



Additional Qualification Course Guideline Special Education, Part I

Schedule D – Teachers' Qualifications Regulation

July 2025



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Preface

Placing each student's interests and well-being first is at the core of teaching in Ontario.

The Ontario College of Teachers (the College) is the self-regulating body for the teaching profession in Ontario and is responsible for:

- establishing and enforcing professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College
- providing for the ongoing education of members of the College
- accrediting Additional Qualification (AQ) courses.

The College supports teaching excellence by preparing educators to work in varied and diverse educational contexts and geographical settings:

- English language public school
- French language public school
- English language Catholic school
- French language Catholic school
- First Nations school
- Provincial and Demonstration school
- Private school
- Independent school
- Urban setting
- Rural setting
- Remote setting

Additional Qualification (AQ) course guidelines are designed following extensive consultation and feedback from course providers, course writers and members of the teaching profession.

AQ course guidelines serve as the framework for providers and instructors to develop courses.

In this document, all references to candidates are to educators enrolled in the AQ course. References to learners indicate those enrolled in school programs.

Introduction

Additional Qualifications (AQs) for educators are identified in O. Reg. 176/10: *Teachers' Qualifications Regulation*. This regulation includes courses that lead to AQs, the Principal's Development Qualification, the Principal's Qualifications, the Primary Division, the Junior Division, the Intermediate Division, the Senior Division, the Supervisory Officer's Development Qualification and the Supervisory Officer's Qualifications. A session of a course leading to an AQ shall consist of a minimum of 125 hours as approved by the Registrar. Successful completion of the course is recorded on the candidate's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.

This AQ course guideline provides a framework upon which to develop courses that meet accreditation requirements established in O. Reg. 347/02: *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs*.

Accreditation – Program of Additional Qualification

Accreditation requirements for AQ courses are articulated in O. Reg. 347/02: *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs*, s. 24.

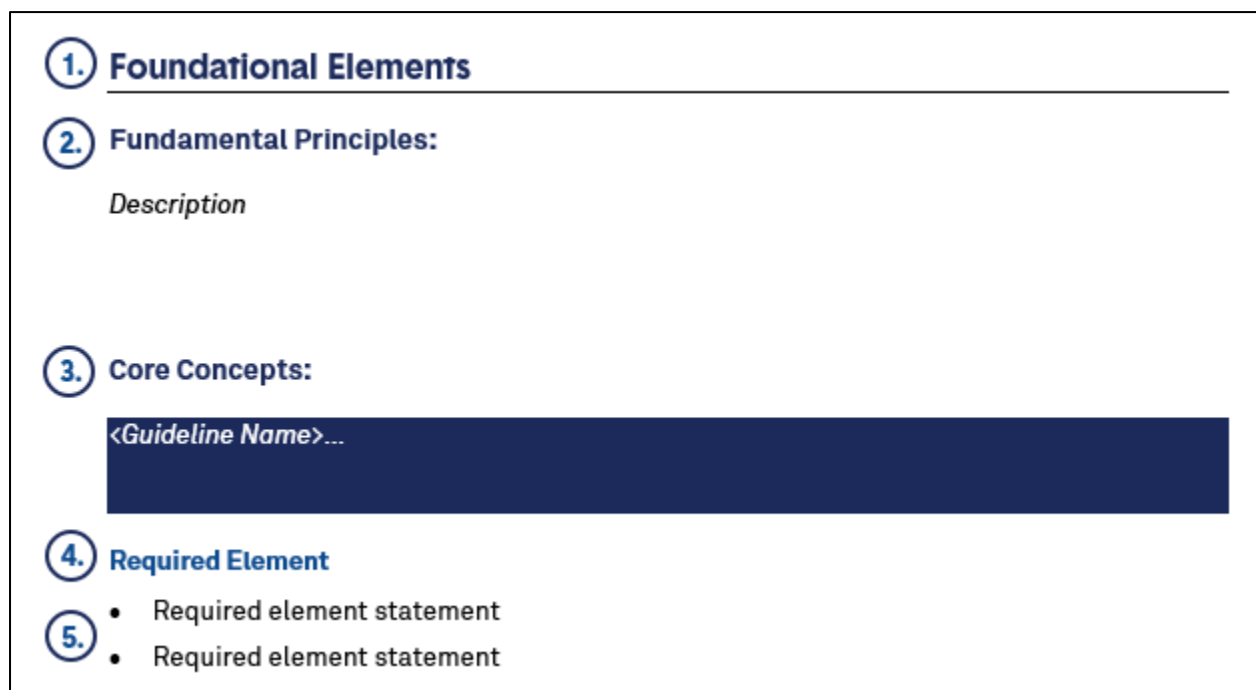
A program of additional qualification may be granted accreditation under this Regulation if the following requirements are satisfied:

