key words, you can focus clearly on the task you must complete.

## Plan your writing

Space for planning is provided to help you organize your work. Use it! Successful writers usually take the time to plan what they will say by using a variety of planning techniques, such as listing ideas or drawing a web diagram. Use the method with which you are most comfortable.

## Support your ideas

The writing assignments require you to present and support ideas. The most convincing and informative pieces of writing include support (illustrations, examples, facts) for the ideas that are being presented.

## Stay focused

As you write, keep checking to ensure that you remain focused on the assigned task. Do not let one idea lead you to another that is not related to your topic.

## Think about your reader

Your writing will be marked by Social Studies 30–2 teachers. Your job is to express your ideas clearly. You must help your reader to understand your ideas by giving specific examples that are accurate and related to your topic. Show your reader why you are thinking as you are.

## Reread your work

You are awarded marks for the clarity and correctness of your writing, as well as for what you say. Therefore, be sure to take some time to reread your writing carefully.

As you reread, ask yourself questions such as these:

- Are my ideas consistent, or do they contradict one another?
- Did I support my ideas with thorough explanations?
- Did I use examples that are historically correct and relevant to the topic?
- Is my writing organized and easy to follow?
- Did I use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar?
- Did I use vocabulary correctly?
- Will my reader understand why I have written what I wrote?

## Revise your finished work

If you think of changes that will improve your writing, make them. Do not worry about crossing out a sentence or adding another word on your final copy, whether it is word processed or handwritten. The markers understand the conditions under which you are writing, and they expect to see legible corrections and revisions on your finished work.

## Use a pen for your finished work

Use a blue or black pen, not a pencil. That way, the markers can concentrate on what you have written instead of thinking about how difficult your writing is to read.

## Understand the value and nature of each assignment

The *Social Studies 30–2 Diploma Examination Part A: Written Response* consists of three different writing assignments. Assignment I requires you to respond to an assigned task by demonstrating your knowledge and understanding of social studies and is worth 10% of your diploma examination mark. In Assignment II you will interpret three sources and use the details from these sources and your knowledge and understanding of social studies to defend a position. Assignment II is worth 20% of your diploma examination mark. Assignment III requires you to explore an issue and analyze various points of view on the issue. You will then create a response that explains and defends a position on the issue. Assignment III is worth 20% of your diploma examination mark.

Each assignment has a suggested time limit, as well as a suggested word count range. You may use each of these as a guideline when responding to each written-response assignment. The suggested word count range is not a cap, and if you hand write you are not expected to hand count your words.

## Try to relax

Having some anxiety when writing examinations is natural, but do not get stressed. Instead of last-minute cramming, get a good night's sleep. Try to stay calm and relaxed as you complete the examination. Concentrate on giving the examination your best effort.

It might help to remember that the examination markers are Social Studies 30–2 teachers who understand what examination conditions are like and want to see you do well.

# Suggestions for Completing

## *Part B: Multiple Choice*

There are different types of multiple-choice questions, and each type requires you to apply your knowledge and understanding as well as to use your skills and processes differently.

**Understanding and Analysis questions** require you to apply your knowledge and understanding as well as to use your skills and processes to address questions that deal with important events, ideas, and people while requiring you to think critically as you analyze information presented to you.

1. In a free-market economy, consumers can expect consumer prices to be low when the
  - A. product is overproduced
  - B. inflation rate exceeds the rate of wage increase
  - C. product is manufactured by only one or two companies
  - D. resources needed to manufacture the product are scarce

**Evaluation and Synthesis questions** require you to apply your knowledge and understanding as well as to use your skills and processes to select the “most appropriate” answer or to determine relationships among sources or ideas. When answering these “most appropriate answer” questions, be sure to read all four alternatives (**A**, **B**, **C**, **D**) carefully before choosing the answer you think is best.

*Use the following information to answer question 2.*

Proposed Reforms	
<b>Proposal W</b>	Nationalize fossil fuel production in order to regulate prices and reduce consumption.
<b>Proposal X</b>	Reduce corporate and personal taxation rates in order to stimulate economic expansion.
<b>Proposal Y</b>	Require persons receiving unemployment benefits to enroll in job skills enhancement programs to make themselves more employable.
<b>Proposal Z</b>	Lower the age at which citizens become eligible to receive government pension benefits in order to encourage early retirements

2. In Canada, a person with right-wing ideological beliefs would most likely oppose which two of these proposed reforms?
  - A. Proposal W and Proposal X
  - B. Proposal W and Proposal Z
  - C. Proposal X and Proposal Y
  - D. Proposal Y and Proposal Z

**Evaluation and Synthesis questions include** in their stems bold-faced qualifiers such as *most*, *mainly*, or *primarily*. Often, all the alternatives are correct to some degree, but one of them will be best because of the context established by the question.

