

Report

The Feasibility and Way Forward for a Standardized Exit Assessment and Test for Newcomers in LINC Training

**November 30, 2008
Lyle Makosky
InterQuest Consulting
Ottawa, Ontario**

Report on the Feasibility and Way Forward for a Standardized Exit Assessment and Test for Newcomers in LINC Training

Background

The federal government's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) has provided language training to landed immigrants and refugees across Canada for some 16 years. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) defines the policies and standards for the program and supports the materials and infrastructure needed to deliver the program. Assessments are made of a learner's language skills when they enter the LINC program (entry) as well as during (progress) and at the end of their LINC studies (exit). Assessments for 'placement' in a LINC program (entry) are conducted by LINC assessors using standardized Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) placement tools. Progress assessments during LINC classes are conducted by LINC instructors, generally using their own methods/tools to assess progress and provide feedback to newcomer students. Recently CIC has provided tools to assist progress assessment in the form of Summary Assessment Method (SAM for CLB 1-4) and CLB 5-10 Tasks (for CLB 5-10). While not presented as formal exit tests, these tools provide a form of testing oriented to relevant curriculum and demonstrated tasks at these levels. Exit assessments are conducted by LINC instructors (rather than LINC Assessors) who receive different training and use different testing methods than those used at entry. As well, since there is no agreed standard or model for these exit assessments, instructors have developed their own methods often drawing from tests developed by others in the system, and which may differ across provinces, communities and even within service provider organizations delivering LINC. As a result, the results of entry and exit testing are generally not comparable, and exit test results across programs and communities are also deemed to be subjective/situational and not comparable to any common standard. This means the exit rating and feedback to newcomers may be inconsistent and the results are not as portable as newcomers, instructors and program managers would like. In addition, it is more difficult to evaluate how effective a LINC program is in improving language skills.

Given this state, CIC has determined it is necessary to determine: whether and how an exit assessment approach with exit testing, can be developed and implemented to serve all levels of LINC; whether the existing CLB Placement Test (CLBPT) could act as the exit test instrument (with adaptations if needed); and how this test could be piloted in Ontario on the way to implementation in the LINC program in Ontario and across Canada.

Scope and Approach to Study

The study undertook to determine the need for, interest in, requirements of, feasibility and practicality of instituting an assessment approach for LINC focused on the concept of an exit test for all LINC levels. The study was also requested to consider whether the CLBPT could be the exit test, what adaptations might be needed to use it, and how it should be piloted in Ontario in the short term to inform eventual full implementation across Canada. Alternative options for the exit test were also to be examined, particularly if the CLBPT was not deemed to be a viable choice but also to ensure all avenues were examined. The recording and reporting protocols to communicate and record the results of the tests were also to be examined. Lastly, the study was to provide composite

recommendations on each of these elements and on the overall way forward with respect to an exit testing approach for LINC and the implications for the future of the LINC program.

The approach consisted of:

- a review of the history, background materials and high level scan of existing language test models;
- an investigative work plan developed and confirmed with the project steering committee;
- an analytical and interview guide designed to outline the necessary lines of enquiry and discussion questions to be used in the subsequent consultations (see Annex A);
- a draft statement of purpose and reasons for a LINC exit test and regime
- a range of consultation sessions undertaken involving stakeholder groups including (see Annex B):
 - o CIC Ontario region staff
 - o CIC National HQ staff
 - o Canadian Center for Language Benchmarks
 - o Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC)
 - o Assessors from LINC Assessment centres
 - o Teachers from a variety of LINC delivery programs
 - o Program Manager/Managers from Service Provider Organizations delivering LINC
 - o Ontario Government Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)
- A rolling aggregation of views and ideas which were used to evolve promising concepts and directions which were then tested in subsequent sessions and refined as the discussions proceeded
- Analysis of the findings and drafting of a set of concepts and way forward for final review using a slide deck for presentation and discussion
- A second review of findings and proposed direction forward with select MCI representatives involved with the language training stream of the COIA Strategic Plan
- Final review of the draft findings and proposed direction forward with the CIC staff concerned
- Finalizing and submitting a final report with findings and recommendations

Purpose of a LINC Exit Test

The following are presented as the purpose of a LINC Exit Test and the main reasons for developing such an assessment regime.