1. The program content and expected achievement of persons enrolled in the program match the skills and knowledge reflected in the College's "Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession" and the "Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession" and in the program guidelines issued by the College.
2. The program satisfies the requirements of the teachers' qualifications regulation for entry of an additional qualification on the general certificate of qualification and registration of a person who successfully completes the program.
3. The program curriculum is current, references the Ontario curriculum, relevant legislation and government policies and represents a wide knowledge base in the program's area of study.
4. The course content of the program makes appropriate provision for the application of theory in practice.
5. The program's format and structure are appropriate for the course content of the program.
- 5.1 The program consists of a minimum of 125 hours of work acceptable to the Registrar.
6. There is clear identification of the goals of the program, with a formal testing or assessment mechanism to determine the level of successful completion of the program.
7. The majority of the educators teaching the program have Ontario teaching experience relevant to the program.
8. The provider maintains adequate internal controls to preserve the integrity of student records relating to the program.
9. The provider is committed to continuous improvement and quality assurance of the program and, if the program is an existing program, has implemented measures demonstrating that commitment.
O. Reg. 347/02, s. 24; 2009, c. 33, Sched. 13, s. 3 (2); O. Reg. 182/10, s. 8.

Overview: Additional Qualification Course Guideline Design

The following section of AQ course guidelines are organized using the structure and content described below (Figure 1):

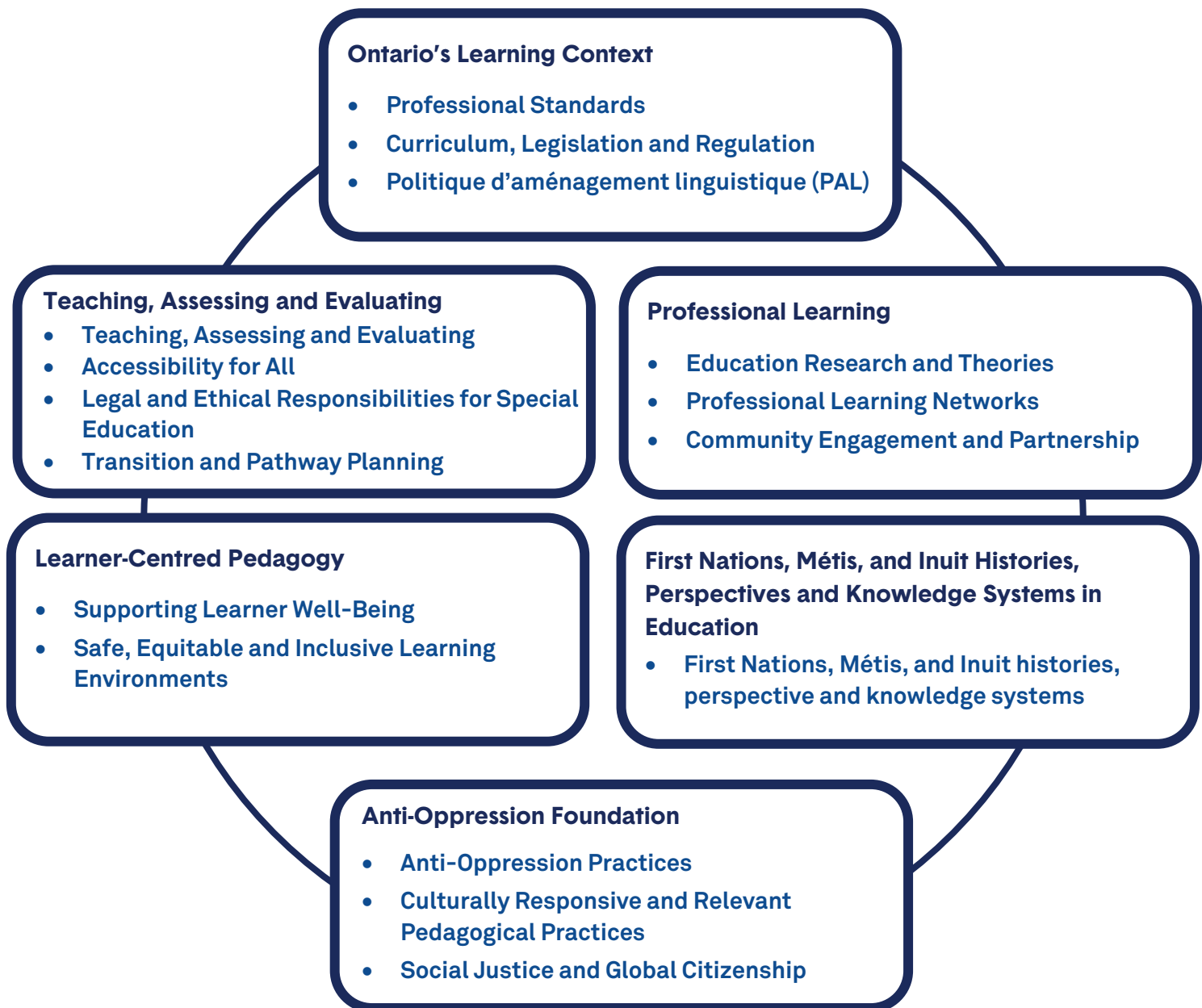
1. **Foundational elements** – six overarching distinct but interconnected elements grounding AQ course guidelines
2. **Fundamental principles** – accreditation requirements that are infused throughout the content of the AQ course and serve to inform providers and instructors of the conceptual framework from which to design AQ courses
3. **Core concepts** – candidates’ professional experience and learning needs in relation to the required elements of the AQ course
4. **Required elements** – subject and/or division specific knowledge, skills, practices and values that AQ course providers must infuse throughout the content of the AQ course
5. **Required element statements** – description of the professional knowledge, skills, practices and values related to the required element.



