# The Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Competencies



In 2013, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) launched a review of the Atlantic Canada Essential Graduation Learnings, the 1995 framework for curriculum development endorsed by the four Atlantic Provinces. A committee representing each province was formed to ensure the framework, guiding expectations for completion of public education, responded to the changing demands of work and life in the 21st century.

A review of literature and research and of national and international documents informed revisions and additions to the 1995 framework. Following departmental consultation and committee collaboration, the updated version of the Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Competencieswas finalized in 2015.

This document provides a common vision of the competencies—a set of attitudes, skills, and knowledge—beyond foundational literacy and numeracy that prepare learners to engage in a lifetime of transitions and learning. It reflects the regional direction provinces want to take to achieve excellence and provides the flexibility todesign curricula based on provincial priorities and timelines. It is intended to ensure that all Atlantic Canadian students are prepared to seize opportunities and meet the challenges of the future.

**CAMET/CAMEF**
Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training
Conseil atlantique des ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

Newfoundland & Labrador • Nova Scotia • New Brunswick • Prince Edward Island

# A Call for Ongoing Change

Curriculum development and renewal has been and continues to be a priority for all Atlantic Canadian provinces. The goals of curricular renewal are achieved through

- clarifying expectations, outcomes, and standards and benchmarks for students
- ensuring relevance and consistency for all learners across grades and curricular areas
- focusing on central tenets and developing deep understanding within curricular areas
- incorporating effective research-based instruction and assessment practices
- promoting a contextualized and constructivist approach to instruction and learning

Revitalizing curriculum content is a thoughtful, strategic, and deliberate process that requires curriculum specialists to articulate what is timely and timeless, while determining what is not essential or is dated. Single-minded focus by all stakeholders is necessary to critically evaluate and challenge existing policy and practice to ensure that all students are prepared to participate in a world of rapid and complex change.

This dynamically evolving environment requires that students develop multiple literacies, increase depth of knowledge, and acquire a range of skills and abilities. Students must also develop a desire for personal and collective achievement and a willingness to collaborate for their well-being, the well-being of others, and the well-being of their planet. It is vital that graduates be well positioned to pursue dreams, strengthen communities, and contribute to a more prosperous Atlantic Canada.

To embrace change and adapt to improve student learning, Atlantic Canada, through CAMET's work, has provided a strong foundation on which to build. In the context of globalization in our rapidly changing world, certain fundamental attitudes, skills, and knowledge form a critical base for higher learning. Atlantic Provinces' departments responsible for public education agree that the articulation of clear statements of what students are expected to know, be able to do, and reflect on by the time they graduate from high school will help to prepare students to continue to learn throughout their lives. These competencies describe expectations, not in terms of individual curricular areas but in terms of attitudes, skills, and knowledge developed throughout thecurricula. They confirm that students need to make connections and develop abilities across subject boundaries if they are to be ready to meet the shifting and ongoing demands of life, work, and learning today and in the future.

# Essential Graduation Competencies

Attitudes, skills, and knowledge that prepare learners to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life/work transitions
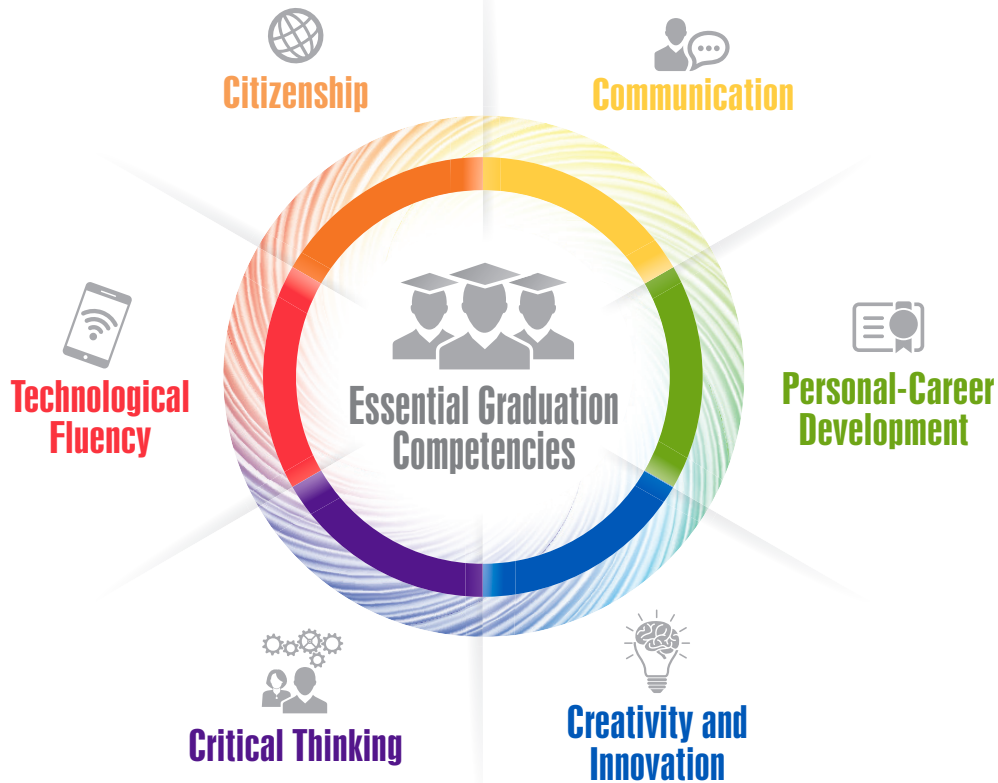


## Citizenship

Learners are expected to contribute to the quality and sustainability of their environment, communities, and society. They analyze cultural, economic, environmental, and social issues; make decisions and judgments; solve problems;and act as stewards in a local, national, and global context.