- a) Provide formalized feedback to a newcomer student on his/her progress in learning the language and proficiency level status within a recognized scale, and with assessment results that are portable, applicable and consistent across Canada.
- b) Provide a language proficiency rating aid to newcomer students for use in his/her: curriculum vitae; career promotion and management; communicating employability; enabling access to skills development and higher education; and accessing other settlement pathways of interest to the newcomer.
- c) Assist the language instructor to manage class progress and organization and to provide another element of feedback on course effectiveness
- d) Provide information on language training progress that will assist the service provider and/or the local/community/regional settlement authority to better manage the language training system.
- e) Provide information on language training delivery and progress to the federal department of CIC: outline the profile of LINC program levels, student numbers and distribution; track progress of the LINC program including changes in student proficiency/rated levels across the system; compile quantitative activity and flow data on LINC. Note: exit test results can

only provide a profile of levels and progress and while this data can combine with other performance information to assist program evaluation, identify areas for review and potential improvement or adjustment, exit test results alone can not enable program evaluation or indicate causal problems or sources and should not be targeted or used for that purpose.

- f) Increase the profile and credibility of the LINC program.

Issues and Challenges – Resolution and Recommendations

1. Reasons/purpose for a LINC Exit Test

The six reasons noted above were developed first during a preliminary scan of background documents and discussion with CIC on the intent of the study. As consultations proceeded, a draft outline of purpose was tested with participants and revised over time. Generally, participants found the six reasons to be a good outline that represented the interest and benefits they perceived in the concept of a LINC Exit Test. Most felt the first three points were the most important to the newcomer and teacher and the main reasons for pursuing such a test. Program managers and SPOs tended to also stress the importance of the latter three points. It was repeatedly noted that an exit test should not bear the burden of satisfying all the reasons alone as the system required other strengthening and mechanisms to enable all six benefits to be met. It was also noted that weighting or ranking the reasons differently would lead to a potentially different emphasis in the design of the exit test.

Depending on whether a proposed LINC Exit Test would be attractive to and adopted by the other ESL channels (school boards, private classes, community colleges, universities, etc), there may need to be some adaptation of the wording to recognize these other parties but generally the intent of each reason ought to be applicable to the other parties.

Resolution – Recommendation: Utilize the six reasons to explain why the exit test is being developed to meet multiple needs. Indicate the test development will focus on the benefits to the newcomer student and the teacher/instructor (reasons a – c). Also indicate the assessment and reporting strategy will require the development of other mechanisms and practices in the language training system, which will draw upon and support the new exit test. If other ESL stakeholders express interest in joining or collaborating on a standardized exit test approach, the reasons should be redefined in more generic terms to allow for their inclusion and identity, while retaining the same range of reasons.

With respect to performance evaluation of LINC, it will be important to clearly indicate that exit test results can only provide a profile of levels and progress and while this data can combine with other performance information to assist program evaluation, exit test results alone can not fully enable program evaluation or indicate causal problems or sources and the results should not be used for that purpose.

2. One or more tests

Participants often queried whether a single test could meet all the assessment needs of all CLB levels (CLB 1-10) and LINC class levels (LINC 1-8) as this would require a model with significant range and detailed gradations to cover the wide skill levels in these CLB/LINC levels. As well, many noted that there was a significant shift in emphasis and expertise between study at LINC/CLB 1-4 and moving to LINC/CLB 5-8/10. Also many raised the possibility of two testing models, one for in-class progress testing and another for end of class exit testing.

Resolution – Recommendation: While the simplicity of one test is attractive, the scoping of a test approach should remain open to the idea of more than one test instrument to respond to the variation in learning focus and complexity over the LINC/CLB levels and to consider

when mid class progress testing can complement end of class exit testing. Notwithstanding this flexibility in options, a primary goal of any exit test/testing regime should be consistency and standardization which will place certain constraints on the number and variation in tests allowed.