Additional Qualification Course Guideline Foundations

AQ course guidelines are grounded in **six foundational elements**, which are distinct but interconnected.

There are 15 required elements in English-language AQ course guidelines and 16 required elements in French-language AQ course guidelines:



Special Education, Part I

Additional Qualification – Schedule D, Part I/Part II/Specialist (Three Session)

Schedule D (see Appendix 1), three-session specialist Additional Qualification courses, allow educators to:

- enhance subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills as outlined in the *Special Education, Part I* course
- extend subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills in the design and implementation of learning opportunities as outlined in the *Special Education, Part II* course
- apply the subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills in a leadership role as outlined in the *Special Education, Specialist* course.

Additional Qualification Course Requirements

The AQ course *Special Education, Part I* enables candidates to advance their professional practice through focussed learning in the following areas:

- Curriculum Knowledge
- Pedagogical Strategies
- The Learning Environment.

This AQ course is designed and delivered using adult learning instructional practices.

The AQ Course *Special Education, Part I* reflects **adult learning theories and processes** that foster critical reflection, dialogue and inquiry. Instructors provide candidates with professional learning experiences related to teaching, learning and assessment of learners.

The purpose of this AQ course is to enhance educators' knowledge, skills and professional practices related to teaching and learning in special education. The course enables educators to understand their ethical responsibilities and legal obligations in supporting learners with special education needs. The course will allow educators to further their professional practice to foster learner inclusion and belonging in collaboration with parents, families, guardians, caregivers and community partners.

Ontario's Learning Context

Fundamental Principles:

Education in Ontario is complex and dynamic with learning communities that reflect the province's diversity. As the teaching profession continually evolves to meet the ever-changing needs of learners, educators are called upon to follow foundational principles that inform instructional practice.

Professional standards, the Ontario curriculum, and related legislation and regulation, including the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Education Act* and *Aménagement Linguistique Policy* (for French-Language schools) serve as the foundation for equitable, inclusive and accessible education.

Through ongoing professional learning, educators deepen their understanding of these principles, thereby advancing their professional practice to support each student's learning and well-being.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

Professional Standards

- significance of the Ethical Standards, Standards of Practice and Professional Advisories as theoretical foundations within *Special Education*
- ethical professional identity, knowledge, leadership, advocacy and collective practices to inform program planning
- role of the educator as a champion of inclusion
- ethical responsibilities associated with the protection and affirmation of learners with special education needs (for example, dignity, vulnerability and privacy of information)
- strategies to support mental health and well-being of educators and staff working within special education.

