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CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC
LEARNER SERVICES

CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARKS ASSESSMENT

INFORMATION PACKAGE

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The Canadian Language Benchmarks is a scale of measuring and describing proficiency in English. This guide may be useful for:

- Applicants to SAIT who use English as an additional language
- SAIT instructors and staff who wish to become familiar with the CLB system.
- ESL instructors and programmers who are preparing students that plan to continue their studies at SAIT.

For specific information about the Canadian Language Benchmarks at SAIT, please contact the English Language Foundations Program:

Room N304 - Senator Burns Building
1301 - 16 Avenue NW
Calgary, AB T2M 0L4
Phone: (403) 210-4045
Email: english.language@sait.ca
Web site: sait.ca

CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARKS ASSESSMENT (CLBA) AT SAIT

Non-native speakers of English who are applying for admission to SAIT are required to demonstrate proficiency in English before they begin their career program. SAIT uses the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment, an assessment that examines four skill areas - speaking, listening, reading and writing. SAIT students must be able to communicate effectively in class and with employers and co-workers in all skill areas. If you are an immigrant to Canada, you may have already done a CLBA assessment before you began a LINC program (Benchmarks 1 - 5).

WHAT IS THE CLBA?

The CLBA is an assessment tool for describing ability to use English as a second language. It was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and developed to provide a standardized measurement of English language proficiency across Canada. The CLBA measures language proficiency for benchmarks 1 to 8. It includes four components: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The full range of Canadian Language Benchmarks is based on a scale of twelve (12) proficiency indicators - three stages. This scale measures proficiency in English, from beginning level to highly proficient. Benchmark 8 is considered high enough for post-secondary study.

	CLB LEVELS
STAGE 1 - (BENCHMARKS 1 - 4)	Beginner to low intermediate level Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) / ESL
STAGE 2 - (BENCHMARKS 5 - 8)	Intermediate to high intermediate level Academic preparation / employment readiness programs
STAGE 3 - (BENCHMARKS 9 - 12)	Highly proficient English usage Specialized areas of study in a post-secondary program

SAIT ADMISSION AND CLBA ASSESSMENT

1. Placement in ELF requires a recent Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA). Scores should be no more than six months old.
2. ELF is not a program for beginners. ELF placement requires a minimum score of Benchmark 4 in listening/speaking, reading and writing.
3. SAIT accepts CLBA scores as a way to meet career program language requirements. Direct entry into SAIT career programs generally requires demonstration of Benchmark 8 in all skill areas. Consult the tables in this guide or visit www.language.ca for a description of the skill requirements associated with Benchmark 8.
4. ELF curriculum is based on CLB levels. Assessment will identify the level at which you begin study.
5. Please Note: Teacher assessed CLB scores and CLBPT scores are not accepted as alternatives to the CLBA.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR TAKING THE CLBA?

STEP 1: SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE LISTENING/SPEAKING TEST.

After you pay for the test, go to NN304 (Senator Burns) or call the English Language Foundations office at 403-210-4045 to schedule your listening and speaking test. The listening/speaking test will take approximately 30 minutes.

RESCHEDULING AND CANCELLATION GUIDELINES

You must call 403-210-4045 at least two working days before your scheduled listening and speaking interview if you want to cancel or reschedule.

If you cancel on the same day as your appointment or if you do not attend your appointment you will not receive a refund and an additional \$25 fee will be charged for the first rescheduling. If this happens a second time a \$65 fee will be charged and after that the full test fee of \$100 will apply to reschedule your appointment.

N.B. Testing appointments are in high demand so it is important to respect the time the assessor has set aside to meet with you. If you miss your appointment the assessor has just wasted his/her time waiting for you when another candidate could have been tested.

STEP 2: DO THE LISTENING/SPEAKING TEST.

Please be on time. If you have a cell phone, turn it off before the test begins.

STEP 3: DO THE CLBA READING AND WRITING TESTS.

After you finish the listening/speaking test, the assessor will send you to the SAIT Testing Centre. Take the form provided and official picture identification with you to MC221 in the Heart Building. You will do the CLBA Reading and Writing tests in this room. You will have two hours to complete the tests. You may not use a dictionary, electronic translator or other references during your test. We want to know about your skills and abilities!

