

International Language Proficiency Accreditation for Immersion and Core French Students

What are language proficiency benchmarks?

Language proficiency benchmarks are descriptive statements of what a learner is able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing. They reference levels of language ability in practical terms which are meaningful not just to teachers but also to the students themselves and to parents, trustees, employers and others.

What is the Common European Framework of Reference?

There are a number of systems to describe levels of language proficiency, but one that is being discussed across Canada is the Common European Framework of Reference. It was developed for the 49 countries of the council of Europe to promote language learning, to facilitate educational and occupational mobility, and to support plurilingualism and multiculturalism.

The CEFR descriptors can apply to any of the languages spoken in Europe. The six levels are widely accepted as an international standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. Curricula may vary, teaching approaches may vary, individuals may or may not take advantage of opportunities for language development outside of school, but no matter what the language or where you are in the world, an A1 is a "beginner" and a C2 is "mastery" as defined by the CEFR.

Proficiency evaluations

Based on the six reference levels, countries develop measurement tools that are validated with the target population and then administered to learners. For example, Spain offers the *Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera* (DELE), England the *Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL).

France has developed the *Diplôme d'études en langue française* (DEL^F) for levels A1 through B2 and the *Diplôme approfondi de langue française* (DAL^F) for levels C1 and C2. This includes "junior" and "scolaire" (school) versions of the A1-B2 exams which reflect the same proficiency standards as the adult versions but include topics and materials more suitable for teens. The DEL^F/DAL^F are recognized in 165 countries and offered by 965 authorized centres throughout the world, including eight in Alberta.

A learner takes the level of assessment for which s/he feels confident (for students, the teacher normally assists in choosing the most appropriate level). It is not required to take all of the tests, or to take them sequentially. Someone who has taken a junior or school version before high school graduation can, after further formal and/or informal language learning, take a higher-level test whenever s/he feels ready.

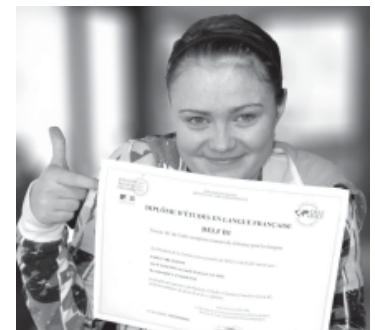
Link to the curriculum

The CEFR does not set objectives and does not specify teaching/learning methods. It does provide educators and curriculum planners with orientation points. Experience in Alberta and across Canada indicates that our language teaching approaches work very well with the Common European Framework of Reference and the assessment tests.

Far more than a certificate!

Having successfully passed one of the French exams, the candidate receives an official diploma issued by the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale of France. The candidate also receives his/her marks for each portion of the exam.

This life-long certification is recognized internationally by employers and postsecondary institutions. For example, the B2 level (the one achieved by most Alberta early French immersion graduates) is required for entrance into most universities in France. And, of course, the *Diplôme* and the accompanying proficiency descriptors are the perfect addition to any résumé.



For more information

Go to www.cpfalta.ab.ca and under "For educators" click on "CEFR and the DELF."