

Learner Support

As adult members of families, communities, workplaces, and educational institutions, learners come to the program with varying needs, wants, dreams, practices, and a wealth of experience. As such, they are oriented to the program, receive appropriate support throughout the program, and are assisted in their transition out of the program.

12. At entrance into a program or course, learners are oriented and provided with accurate and accessible pre-course information.¹²

- Learners participate in an orientation that includes the facilities, the program, and the services provided.
- Learners are given print materials that accurately describe the objectives and the content of the course.
- Learners are clearly informed of requirements for progression to higher levels and/or requirements for diplomas, certificates, or credit.
- Learners are given print materials describing their roles and obligations as learners in the program, as well as the program's obligations towards them. This includes information regarding
 - Attendance and participation requirements.
 - Homework requirements.
 - Evaluation procedures.
 - Withdrawal/cancellation deadlines.
 - Any charges and fees that may be levied.
 - Grievance procedures.
 - Dismissal procedures.
- Print materials are orally reinforced by instructors, especially in literacy classes.
- Learner pathways are charted. In groups or individually, with an instructor or with an advisor, formally or informally, learners are invited to consider

¹² See also Best Practice #52 related to learner placement.

- Their present skills.
- Where they fit into the program.
- Where they are headed.
- What they must accomplish to reach their goals.
- A plan for reaching their goals.
- Availability of finances (e.g., scholarships, funding, student loans).

13. There are policies and procedures in place that facilitate communication with learners.

- There are procedures in place for acknowledging/rewarding regular attendance, completion of work, participation, and success.
- There are procedures in place for contacting learners with irregular attendance patterns.
- There are procedures in place for communicating with learners regarding non-completion of work or non-participation that may affect final course outcomes.
- There are procedures in place for dealing with learner grievances and appeals.
- There are procedures in place for dealing with plagiarism, cheating, disruptive behaviour, disputes, and withdrawal from the program. These procedures
 - Are communicated to instructors.
 - Are communicated to learners at the beginning of a course.
 - Acknowledge the complexities involved with respect to diverse cultural expectations and educational experiences.
 - Include support and instruction along with consequences.
 - Include a number of stages and steps.
 - Are fair and transparent.
 - Encourage personal responsibility.

14. The program facilitates learner access to appropriate support services, either within the program or through referrals to cooperating agencies.¹³

- The program provides the following services, or refers learners to agencies/organizations that can provide those services:
 - Library.
 - Childcare.
 - Accommodation (e.g., home-stay, residence).
 - Tutoring.
 - Other.
- The program provides a selection of the following settlement/counselling services, or refers learners to agencies/organizations that can provide those services:
 - Native language translating/interpreting services.
 - Counselling.
 - Healthcare.
 - Housing.
 - Legal advice/aid.
 - Financial advice/aid.
 - Vocational/academic counselling.
 - Immigration.
- If necessary, the program orients **newcomers** to Alberta to studying and living in Alberta (weather, clothing, food, immigration/visa issues, dental/medical information, transit, etc.), or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.
- The program provides support to **learners with literacy needs**, or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.
- The program provides support to **learners with learning disabilities**, or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.
- The program provides support to **survivors of trauma and torture**, or refers them to agencies/organizations that can provide that support.¹⁴

¹³ See TESOL (2003), Standard 9A

¹⁴ For further details, refer to Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (n.d.).

- One or more identified people have information on where learners can access services listed above. This person is available to instructors and learners.

15. The program establishes and maintains linkages with service providers and cooperating agencies.¹⁵

- Classes are offered in locations where support services are available.
- An updated list of agencies and experts for referrals and consultations is available.
- In-house support staff or representatives of cooperating agencies and service providers are invited to speak with learners and/or instructors.
- The program facilitates learner visits to service providers and cooperating agencies (e.g., through field trips).
- Program staff ensure that referrals result in meeting learner needs through any of the following:
 - Follow-up communication with learners.
 - Follow-up communication with service providers and cooperating agencies.
 - Written procedures and records.

16. The program provides opportunity for learner participation in the broader community.¹⁶

- The program either offers social and recreational services appropriate to learners' ages and interests, or has a system in place for informing learners of relevant social/recreational opportunities in the community.
- Learner involvement in the local community is facilitated by any of the following:
 - People from the community are invited to participate in the program through class presentations, mentoring, etc.
 - Community/neighborhood resources and material are incorporated into the curriculum.

¹⁵ See TESOL (2003), Standard 9A and 9C

¹⁶ See Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee MWB Educational Consultants (n.d.), p.13-15.

- Knowledge of the local area, the province, and the country is integrated into the curriculum.
- Information regarding volunteer and community involvement opportunities is passed on to learners.
- Joint activities with other education programs or organizations are arranged.
- Fieldtrips are arranged.
- Homework assignments encourage learners to interact with their community and to use their language skills in “real world” situations.

17. There is a system in place for helping learners who have completed a course to transition to other courses within the program, to other programs, to bridging programs, to other educational institutions, or to the workplace.

- Upon exit from a course or program, learners receive timely feedback regarding their progress in the course. Ideally, this feedback takes the form of both
 - a written evaluation.
 - a formal or informal exit conference with the instructor.
- Learners receive information about further options within the ESL program or wider institution.
- Learners who are exiting from the institution have access to counselling regarding further education or workplace options, or are referred to agencies that have this expertise.

References and Further Reading: Learner Support

- Albertsen, E., & Millar, V. (Eds.) (2009). *Learning for LIFE: An ESL literacy handbook*. Calgary, AB: Bow Valley College.
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