3. Testing/test development philosophy or principles

On what philosophy or principles should a language test be based? Considerations include: whether a common standard should be used; whether it should test for language proficiency or curriculum learned; learning outcomes or exit outcomes; based on a set of demonstrated 'can do' behaviours/practices; how specific or exact the test should be; whether a test should be delivered through 'high stakes' or 'low stakes' terms and conditions; how important consistency is and over what domains; cover some or all the dimensions of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Discussing these aspects yielded strong views and passionate rationales.

Resolution – Recommendation: An effective test design intended for exit testing in the LINC program should be based on:

- A common language proficiency standard which must be the CLB system
- Common, consistent design, resulting in a test that is applied consistently throughout the country yielding comparable results wherever delivered
- Priority to be on assessing language proficiency
- A recognition of variations in language curriculum and/or learning outcomes allowing for a controlled degree of focus on learning/learning outcomes
- Starting point is a focus on exit outcomes. Test design could also accommodate flexibility to enable use in mid class progress testing where applicable.
- Demonstrated behaviours or practices at each level assessed. For example through reference to the CLB Can-Do Checklists for CLB levels 1-10 (all 4 dimensions of Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) which can provide a vocabulary and consistent means of explaining and demonstrating what proficiency at a level looks and sounds like.
- Testing conditions and practice that convey relative seriousness, reference to standards, relative formality of the test results, an appreciation of the proficiency level achieved, acknowledgement of the public meaning of the results and its public use by the student (Note: the author avoids use of 'high vs low stakes' labels as it appears there is wide variation in interpretation and application of these terms)

4. Use of test in qualifying student position or placement in a LINC class

How should the test be used to qualify/position a student in the LINC system. For example, should the exit test be a 'gate' (i.e. can't proceed to the next level of instruction until passed the test) ...if so, does this imply the need for 'service standards'..or, is it simply to inform the student of status and progress and provide the instructor and LINC system with progress and outcomes data....in either case, does passing it obligate the student to move to the next level, i.e. can't stay at the level just passed? There are occasions where students may not be ready to move or have split ratings across the four domains (R,W,L,S) which causes class management challenges (e.g. student not emotionally ready to move to next level, or R,W at level 4 but S,L at level 6 and class interaction demands student function in a higher level class).

Resolution – Recommendation: The authority for using the test results to manage student placement and movement should rest with the instructor while emphasizing that in general the test should act as both a gate and an automatic promoter to the next level class. This means the vast majority would use it in a formal way as indicated but where special

circumstances require, the instructor could exercise discretionary authority to change the qualification impact and placement.

5. Who can/should deliver the exit test

Options for delivering the test include: LINC assessors at existing assessment centres; LINC assessors operating in an itinerant fashion, i.e. travelling to the class location; LINC class instructors who have been trained and certified with the test, delivering the test to their own students; the same LINC instructors acting as resources to LINC classes and delivering the test to classes other than their own; new specially developed and certified assessors designated for LINC class exit testing exclusively; a two step delivery where the class instructor administers the test and the results are sent to a third party for assessment. The main factors in the choice include: the benefit of consistency, objectivity and integrity in an independent testing approach; desire for the instructor to manage and complete the relationship with the student by administering the test and providing the feedback on results personally; existence of an established assessor base in the existing assessment centres; extent of training and certification required; and the readiness of the instructor profession to embrace a testing role and the training and certification required.

Resolution – Recommendation: The LINC Exit Test should be made available for delivery primarily through assessment centre assessors and class instructors. This would allow LINC SPOs to determine whether they prefer to access the testing regime through an external source (which could provide an itinerant service) or via in-house by supporting the training and certification of their own instructors. It also allows instructors to adopt a testing expertise focused on exit testing to complement their typically self developed approach to mid class progress testing. Those administering the test should be trained and certified on the test.