STEP 4: PICK UP YOUR CLBA RESULTS (CLBA CLIENT PROFILE).

Your results will take one week to score if you complete all parts of the assessment on the same day. Go to NN304 (Senator Burns) to pick up your results. Your results are also entered into SAIT's central Banner system. If you are using a CLBA score for admission purposes, your benchmarks are accessible to staff across campus.

The CLBA report is an official document. Take care of this document and try not losing it as a \$25 charge will be implemented to issue a duplicate copy of a CLBA client profile.

You need pick up your results in person. If you cannot come to our office, you may request results be mailed to you (call 403-210-4045). If you ask another person to pick up your marks, please provide them with a letter of authorization and your picture ID. Marks will not be released to friends or family without your written authorization.

BUSINESS HOURS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOUNDATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE N304 (SENATOR BURNS BUILDING)

Monday - Friday: 8:30 am - 12:00 pm & 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm (Excluding Statutory Holiday)

LEARNER ASSESSMENT AND SKILLS CENTRE MC221 HEART BUILDING (MAY 4-SEPT 7, 2009)

Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Tuesday - Thursday: 9:00 am - 8:00 pm

Saturday: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Sunday: Closed

Call 403.284.4283 to confirm hours.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

WHO WILL ASSESS MY LANGUAGE?

When you go for language assessment at SAIT, you will be tested by a nationally certified CLBA assessor. Our CLBA assessors receive training and certification. Training ensures that the test is offered in a professional way, with standardized interpretation of results.

WHY DOES THE CLBA COST \$100?

SAIT receives no support from government to offset the cost of testing. Because this test includes a face to face interview and is marked by a trained assessor, there is a cost to the applicant. SAIT CLBA test is offered to SAIT applicants and PNP candidates.

CAN I TAKE THE CLBA IN ANY OTHER LOCATIONS?

New immigrants to Canada take either the CLBA or CLBPT for placement in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes. In Calgary this assessment and referral service is provided by the Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment- Referral Centre (ILVARC). Their phone number is 403-262-2656. They are located on the 14th floor at 910 - 7 Avenue SW. This service is provided for free as they receive government funding to provide services to newcomers to Calgary. However, there is often a waiting period of several weeks.

WHY IS THE CLBPT NOT ACCEPTED AT SAIT?

The Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) is different from the CLBA. It is not accepted for program admission at SAIT.

WHEN SHOULD I TAKE THE TEST?

If you plan to apply for government funding for the English Language Foundations (ELF) program, you will need to allow 6 - 12 weeks for your application form to be processed. Therefore, you should take the CLBA at least 8 weeks before the start of the next term. If you are planning to pay for your own studies, try to take the CLBA approximately two weeks before the start of the next term to ensure there will be room in the class. If you are applying to a career program, refer to the application dates. Remember it will take one week to get your CLBA results.

HOW DOES THE CLBA TEST COMPARE TO OTHER LANGUAGE TESTS?

The CLBA tests your ability to use English to communicate. Some other tests used by universities and colleges test only knowledge about the English language. Knowledge about English, however, does not prepare you to use it as a tool. Effective communication skills are necessary for career success. Other tests that measure this way include: TOEFL-IBT, IELTS, and CAEL.

WHAT IS THE TEST FORMAT?

The CLBA is a communicative tool. It is a task based assessment. You will be asked to complete listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks. You will be assessed on how successfully you complete each task. Your responses should be easy to understand and culturally appropriate. Your fluency, vocabulary and control of sentence structure will be assessed.

HOW LONG WILL THE ASSESSMENT TAKE?

The test will take approximately 2.5 hours in total. The listening/speaking interview will take about 30 minutes. According to your previous English studies, the assessor will decide to give you either Stage 1 (Benchmarks 1-4) or Stage 2 (Benchmarks 4 - 8) Reading and Writing tests. You will have up to one hour for each Stage 2 reading and writing or 45 minutes each for Stage 1 reading and writing. It is possible that you may be asked to return and complete the other test as well. For example, if you start with Stage 1 and achieve a benchmark 4+, you may be asked to do Stage 2.

WHAT IF I ALREADY HAVE A CLBA SCORE?