Ontario curriculum and related Legislation and Regulation

- current Ontario curriculum, policies, frameworks, strategies and resources related to *Special Education*
- relevant legislation and policies at the municipal, provincial, federal and international levels that support human rights and privacy for all (for example, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Canadian Human Rights Act*, *Ontario Human Rights Code*, *Anti-Racism Act*, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 15 and *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*)
- candidates' legal obligations and ethical responsibilities according to current provincial legislation, policies and practices

- strategies that deepen understanding of curriculum and related policies to inform decisions related to learners' Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and outcomes (for example, accommodations, modifications and alternative programming)
- legal obligations and policies specific to Special Education (for example Identification Placement Revision Committee (IPRC) process, implementation of IEP, privacy and protection regulations and placement decisions).

Professional Learning

Fundamental Principles:

Professional learning is an integral part of the teaching profession and is essential for fostering continuous growth and improving outcomes for Ontario learners.

Throughout their career, educators continue to engage in ongoing professional learning informed by educational research and theories, including sessions offered by school boards or community partners, professional reading and AQ courses.

AQ courses serve as a key tool for enhancing professional practice by preparing educators for specific roles within the educational community. As part of their professional learning, educators are called upon to participate and lead in Professional Learning Networks and Community Engagement and Partnership opportunities that foster knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation to respond to diverse learner needs and create inclusive learning environments.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

Educational Research and Theories

- current research and contributions representative of diverse voices and cultures associated with professional practices, policies and pedagogies related to *Special Education*
- research related to categories and definitions of exceptionalities (for example, dyslexia, behaviour exceptionality, communication disorder and mild intellectual disability)
- research and theories that reflects society's diverse changing nature and influence on learning and well-being (for example, trauma-informed pedagogical practices and mental health resources)
- theoretical foundation for the design, assessment and implementation of programs and practices in support of learning
- research on the historical impact of societal norms on special education (for example, institutionalization, community programming, and inclusion in school)

- research related to the impact of emerging technologies on teaching and learning in special education (for example, Artificial Intelligence and eye-gaze technology).
- application of theories of development and identity formation that support learner well-being, efficacy and agency
- theories of cognitive processes specific to learner development (for example, literacy skills, working memory and executive functioning skills).

Professional Learning Networks

- professional learning communities that promote critical pedagogy and collective efficacy (for example, strategies that promote self-care and capacity building)
- research and leadership to advance professional practice through ongoing collaborative inquiry, dialogue and innovation
- strategies to build collective capacity in the principles of evidence-based pedagogical practices related to special education (for example, formal and informal coaching and mentorship).

Community Engagement and Partnerships

- culturally responsive strategies to engage with learners, families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians, agencies and the school community including:
 - processes and practices to foster communication and collaboration to support learning
 - partnerships that value shared decision-making, confidentiality, advocacy and leadership
 - empowerment to navigate the education system and support learning and well-being
- strategies to build community partnerships that promote reciprocal learning experiences
- processes to engage staff in a whole school approach to special education
- strategies to build and maintain authentic relationships between school and communities, highlighting socio-cultural awareness about special education.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Histories, Cultures, Perspectives and Knowledge Systems in Education

Fundamental Principles:

Ontario's educators are responsible to uphold the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* and align their professional practice with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). They engage in authentic reconciliatory action by learning from and valuing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives and knowledge systems, in teaching and learning. Educators, as treaty partners, acknowledge that learning about, and upholding treaty responsibilities will guide them on the reconciliation journey.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Histories, Perspectives and Knowledge Systems

- meaningful inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives and knowledge systems in teaching and learning processes
- knowledge of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (TRC)
- awareness of *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP)
- culturally appropriate processes for identification of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners' special education needs that recognize community, language and the impact of past education experiences.

Anti-Oppression Foundation

Fundamental Principles:

An anti-oppression foundation acknowledges that systemic manifestations of power and privilege have led to multiple forms of oppression, injustices, inequities and inequalities. It is an approach that ensures equity and human rights are foundational to all AQ courses and programs.

Educators have a shared ethical and professional responsibility to identify and challenge individual and systemic barriers, including the impact of biases and assumptions related to power and privilege. Ongoing teacher education must recognize and address historical contexts that have contributed to various forms of oppression.

Through culturally responsive and relevant pedagogical practices, educators provide learning opportunities that respect diversity, foster learner well-being, and promote social justice and global citizenship.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

Anti-Oppression Practices

- theories and pedagogies about multiple forms of oppression applied to the design, assessment and implementation of programs and practices
- addressing individual and systemic biases, discrimination and barriers as well as manifestations of power and privilege

- addressing disproportionate representation of learners from equity seeking groups within specialized programs
- critical pedagogy to address connections between forms of oppression and intersectionality of learners in special education
- strategies to address barriers that impact accessibility of special education programs and services.

Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogical Practices

- culturally responsive and relevant practices that reflect understanding of learners' identities and intersectionalities
- strategies for exploring the difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation
- culturally inclusive processes, practices and resources to provide learning opportunities that respect the learning styles, voices and perspectives of each learner
- impact of linguistic insecurity and cultural belonging on teaching and learning
- professional responsibility related to diverse cultural perceptions, beliefs and values in special education
- culturally responsive approaches to communication with families and caregivers.

Social Justice and Global Citizenship

- processes and practices that foster learners' voice and choice, respect diversity and promote social and ecological justice
- strategies for consensus-building, participatory democracy and empowerment within schools and the community
- processes and strategies that engage learners with special education needs as active global citizens in supporting environmental sustainability
- addressing barriers to facilitate participation of learners with special needs in school activities (for example, extra-curricular activities, field trips and recess).

Learner-Centred Pedagogy

Fundamental Principles:

Learner-centred pedagogy prioritizes learner engagement, well-being and success. Educators support student learning and well-being by encouraging learner voice, choice, and collaboration with families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians and community partners.

Educators create safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments that value diverse identities, experiences, and learning needs to ensure that all learners are empowered to reach their learning goals.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

Supporting Learner Well-Being

- policies, processes and practices to support learners' cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development
- strategies that respond to the strengths, identities, needs and interests of each learner
- programs that respond to learners' lived experiences, mental health and well-being
- practices that respond to linguistic abilities of learners (for example, English language learners, multilingual learners and learners who are non-verbal or use alternative communication methods)
- practices to understand learner's curiosities and experiences to empower them to reach their learning goals
- processes and practices to address comorbidity within categories of exceptionalities (for example, impact of mental health)
- integration of processes and supports for learners with special education needs (for example, design thinking, scaffolding, sensory supports, response to intervention process, and physical spaces).

Safe, Equitable and Inclusive Learning Environments

- policies and processes to create and maintain inclusive learning environments that:
 - respect diversity
 - encourage critical thinking
 - foster learner agency and perspectives
- strategies to foster inclusive learning environments (for example, gender neutral language and resources in various formats)
- practices that support safe and healthy learning environments for learners as well as families, caregivers, guardians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Knowledge Guardians
- ethical use of technology in support of learners' safety, privacy and well-being
- early and ongoing intervention approaches for the elementary and secondary panels (for example, attendance patterns and reading assessments)
- processes and protocols to develop data-informed learner safety plans and plans of care
- resources to support implementation of learner safety plans and plans of care (for example, Applied Behavioural Analysis [ABA], Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training [ASIST], and safe talk)
- design of differentiated learning environments to foster inclusion (for example, multisensory tools, and calming spaces)
- how identity, relationships and intersectionality impact individuals with exceptionalities
- strategies to foster inclusion of specialized classrooms within the whole school environment.

Teaching, Assessing and Evaluating

Fundamental Principles:

Educators believe that each student can learn. Through evidence-based teaching and learning practices that are learner-centred, educators provide programs and services that offer equitable, inclusive and accessible opportunities for all. Educators use instructional strategies and assessment practices that respect the identities of each learner and support their cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development.

Accessibility, inclusion and equity are fundamental to everyday practice for teaching and learning. Informed by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Education Act*, educators advocate for each learner to access and benefit from services and resources within the education system, understanding the unique needs presented by geographical and socioeconomic contexts.

As educators are responsible for instruction, assessment and evaluation of all learners, they provide accommodations, modifications, or alternative programming outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), which must be developed by an interdisciplinary team to reflect the learner's strengths, needs, and abilities, according to Reg. 181/98.

Each learner has their own unique profile and goals. As such, educators design opportunities that support their transition, education, and life and career planning.

Core Concepts:

Special Education, Part I enhances candidates' subject-specific professional practice, knowledge and skills through explicit instruction, reflections, guiding questions or resources in the following required elements:

Teaching, assessing and evaluating

- program design and implementation aligned with the Ontario curriculum that foster transferable skills to support lifelong learning (for example, critical thinking, collaboration and innovation)
- instructional strategies and approaches (for example, differentiated instruction, universal learning design, experiential learning, outdoor learning, inquiry-based learning, co-teaching and co-intervention)
- assessment and evaluation processes and practices to:
 - provide feedback to learners and adjust instruction (assessment *for* learning)
 - develop learners' capacity to be independent, autonomous learners (assessment *as* learning)
 - make informed professional judgments about the quality of learning (assessment *of* learning)
- integration of information and communication technology, technological tools and digital resources in program planning for learners with special education needs to enhance teaching and learning