Learners are expected to

- recognize the principles and actions of citizens in just, pluralistic, and democratic societies
- demonstrate the disposition and skills necessary for effective citizenship
- consider possible consequences of decisions, judgments, and solutions to problems
- participate in civic activities that support and promote social and cultural diversity and cohesion
- promote and protect human rights and equity
- appreciate the complexity and interconnectedness of factors in analyzing issues
- demonstrate understanding of sustainable development

# Communication

Learners are expected to express themselves and interpret effectively through a variety of media. They participate in critical dialogue, listen, read, view, and create for information, enrichment, and enjoyment.

Learners are expected to

- listen and interact purposefully and respectfully in formal and informal contexts
- engage in constructive and critical dialogue
- understand, interpret, and respond to thoughts, ideas, and emotions presented through multiple media forms
- express ideas, information, learnings, perceptions, and feelings through multiple media forms, considering purpose and audience
- assess the effectiveness of communication and critically reflect on intended purpose, audience, and choice of media
- analyze the impact of information and communication technology
- demonstrate the provincially-defined level of(to be completed by provinces)

# Personal-Career Development

Learners are expected to become self-aware and self-directed individuals who set and pursue goals. They understand and appreciate how culture contributes to work and personal life roles. They make thoughtful decisions regarding health and wellness, and career pathways.

Learners are expected to

- connect learning to personal and career development
- demonstrate behaviours that contribute to the well-being of self and others
- build healthy personal and work relationships
    - establish skills and habits to pursue physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being
    - develop strategies to manage career balance and wellness
    - create and implement a personal, education, career, and financial plan to support transitions and achievement of personal, education, and career goals
    - demonstrate preparedness to learn and work individually, cooperatively, and collaboratively in diverse, evolving environments

# Creativity and Innovation

Learners are expected to demonstrate openness to new experiences;to engage in creative processes;to make unexpected connections;and to generate new and dynamic ideas, techniques, and products. They value aesthetic expression and appreciate the creative and innovative work of others.

Learners are expected to

- gather information through all senses to imagine, create, and innovate
- develop and apply creative abilities to communicate ideas, perceptions, and feelings
- take responsible risk, accept critical feedback, reflect, and learn from trial and error
- think divergently, and embrace complexity and ambiguity
- recognize that creative processes are vital to innovation
- use creation techniques to generate innovations
- collaborate to create and innovate
- critically reflect on creative and innovative works and processes
- value the contribution of creativity and innovation to personal, social and economic well-being

# Critical Thinking

Learners are expected to analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, and ideas using various types of reasoning and systems thinking to inquire, make decisions, and solve problems. They reflect critically on thinking processes.

Learners are expected to

- use critical thinking skills to inquire, make decisions, and solve problems
- recognize that critical thinking is purposeful
- demonstrate curiosity, inquisitiveness, creativity, flexibility, persistence, open- and fair-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and suspension of judgment
- ask powerful questions which support inquiry, decisionmaking, and problem solving
- acquire, interpret, and synthesize relevant and reliable information from a variety of sources
- analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, and ideas
- use various types ofevidence,reasoning, and strategies to draw conclusions, make decisions, and solve problems
- reflect critically on thinking processes used and acknowledge assumptions
- effectively communicate ideas, conclusions, decisions, and solutions
- value the ideas and contributions of others who hold diverse points of view

Learners are expected to use and apply technology to collaborate, communicate, create, innovate, learn, and solve problems. They use technology in a legal, safe, and ethically responsible manner.

Learners are expected to

- recognize that technology encompasses a range of learning tools and contexts
- use and interact with technology to create new knowledge
- apply digital technology to gather, filter, organize, evaluate, use, adapt, create, and share information
- select and use technology to create and innovate
- analyze how technology and society impact and advance one another
- adopt, adapt, and apply technology efficiently, effectively, and productively

## Relationship between Essential Graduation Competencies and Curriculum Outcomes

Essential Graduation Competencies articulate the interrelated sets of attitudes, skills, and knowledge learners need to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life/work transitions. They are cross-curricular in nature. Programs and courses, described through general and specific curriculum outcomes, provide the context for development of these competencies over time.

The essential graduation competencies are a framework for the development of programs and courses. Development within this framework ensures that curriculum outcomes align with the competencies and provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

## Learning and Assessment

Achievement of the Essential Graduation Competencies will be addressed through the assessment and evaluation of curriculum outcomes developed for individual courses and programs.

Assessment gathers evidence about learning to inform instruction, evaluation, and reporting of progress and achievement. It captures what students know, are able to do, and reflect on in relation to programs of study. Assessment is embedded throughout the process of learning and instruction. Its primary purpose is to improve and inform the learning process.

Evaluation occurs at the end of the designated period of learning. It is used, based on evidence collected through assessment, to determine learning achievement.

The diversity and variability of learners require a range of strategies and methods to be used in the meaningful assessment and evaluation of learning.