As will be explained in a later section, this report will recommend a testing approach where the test model is somewhat different for the lower CLB/LINC levels (1-4) and the higher levels (5-8+). In this case, it is recommended that the lower level test can be administered by either an assessor from an assessment centre or an instructor, where the instructor can be from his/her own class or another class environment; whereas the higher level test must be administered by an assessor or an instructor drawn from a qualified pool that ensures the instructor does not test his/her own class.

Note: the author does not recommend a separation of test administration and results analysis as this represents more bureaucracy/process than the LINC system needs. Similarly, there is no need to establish a new separate cadre of assessors dedicated to LINC Exit testing.

6. When to apply the exit test

While the term ‘exit test’ implies application on exiting from the course/at the conclusion of the course, one could still imagine different timing options for application as follows: on a set time or times each year all classes would be tested to take a collective national snapshot of the state and the progress of all LINC students/classes (e.g. June 1 and Dec 1 each year); the test would be administered at the closing of each class program; the test would be applied whenever a student left a class or requested/required the test for other purposes (e.g. job related); an exit test could be applied when a set number of hours of class instruction was reached (which may vary by BM or LINC level); exit testing could be left optional for the instructor and SPO to determine. There is evidence that newcomers often and increasingly seek test results for use in their settlement, education and employment/career pathways. To date, newcomers are using a variety of means to determine their language proficiency status including approaching assessment centres to obtain placement tests

(CLBPT or CLBA) or to community colleges or private third parties. This represents a larger policy challenge for CIC to address and is beyond the scope of this study.

Resolution – Recommendation: The LINC Exit Test should be a requirement to be applied at the conclusion of every LINC class. Should a student have to leave a class before the class concludes, the test should be available if requested and generally applied to ensure the student leaves with knowledge of the level attained. If a standard is established for the number of class hours required to progress through a BM or LINC level and commonly applied, then this class time metric could become the check point for applying the exit test. In addition, LINC students should have access to being tested at other times if they validate that it is important for their pathway pursuit such as access to higher education or employment.

When CIC considers the policy of who and when can access the test outside of LINC classes, it is recommended that the LINC Exit Test that is developed be considered as a possible candidate for use in general proficiency testing for other than strictly LINC progress/exit purposes. Until such time as this policy question is addressed, it is recommended that the LINC Exit Test be reserved for the LINC language program as outlined above.

7. Test availability, security and maintenance

As the proposed exit test becomes institutionalized, there will be a need to establish a custodian to maintain the model, undertake updates, work with training regimes to train and certify those who will administer the test, establish and manage content integrity and security from misuse and financial abuse. While there is always a danger of test misuse and security breaches (unintended or not), the importance of institutionalizing the test, ensuring it is universally applied across LINC programs and is available for administering by both certified assessors and LINC instructors takes priority over misuse concerns. Furthermore, as the test regime is not a formally legislated policy and the results do not have formal impact on student settlement or progress in society nor do they formally guarantee access to higher benefits, it is less likely that potential abusers will attempt security breaches, sell copies underground or other misuse actions as the risk-reward is deemed to provide low attraction and benefit.

Resolution – Recommendation: The LINC Exit Test should be placed with a third party custodian agency such as the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks, who will: manage licensing and distribution to licenced delivery agents; define and promulgate security rules and guidelines; undertake such measures as needed within the realities of the LINC system to prevent misuse and abuse; and ensure the test is kept up to date including regular refreshment reviews and revisions as needed.

8. Delivering and explaining test results

With an exit test system a challenge is how to commonly represent and explain the results to the student and how does the student present and explain those results to external parties such as employers. In short, what does ‘success’ or ‘pass’ mean? For instance, lets say a student has completed a LINC 4 class, completes the exit test and is deemed to have passed the test....what should be the message to the student and how would it be recorded for external use? After much discussion, participants agreed that a simple pass-fail vocabulary would not suffice for communication or recording purposes and in fact would put an unintended and undesirable emphasis on the status of passing or failing when the intent is to communicate and appreciate the level of proficiency demonstrated by the student in the assessment; hence the preferred message would be more like “has finished or completed LINC 3 and is ready for or would benefit from LINC 4”. This is preferred over terms that

associate the student with a specific LINC level such as “is proficient at or operating at LINC level 3”, while recognizing that many students may wish a specific level rating terminology and hence a ‘level rating’ may have to be provided.