- evidence-based instructional strategies that align with each learner's needs (for example, dyslexia, speech and language development, giftedness and sensory perception)
- strategies to develop learning skills and work habits of learners with special education needs
- pedagogical resources that enable learners to access curriculum (for example, reading materials in braille format, use of sound amplification systems and communication tools and apps)
- processes to differentiate identification of English language learners, English Language Development and special education needs, including relevant assessments, programs and supports
- processes and strategies to differentiate assessment and evaluation using an assets-based approach that respond to learners' profiles, strengths and needs
- literacy programs that respond to learner's language and literacy needs
- selection of strategies and practices based on learner data to align instruction with individual learner profile
- early and ongoing screening processes and strategies to inform instructional practices and identified needs of each learner.

Accessibility for All

- ethical responsibilities related to the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act S.O., 2005
- adaptive strategies, such as assistive technologies, accessible content and inclusive design to facilitate learning and foster inclusion
- strategies to address ableism that exists in processes and practices
- educator role and responsibility in knowing each learner both individually and through related documentation, including within different contexts (for example, school, home and community)
- processes and strategies to promote accessibility of community services, programs and resources, including in remote areas and within minority groups
- access to, and applications of, assistive technologies within the school, board and community
- navigation of community services and resources (for example, provincial schools and alternative programs).

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities related to Special Education

- legal and ethical responsibilities related to learner's Individual Education Plan (IEP), safety plan, and transition plan
- programs, strategies and services that support the learner in achieving individual goals outlined in their respective plans
- interdisciplinary teams to support learning, advocacy and transitions

- strategies to operationalize the principles of differentiated pedagogy as a precursor to initiating special education processes
- roles and responsibilities of board and school support staff, paraprofessionals and community partners
- processes to develop, update and monitor learners' IEP that include the voices and perspectives of learners, families, guardians and caregivers
- strategies to understand specialist reports that inform decisions related to learners' IEP, programs and placement (for example, psycho-educational assessment)
- programs, services and resources to implement a tiered approach to ongoing prevention and intervention support system.

Transition and Pathway Planning

Transition Planning

- processes and practices to support all transitions from elementary to secondary and secondary to post-secondary, including college, apprenticeship, university, workplace and community living
- federal and provincial policies and programs as well as community partnerships for post-secondary pathway planning (for example, Disability Services Ontario, community living agencies and health care providers)
- importance of pathway planning from Kindergarten to post-secondary (for example, entry to school, Ontario Secondary School Diploma/Certificate, destreamed courses and Specialist High Skills Major programs)
- policies, programs and learning opportunities that value each pathway equally and equitably
- health and safety considerations responsive to learner's transition needs
- internal and external processes that support transitions (for example, cross-panel/division meetings, and 4-step inquiry process)
- inclusion of learners, families, guardians and caregivers in the development and updating of learners' transition plans, including micro and macro transitions.

Education, Life and Career Planning

- curriculum design to relate classroom learning to learners' career and life planning
- exploration of a variety of entry points to all career pathways.

