



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

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MEMORANDUM TO THE DEPUTY MINISTER

DESIGNATION OF LANGUAGE TESTING ORGANIZATIONS: CURRENT PROCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES GOING FORWARD

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

- The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) language designation framework, which designates third party language testing organizations for the purpose of testing language proficiency of permanent residence (PR) applicants under the economic class, and highlight where opportunities exist to reassess the framework and implement a more coherent and consistent approach to language testing across the Department, resulting in greater alignment across lines of business.
- An evolving departmental context and stakeholder environment have highlighted certain policy issues, including: mandatory language requirements for international students; remote proctoring of language tests; and the acceptance of specialized language tests for economic immigration.
- Undertaking a broad review of the language designation framework, taking into consideration impact on clients, stakeholder pressures, and the current lengthy designation process, provides an opportunity to improve client service, to increase efficiencies, and to determine the management and program resources needed to support these objectives. It would also help align language testing policy across the whole immigration continuum, from temporary to permanent residence, to citizenship.

BACKGROUND:

- Since 2010, language test results from designated organizations, paid for by the applicant, are the only evidence of language proficiency accepted by the Department for economic immigration. This universal approach has been found to be the most transparent, objective, and consistent way to evaluate an applicant's language proficiency.

Canada

- Canada's current approach to only accept test results from designated independent testing organizations was implemented to support various requirements of the immigration process. It was designed to be facilitative to potential applicants of the immigration application process regarding evidence of their language abilities while ensuring a fair and transparent process, wherever and whenever the tests are taken.
- The Minister of IRCC has regulatory authority to designate any language testing organization, and to approve a specific language test used by that organization, for the purpose of evaluating the language proficiency of individuals who could use test results to demonstrate they meet the requirements of, or to gain points related to an application for, permanent residence in economic immigration classes. The Minister's designation authorities have been delegated to the Director of Economic Immigration Programs and Policies.
- While the *Immigration and Refugees Protection Regulations* provides the framework for the designation of organizations, the designation process was established by the Department based on different factors, including regulatory requirements, policy/program objectives, and operational needs. Any language testing organization can seek designation by providing a submission demonstrating how they meet IRCC's criteria, which ensure that each organization's test is accurate, fair, transparent, objective and consistent.
- There are currently four designated organizations, two in English and two in French:
 - Cambridge Assessment English – *International English Language Testing System (IELTS) General*
 - Paragon Testing – *Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELP) General test*
 - Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Paris Île-de-France – *Test d'évaluation du français (TEF) Canada*
 - France Éducation International – *Test de connaissance du français (TCF) Canada*
- The Department also recently approved the designation-in-principle of
 The implementation of this new test is anticipated for early to mid-2023 once a service agreement is signed by both parties and necessary system changes are implemented.

CURRENT STATUS:

- Despite some initial challenges during the pandemic, as well as in the wake of the temporary resident to permanent resident public policies launch, the number of designated testing organizations and the testing availability in Canada and worldwide continues to meet the demand for English and French language tests for the purposes of immigration to Canada and Canadian citizenship. All four designated organizations are established businesses/entities with a growing number of service locations around the world.
- However, an increasing number of requests from language testing organizations seeking designation, compounded by a lengthy, complex and insufficiently transparent designation process, have begun to create pressure on the Department for a more streamlined and expedited designation framework.

- **Longer term priorities** focus on the broader review of the language designation framework, including the core technical designation criteria as well as the emerging evidence of outcomes related to specific language proficiency benchmark levels to inform future research and language requirements in program design.

NEXT STEPS:

- The Immigration Branch will develop forward-looking actions aimed at improving the language designation framework. Key actions to support ongoing priorities include a review of the designation process to increase efficiency and transparency, improving public facing as well as internal communication as it relates to the overall framework, and garnering interest for additional French language testing organizations. These will complement the development of proposals aimed at advancing the policy priorities outlined above.
- In response to the growing demand for language testing, the Immigration Branch will also be exploring the feasibility of establishing a language designation program with dedicated management and program functions and sufficient capacity to support a more streamlined and coherent approach to language testing. A dedicated program would facilitate the Department's response to an expanding policy and program landscape while maintaining and expanding the current open intake approach to designation.

Marian Campbell Jarvis

Annex: Overview of the language designation priorities in 2022 and going forward

ANNEX A

OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE DESIGNATION PRIORITIES IN 2022 AND GOING FORWARD

Priority	Timeline	Status	Next Steps
	2022-2023 (3-6 months for Service Agreement Further 12 months to implement)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting and signing of the Service Agreement Proceeding with implementation. This step included changes to GCMS, EE Portal, Come to Canada tool, etc., as well as updates to PDIs and Instructions, updates to external communication products, and training to ensure that processing officers are aware of the new designated organization and the details of their test.
	Summer-Fall 2022		
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	Summer-Fall 2022		
Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)	Fall/Winter 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns have been raised by the panel regarding CLBs being too granular for testing purposes and alignment with CLBs using Common European Framework of Reference Further research is required on CLB levels to ensure that all approved language tests' constructs are equivalent in the level of difficulty and test purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of advice and recommendation from panel on the CLB framework Seeking direction to further pursue this work Consultations with Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB)
French language testing organizations	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garnering interest from additional French language testing organizations to address parity between approved English and French language tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of panel advice and recommendation

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Expert Panel on Language Designation	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, the Expert panel increased in size from 5 to 7 members, balanced in terms of expertise (psychometrics, test development), language proficiency and gender diversity. • Panel members review technical elements of submissions for designation • Panel is also asked to provide advice on various policy questions. • Expert panel is key to providing technical expertise on designation criteria, and ensuring consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of submissions for designation by new organizations • Advice and recommendations on a range of policy questions • Each panel member's contract must be renewed by IRCC each fiscal year.
	On-going		
France Education International (TCF Canada) MOU renewal	Winter 2022-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU will expire on October 18, 2023 if not renewed • Renewal process has to start at least 6 months before the expiry date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start discussions with FEI on the process in late 2022 • Send an official letter about renewal by end of Jan 2023 • Identify panel members for the evaluation of the FEI renewal submission