The problem exacerbates when we consider use of the results outside the classroom. Most evidence suggests that employers and schools of higher education among others, cannot relate to the terminology of ‘benchmarks’ or LINC levels as they are an abstraction with nothing to compare to. Terminology related to demonstrated ability/actions is more promising, such as those related to the CCLB Can-Do Checklists, however they require a more extensive interaction and explanation to understand the language proficiency being explained.

LINC has objectives other than language enhancement that relate to supporting and informing newcomer progress in settlement in general. Hence the question of whether there should be some form of gauging progress and newcomer satisfaction and providing feedback in those other aspects as well. Thus LINC may need a larger assessment framework to view other settlement progress indicators. We note that some of these aspects can be addressed in the exit test to the extent that learning outcomes are assessed and hence it depends on whether the LINC curriculum learning outcomes are a part of the new test design. However, the exit test would not be designed to address all these other settlement aspects.

Resolution – Recommendation: An agreed terminology should be commonly used to indicate and explain the results of the exit test to the student. The vocabulary of ‘pass – fail’ should be avoided both in person and in the recording of results. Assuming the exit test assesses proficiency in CLB benchmarks as well as LINC levels, both should be part of the proficiency positioning explanation. As well, the student should be informed of their proficiency in behavioural terms as well, for example using the CCLB Can Do checklists to make the results more meaningful.

When a portable settlement and language progress record is developed (see the Pass port concept recommended by COIA) CIC should adopt this model and incorporate the exit test results into the passport process and instrument.

As the use of the results by the student for their settlement pathways is a critical need that demands a more communicative approach, CIC must develop a better terminology for explaining test results for public use that uses comparative standards and examples as well as behavioural terminology.

CIC should consider how the settlement orientation and guidance that is also provided through LINC can be assessed as part of a larger assessment.

When the assessment model is agreed, consider whether it might simply be called an ‘exit assessment’ (or possibly a ‘LINC class/course exit assessment’) rather than an exit test to avoid the sensitivities associated with ‘Tests’ (pass-fail, pressure, test results define the future etc) and the confusion and ambiguous competition currently in play between ‘tests, tools, and tasks’.

9. Recording and reporting test results

Despite attempts by CIC and CIC Ontario to establish a national-provincial data base (ICAMS national and HARTS in Ontario) on language programs and student progress and results, it appears there are still data entry, data consistency and data retrieval problems such that the information resident in the data base is suspect. Furthermore, although contribution agreements with service providers require the recording/reporting of LINC related information, it appears there has not been a consistent discipline of recording and reporting program results by SPOs and instructors or the process has not consistently followed. This situation must be addressed.

Resolution – Recommendation: If one of the goals of an exit testing system is to produce performance and progress data on the LINC program, there must be a common regime of on-line recording and reporting results instituted into the LINC program on a mandatory basis and consistently followed by all LINC program providers. The format for recording the LINC exit test results should draw upon the points noted for delivering test results to the student, i.e. "completed level X...ready for level X + 1..." As well, at each point of recording, results should be noted and compared over an agreed time period, e.g. level 6 months ago – level at this time.

As noted in point 8, the test results should also be recorded in the personal, portable newcomer progress instrument, referred to as the newcomer progress passport. Record design should incorporate tracing of individual students to enable tracking progress and pathways over time and space.