Resources

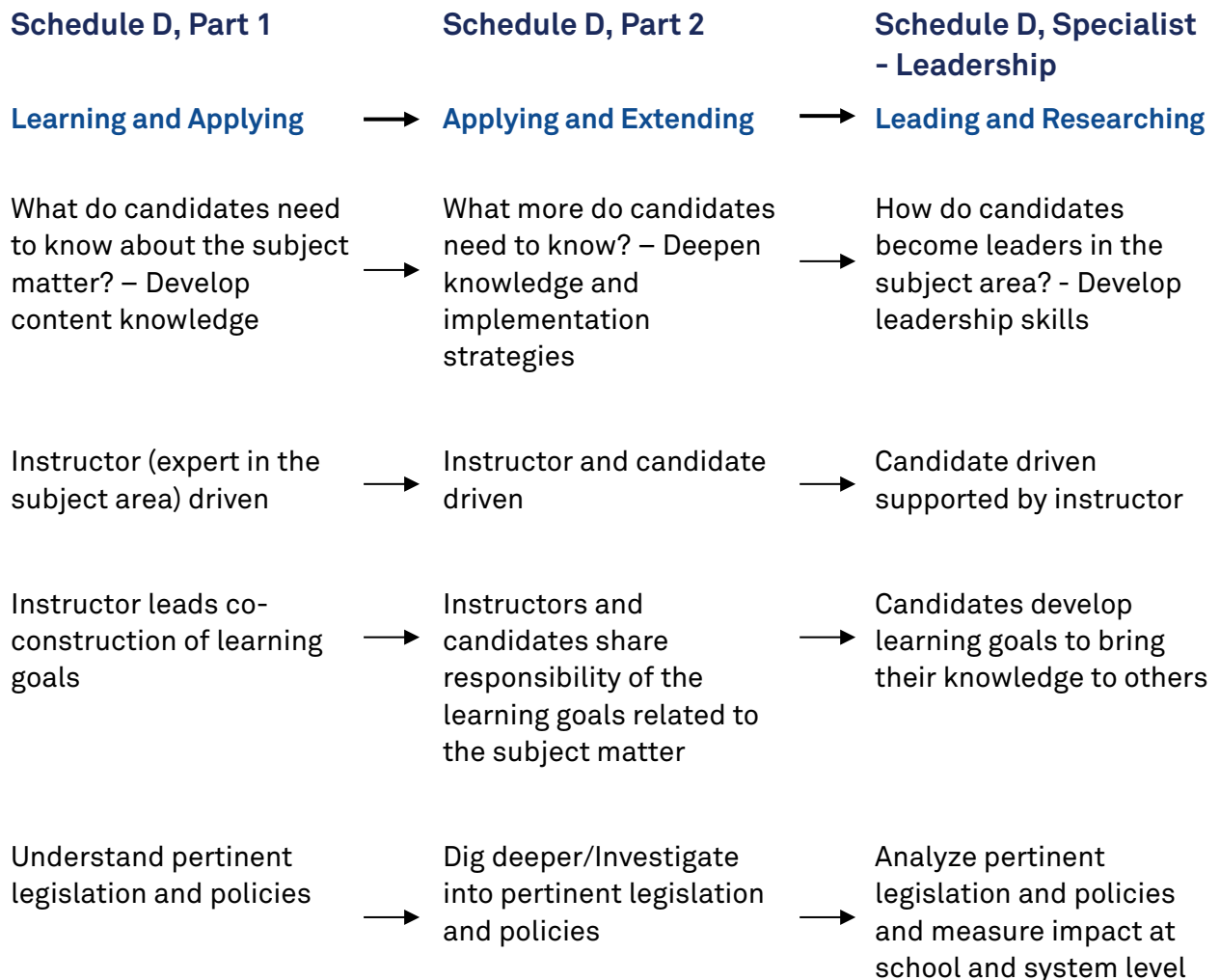
Resources to support the development of the AQ Course *Special Education, Part I* can be found on the [College](#) website and the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#) website.