*Use the following information to answer question 3.*



3. Taken together, these headlines focus **most directly** on which of the following research questions?
- A. Should citizens be required by law to vote in federal elections?
  - B. To what extent should governments be held accountable to the public?
  - C. To what extent should the news media be controlled by large corporations?
  - D. Should there be limits placed on how long a person can serve as an elected representative?

**Carefully read** each multiple-choice question and any source material. You may wish to **use a highlighter or pencil** to circle key words and ideas, to cross out choices that you know are wrong, or to jot down a brief summary of what you have read. Think carefully about what you are reading. For example, ask yourself what the quotation you have just read or the map you have just examined is *really* telling you.

# Reminders

- Be sure that you know the **writing location** of your examination. You must provide your own pen (for your final copy of the written responses), HB pencil (for multiple-choice responses), eraser, and highlighter.
- You are allowed to use the following print references while writing *Part A: Written Response*:
  - an authorized English and/or bilingual dictionary (students writing in French may use a French language dictionary)
  - a thesaurus
  - an authorized writer’s handbook
- The following writing handbooks are authorized for students to use while writing *Part A: Written Response*:
  - *A Canadian Writer’s Reference* (D. Hacker), **2nd edition only**
  - *Checkmate: A Writing Reference for Canadians* (J. Buckley)
  - *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* (Alberta Education)
  - *Fit to Print: The Canadian Student’s Guide to Essay Writing* (J. Buckley)
  - *The St. Martin’s Handbook for Canadians* (A. Lunsford et al.)
  - *The Writing Process* (Gehle et al.)

The reference texts used must **not** contain appendices that include social studies content (e.g., historical timelines, structure of the Government of Canada, Canada’s court system, structure of international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO).

The following dictionaries are authorized for students to use while writing *Part A: Written Response*:

- *Collins Paperback English Dictionary*
- *Collins-Robert Paperback French Dictionary*
- *Gage Canadian Dictionary*
- *Harper-Collins French Dictionary (French-English)*
- *Le Petit Robert 1*
- *Merriam-Webster’s School Dictionary*
- *The Canadian Oxford High School Dictionary*
- *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*
- *The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary of the English Language*
- *The Oxford Dictionary of Current English*

- You will **not** be allowed to use a dictionary, bilingual dictionary, thesaurus, or writing handbook while writing *Part B: Multiple Choice*.
- If you normally do your written work on a **word processor**, you may have the opportunity to use a word processor for writing *Part A: Written Response*. Speak to your Social Studies 30-2 teacher about this. Make sure that you are familiar with the effective use of the features of a word processor, including the “Tools” menu, well in advance of the examination. Practising will enhance your performance. Be cautious of relying on the program to correct all your mistakes. For example, on a recent examination, a student wrote “During the Cold War, the superpowers were very aware of the ‘treat’ of a nuclear war” when he or she intended to say “During the Cold War, the superpowers were very aware of the ‘threat’ of a nuclear war.” Because ‘treat’ was on the program’s list of words, the spell-checker did not help the student to avoid this unfortunate error.
- The examination booklet is your working copy. If you prefer to underline, highlight, or make notes on what you are reading, do so.
- Your teacher may have a booklet showing samples of students’ writing from past *Social Studies 30-2 Diploma Examinations*. Note that the example responses in the [Examples of the Standards for Students’ Writing](#) documents have been provided for instructional purposes only. If you use sections from these responses when writing the diploma examination, you will be guilty of plagiarism and in breach of examination regulations.
- If you believe that the mark you have received is not appropriate, you may request a rescoring of your examination. Before you apply for a rescoring, be sure to check your *Diploma Examination Results Statement* to see what marks you have been awarded on both parts of the examination. Keep in mind that if you do request a rescore, your new mark, whether it has increased or decreased, will be your final mark. Follow the procedures on your *Diploma Examination Results Statement* to apply for rescoring.
- For more detailed information about the *Social Studies 30-2 Diploma Examination*, see the [Social Studies 30-2 Information Bulletin](#).
- If you have questions about the examination that your teacher cannot answer, or if you are a student without a regular classroom teacher, feel free to contact **Karla Moldenhauer**, at [Karla.Moldenhauer@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Karla.Moldenhauer@gov.ab.ca); or **Deanna Shostak**, at [Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca). In Edmonton, call (780) 427-0010. To call toll-free within Alberta but outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000.