10. Implications for LINC Instructors

The teacher/instructor participants in the study were universally thoughtful, constructive and enthusiastic about the concept of an exit test for the LINC program. They felt it was long overdue and would: assist them to manage and assess student progress; manage class organization; strengthen the relationship with students; increase the perceived program and instruction benefits in the eyes of the student; and improve the credibility of the program. They did feel that this should be just the start of a larger strengthening and formalizing of the program including the development of standardized text that would be available as a resource for all levels of LINC (this would still allow each class/Instructor to tailor or add to the content to fit particular or local circumstances etc), on the way to standardized texts and curriculum mandated across LINC delivery. Instructors believed they should be trained in exit test application and should be allowed to administer the test to their own classes at least at the lower levels but accepted the principle of objectivity and independent testing especially at the higher levels.

Resolution – Recommendation: LINC instructors/teachers should be seen as key agents in the exit testing approach. They should be provided training and be certified in the application of the exit test and generally should be exposed to more training in assessment methods/practices in general for their use in the classroom for interim progress assessment as well as exit assessment. In principle, certified instructors should have the option to administer the exit test to their own class for LINC 1-4 and should be available as a resource to administer the exit test to other classes for LINC 5-8. As a matter of principle, it should be assumed that instructors will treat the testing regime with respect, objectivity, integrity and security and will act in the best interests of the students by using the test with clarity, forthrightness and encouragement.

Instructors should be the first point of record on testing results, ensuring the result is fully recorded and reported on a regular basis according to the protocol established by CIC.

While the SPO involved may be the formal conduit of the results, the accurate recording must start with the instructor who has the first hand knowledge of the results and its representation.

11. Implications for LINC programs delivered through other channels

LINC can be delivered through other channels such as school boards in distinct or blended classes or through institutions such as community colleges and even private organizations that are not directly receiving CIC funding for LINC.

Resolution – Recommendation: In cases where LINC is delivered through channels other than CIC funded SPOs, it would be desirable to seek the adoption of the new exit testing regime as a key component of LINC delivery. Over time, adoption of the exit test should

progress from a desired option to a required and integral standard in any LINC program wherever delivered.

12. Implications for other language training programs for newcomers

In Ontario, language training or ESL training for newcomers is also delivered through school boards, community colleges and Universities as well as private agencies.

With respect to school boards, they represent the largest ESL delivery system for newcomers other than LINC and hence the question of a language proficiency test oriented to exit outcomes should be a matter of mutual interest to CIC and MCI as well as the school board delivery system. The particular nature of school board ESL will provide significant challenges to this idea, including the fact that: there is very little standardization in the ESL courses, curriculum, assessment or placement (although some may utilize LINC assessment centres for placement); some classes have a broad range of BM levels across the students; students can move in and out of classes without formal checks; testing is controversial with some school boards tending toward ongoing assessment (e.g. through a portfolio approach) rather than end of class assessment; there is typically no concluding level positioning at the end of a class nor a certificate awarded; debate exists as to whether a language test is revealing individual language proficiency or the value of the training and in what balance, etc.

With respect to Community Colleges, participants noted that CCs typically don't accept LINC level ratings and require prospective newcomer students to be tested through their own test model at a cost to the student, followed by tailored remedial language training and with often inconclusive and unsatisfying results.

Resolution – Recommendation: In relation to Ontario School Boards, notwithstanding the evident differences between school board delivered ESL and the LINC program, CIC should pursue talks to examine the interest and appetite for a standardized language assessment instrument(s) and regime that could be used by both ESL and LINC for their own assessment purposes, whether as a placement test, progress test, or exit test or combination. In light of the COIA recommendation to proceed toward implementing a common language assessment and referral system in Ontario (incorporating both ESL and LINC programs), it would seem opportune and necessary to pursue this common assessment question in the COIA context.

In relation to community colleges, by establishing a standardized LINC exit test, this would add credibility and consistency to the LINC level rating carried by a newcomer student, thereby reducing and over time eliminating the requirement for a prospective newcomer CC student to be retested and sent to remedial training and would enhance the portability of the language level achievement record.