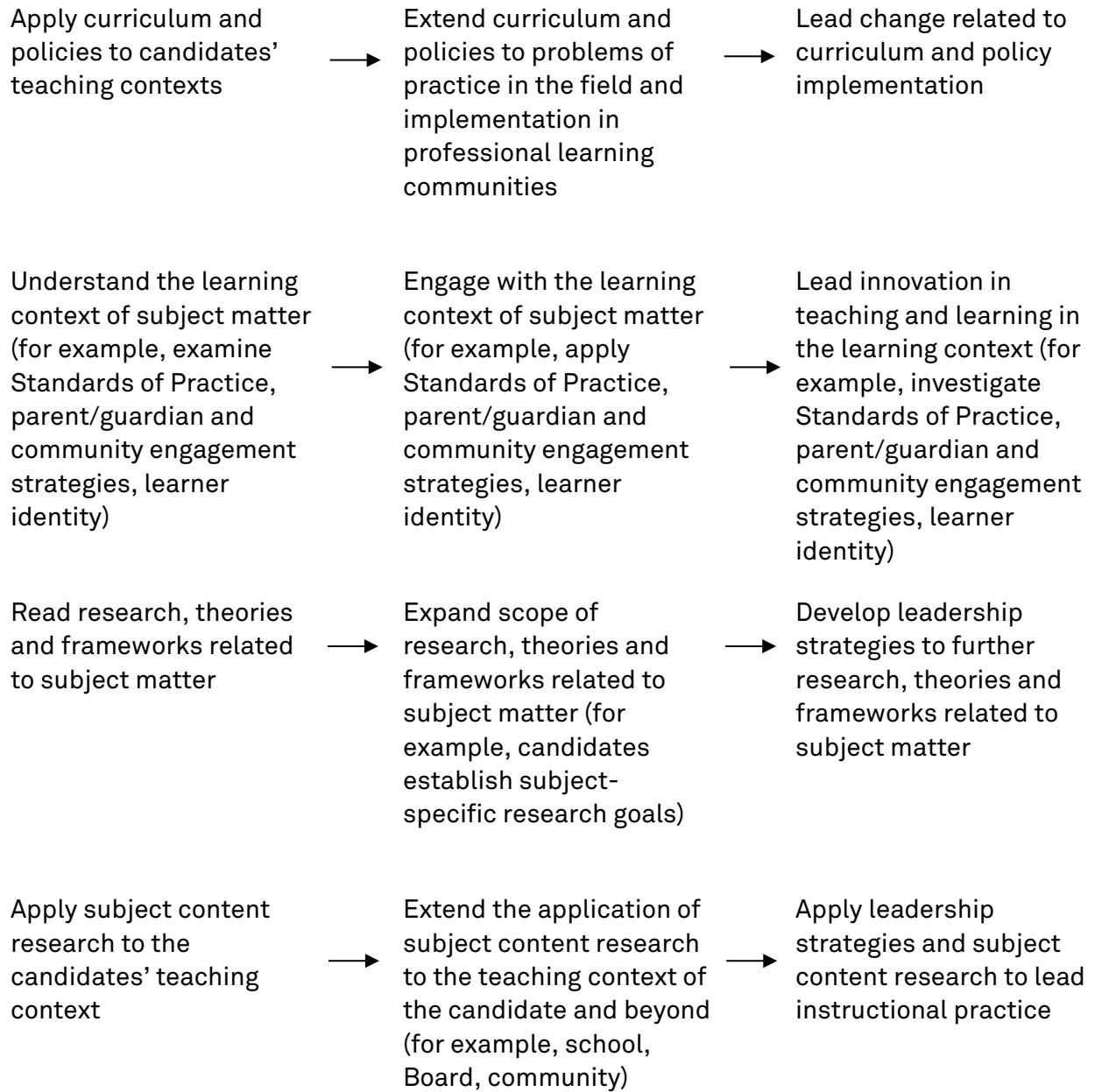
Appendix 1

Continuum Of Learning in Schedule D Additional Qualification (AQ) Courses

Considerations

- Consistency across the three Schedule D sessions to:
 - support the development and progression of knowledge, implementation and leadership
 - support candidates who take the sessions from different providers
- Candidates' professional experience and learning needs in relation to the required elements of the AQ course.





Continuum of Learning in Schedule D Additional Qualification (AQ) Courses

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Compliant Text:

Schedule D, Part 1

This is the first level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.

Learning and Applying

- What do candidates need to know about the subject matter? – Develop content knowledge
- Instructor (expert in the subject area) driven
- Instructor leads co-construction of learning goals
- Understand pertinent legislation and policies
- Apply curriculum and policies to candidates' teaching contexts
- Understand the learning context of subject matter (for example, examine Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Read research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter
- Apply subject content research to the candidates' teaching context.

Schedule D, Part 2

This is the second level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.

Applying and Extending

- What more do candidates need to know? – Deepen knowledge and implementation strategies
- Instructor and candidate driven
- Instructors and candidates share responsibility of the learning goals related to the subject matter
- Dig deeper/Investigate into pertinent legislation and policies
- Extend curriculum and policies to problems of practice in the field and implementation in professional learning communities
- Engage with the learning context of subject matter (for example, apply Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Expand scope of research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter (for example, candidates establish subject-specific research goals)
- Extend the application of subject content research
- to the teaching context of the candidate and beyond (for example, school, Board, community).

Schedule D, Specialist – Leadership

This is the third level on a three-level continuum as outlined in the columns above.

Leading and Researching

- How do candidates become leaders in the subject area? - Develop leadership skills
- Candidate driven supported by instructor,
- Candidates develop learning goals to bring their knowledge to others
- Analyze pertinent legislation and policies and measure impact at school and system level
- Lead change related to curriculum and policy implementation
- Lead innovation in teaching and learning in the learning context (for example, investigate Standards of Practice, parent/guardian and community engagement strategies, learner identity)
- Develop leadership strategies to further research, theories and frameworks related to subject matter
- Apply leadership strategies and subject content research to lead instructional practice.



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For additional information:
Ontario College of Teachers
101 Bloor Street West
Toronto ON M5S 0A1

Telephone: 437.880.3000
Toll-free (Canada and U.S.A.)
1.833.966.5588
Email: info@oct.ca
[oct.ca](https://www.oct.ca)