You may have a test from ILVARC or taken an official one in another Canadian city. You can use these results from a CLBA completed within the past six months. In this case, present your original CLBA client profile form for entry to SAIT. Teacher assigned benchmarks from an English course are not accepted.

WHAT IF MY CURRENT LANGUAGE LEVEL IS TOO LOW FOR SAIT?

If you obtain less than benchmark 4 in one or more areas, you will need more basic English instruction before coming to the English Language Foundations at SAIT.

HOW OFTEN CAN I TAKE THE CLBA ASSESSMENT?

A minimum of six months is required between assessments. If your score is low, you need to improve your English skills before you reassess. You cannot improve your CLBA score by taking the test over and over. If you ask for a repeat assessment, you will be required to show evidence of recent study.

Students leaving ELF for a period of one term or more are required to do CLBA before registration in ELF.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING TO THE TEST?

You must bring your SAIT ID number, the cashier's receipt for the CLBA, and photo ID such as your passport or driver's licence.

	BENCHMARK 4	BENCHMARK 5	BENCHMARK 6	BENCHMARK 7	BENCHMARK 8
LISTENING & SPEAKING	Adequate competence in basic oral communication. Can describe the process of obtaining essential goods and services. Needs little support from assessor. Understands short instructions. Understands short sentences. Clear evidence of connected discourse. Conveys messages using a variety of short sentences. Has control of basic grammar structures and tenses. Pronunciation difficulties may impede communication. Vocabulary adequate for basic oral communication.	Can comprehend and relate video-mediated instructions. Understands and uses a variety of sentence structures. Discourse is reasonably fluent. Grammar and pronunciation errors may sometimes impede communication. Comprehends and uses a range of common vocabulary.	Can comprehend and relate audio-mediated information. Understands and uses a wide variety of sentence structures. Discourse is reasonably fluent. Grammar and pronunciation errors may sometimes impede communication. Comprehends and uses a range of common and idiomatic language.	Can discuss concrete information on a familiar topic. Comfortably engages in a conversation at a descriptive level. Discourse is fluent. Grammar and pronunciation errors rarely impede communication. Uses an expanded inventory of concrete and idiomatic language.	Can comprehend and synthesize abstract ideas on a familiar topic. Comfortably engages in a conversation at an abstract level. Discourse is fluent. Grammar and pronunciation errors do not impede communication. Uses an expanded inventory of concrete, idiomatic and conceptual language
READING	Able to read a simple 2-3 paragraph passage within a mostly familiar, mostly predictable context of daily life and experience: simple narrative, bibliographical or descriptive prose, set of instructions.	Able to read and understand purpose and general idea in some authentic 2-3 paragraph texts within mostly familiar, mostly predictable context of daily life and experience. Language is mostly concrete, factual and literal. Some vocabulary items on abstract ideas.	Able to read one page of authentic text, mostly of factual nature. Vocabulary items relate to abstract ideas. Context is familiar, mostly predictable, practical and relevant to daily life and experience.	Able to read authentic text, mostly of factual, concrete nature with some abstract ideas within a familiar, predictable, mostly practical and relevant context of daily social, educational and work-related life experience.	Able to read authentic texts, mostly of factual nature within an unfamiliar and only partially predictable context of daily social, educational and work-related life experience.
WRITING	Is competent in performing basic, familiar writing tasks. Composes short messages and notes about personal experience and fills out simple forms. Has good control of simple structures, spelling and mechanics.	Competently performs basic, familiar writing tasks, and shows minimal competence on more complex tasks of a business or social nature. Demonstrates ability to write short paragraphs. Has frequent difficulty with complex structures. Spelling and mechanical errors may interfere with comprehensibility.	Developing competence on more complex tasks of a business or social nature. Reproduces information from a visual graphic, completes formatted text of medium complexity, and writes short letters and reports. Has occasional difficulty with complex structures.	Demonstrates adequate competence on writing tasks, which are more complex and demanding. Joins paragraphs into coherent tasks, uses complex structures, and supports main ideas. Has satisfactory control of complex structures, spelling and mechanics.	Demonstrates fluent competence in complex and demanding writing tasks. Writes coherent reports, formal letters and short articles. Links sentences and paragraphs to form coherent text, provides good support for main ideas, and displays an appropriate sense of audience. Has good control over complex structures, spelling and mechanics.

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