

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Material Framework



Coordination and content

Direction de la méthodologie et des enquêtes

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Services langagiers
Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur

For additional information, contact:

General Information
Direction des communications
Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur
1035, rue De La Chevrotière, 28^e étage
Québec (Québec) G1R 5A5
Telephone: 418-643-7095
Toll-free: 1-866-747-6626

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MATERIAL FRAMEWORK

The Bureau d'approbation du matériel didactique evaluates the material aspects of elementary and secondary school instructional resources such as textbooks, grammar books, dictionaries and atlases. These must meet a specific set of criteria before they can be deemed of sufficient quality. Teaching guides are also evaluated using some of the same criteria.

The reference framework outlined below presents the material criteria that print materials must meet. These criteria make it possible to evaluate the durability and visual quality of print materials commonly used by the students.

1. DURABLE BINDING

The main criteria for student textbooks and reference works are:

- The pages are folded in signatures.
- Each signature is firmly attached to the binding.
- The paper is sufficiently resistant to tearing and folding and strong enough for binding.
- The paper is opaque enough to prevent transparency effects and matt enough to keep light from reflecting off it.
- The paper grain direction is parallel to the spine of the book.
- The dimensions of the work do not exceed 23.5 cm x 30.5 cm (except for atlases).

Types of binding

Three types of binding uses for instructional materials: case binding, soft binding and stapled binding:

- Case binding is required for commonly used reference books (grammars, dictionaries, atlases).
- Either of the three types of binding may be used for textbooks of 104 pages or less.
- Case binding or soft binding may be used for textbooks of 104 to 303 pages.
- Only case binding may be used for textbooks of 304 pages or more.

Binding requirements

Case binding

- The signatures are sewn and glued.
- The spine of the book is reinforced with good quality muslin.
- The cover is made with strong boards (cross-grained), covered with thick paper (160 M) and a protective coating (lamination).
- The body of the work is attached to the cover with the help of reinforced end paper.

Soft binding

- The signatures are sewn and glued together.
- The cover is made with paperboard (ideally 10 or 12 point) covered with a protective coating (lamination).
- The body of the work is attached to the cover.

- Stapled binding**
- The cover is made with paperboard (ideally 10 or 12 point) covered with a protective coating (lamination).
 - The signatures are solidly attached to the cover by three long staples whose points touch.

2. REASONABLE WEIGHT

Students often have to carry textbooks and reference books in their backpacks. The heavier these packs are, the greater the danger they pose to students' health. It would be advisable therefore to reduce the weight of the books that students have to carry.

3. ECOLOGICAL COMPOSITION

The Ministère is committed to sustainable development. Therefore, with regard to their physical composition, the works must come with a certificate attesting that they adhere to sustainable forest management practices (e.g. FSC, SFI or other).¹

4. SUITABLE PRESENTATION

Special attention must be paid to the covers of both textbooks and reference works, as well as to the content of front pages, structure of the work and pagination.

A. Information that must appear on the cover

	Textbooks	Grammar Books	Atlases	Dictionaries
Title of the work, clearly visible and legible	X	X	X	X
Name(s) of the author(s). If there are multiple authors, their names could appear instead on the title page.	X	X	X	X
Name of the publishing house	X	X	X	–
Components (e.g volumes, booklets, themes)	X	–	–	–
Title of the collection or series, if applicable	X	–	–	–
If the work is in a new edition, an indication to this effect (e.g. 2nd edition)	X	X	X	X
Name of the subject	X	–	–	–
Level of education and class (e.g. Elementary 6; Elementary Cycles 2 and 3; Secondary II)	X	X	X	–
An indication of the type of material	X	X	X	-

¹ A certification of this kind is advisable with regard to dictionaries.

B. Content of front pages

- Name and address of the publishing house
- Contributors' names
- Credits and acknowledgements (e.g. SODEC)
- ISBN number
- If the work is in a new edition and under new copyright, an indication to this effect
- Name of the original edition, if the work is a translation
- Certification of adherence to sustainable forest management practices
- Lists of abbreviations, symbols, pictograms along with their meanings

C. Requirements pertaining to the structure of the work

- Pagination clearly distinct from chapter or section numbers
- Accurate, clear and easily searchable table of contents
- Explanation of the functions of the different sections
- Logical structure (divisions, sub-divisions, paragraphs) and standardized presentation throughout
- Consistent organization of text and illustrations
- Standardized typography and page layout throughout
- Identical visual impact of images associated with messages of the same type (e.g. pictograms, logos, drawings, symbols)
- Clear references to specific pages or sections

D. Requirements pertaining to page layout

- Meticulous layout
- Few blank pages (those that do exist serve a clear purpose)
- Avoidance of crowded pages in overall presentation; adequate space between elements
- Well-proportioned margins and blank spaces
- Easy-to-follow paginationThe blank spaces clearly separate the parts without encouraging the reader to scribble between them.
- The highlighting functions (underline, bold, font change, upper case, inking, colour, photoengraving and the use of white spaces and margins) are used sparingly and in a uniform manner.
- Spaces to be filled in (in tables, boxed text, etc.) are presented in ways that do not encourage the reader to scribble in them.

5. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

It is essential to provide references throughout the material, including the teaching guide. In other words:

- Works of art must be clearly identified and their sources indicated (title, creator and date [or period]).

- Illustrations (e.g. drawings, photographs, diagrams, sketches) must be positioned next to the texts they are meant to supplement.
- Photographs must be clearly identified (e.g. in explanatory legends) and their sources indicated (e.g. date, place), when applicable.
- Tables must be provided with explanatory legends and source information, except when sources of data are too numerous.

The relevant source information must be placed next to illustrations, photographs and maps for which the publisher does not hold the copyright, except when there are too many of these visual elements. In that case, the sources can be grouped together in a single location.

6. GRAPHIC QUALITY

The reproducible pages in the teaching guide must also be evaluated for graphic quality.

A. Presentation of visual elements (e.g. drawings, photographs, diagrams, graphics, sketches, maps, tables)

- The visual elements must convey clear information.
- The content of each visual element must correspond to its legend.
- The images must be presented in a logical sequence.
- Bright colours must facilitate learning and be used judiciously (proper quantity, intensity and density).
- The size of visual elements must be proportionate to their function.

B. Legibility of text

- The page layout must be designed so as to facilitate learning: colour scheme, sidebars, titles and intertitles distinctly visible, fonts, layout, line spacing.
- The text must be printed on a background that is either white or very pale, or on a very dark background in very pale letters.
- Colours or drawings used as watermarks must not interfere with the legibility of the text.
- Pages reproduced in miniature for reference purposes must be completely legible.
- A sans-serif font must be used for books in Elementary Cycle One.
- The kerning (i.e. the space between the letters) and line length must be suitable for the students' age group.
- The size of the characters must be suitable for the students' age group.
- Elementary school books must always be paginated.
- The binding must not interfere with the legibility of the pages.