13. Implications for the future of LINC

Several participants characterized LINC as an 'informal' system, i.e. allows continuous intake; there are large variations in class make up and content for the same level; different classes have significantly different expectations and needs (e.g. community college vs inner city development project); there is no standardized curriculum (there are curriculum guidelines) or standardized texts; there are no exit tests, etc. They wondered whether adoption of an exit test regime would mean a change in the philosophy and model for the LINC program. In general, participants felt a move toward a more formal system was appropriate and timely.

Resolution – Recommendation: The adoption of an LINC exit test regime is worthy in its own right and should be implemented to meet the needs and purpose stated regardless of any further consideration of the LINC model and in fact could be pursued without any other

significant change to LINC although a full recording and reporting regime must also be adopted to gain all the benefits of an exit testing approach. Nevertheless, it is apparent that further strengthening of LINC is in order and thus the exit test initiative should be utilized as a launch point for movement toward a more formalized system. To start with confidence, we note that after 16 years of significant contribution to advancing the language ability of newcomers, LINC has been very successful and the fundamentals of the program are strong. Notwithstanding this history, conditions and expectations have matured and it is time to augment the successful fundamentals. LINC should be strengthened and moved toward a more formal system incorporating:

- Standardized texts/curriculum content for each level. Initially the focus should be on developing standard texts to act as a resource for instructors, then moving to mandating the texts as central to the standard curriculum at each level while still allowing local tailoring and augmenting of curriculum to accommodate local conditions or the special profile of the student group etc.
- Standard exit testing regime as outlined in this report
- Formal required progress and proficiency results recording and reporting regime
- Service standards for each LINC level
- Enhanced training and ongoing refreshers/updates for LINC instructors to support delivery of the more formal system, deliver the exit testing regime, strengthen skills in general assessment practices, adopt the recording and reporting practice, increase ability and practice in teaching emerging workplace communication skills

14. Options for selecting/developing a standard exit test and selection criteria

Establishing a LINC exit test suggests several options: use existing tests/tools within the LINC system such as a proficiency test or tool, a progress test or tool, or a placement test; use a test developed independently through a local SPO, educational institution, private sector provider, etc; start with any of these existing test/tool and undertake changes and adaptations that will enable a better response to the issues and requirements outlined to this point; start fresh, identify the requirements and commission the design and development of a new test(s) to meet the needs.

Resolution – Recommendation: To select the best option, the following criteria should guide the choice, i.e. the approach should:

- Respond well to all six reasons for an exit test (as stated at the start of this paper)
- Use the Canadian Language Benchmarks structure as the underpinning foundation
- Be applicable across all CLB benchmark levels and all LINC levels
- Lend itself to common and consistent application across Canada in all LINC programs using a standardized approach
- Be practical to use, with reasonable administration and interpretation requirements delivered over an acceptable time frame
- Be deliverable in a mix of group and individual forms to allow individual assessment particularly on speaking, while optimizing the test time through group assessment for example with reading and writing
- Demonstrate a priority on assessing language proficiency associated with end of class exit outcomes
- Recognize variations in language curriculum and/or learning outcomes allowing for a controlled degree of tailoring to accommodate learning/learning outcomes

Options for selecting/developing a standard exit test

The range of approaches considered for selecting and/or developing a standard exit test and the conclusions reached are as follows:

- I. ***Review and select a test from among existing language tests*** currently in use or previously designed but currently not in use, e.g. proficiency test, progress test, placement test. The existing tests considered include: the CLBPT, the CLBA, ILES, CLBA-I, CELPIP, ELTPA and various other tests developed independently or by other provinces. Not all tests were received and reviewed in depth, rather the author relied on informed input from test design experts and LINC program delivers to comment on the viability and practicality of these various tests. In particular, CIC had requested that the CLBPT be evaluated as a potential starting exit test. In general, all these tests were found wanting and were ascertained to not sufficiently meet the needs, reasons/purpose or design requirements for a complete exit test as outlined in this report. Various reasons included: the reviewed test was too long or impractical to use with LINC classes or would demand a more extensive resource and time burdened testing process than was warranted for the purpose intended; test was too broad, general or light and would not provide enough specificity and focus to delineate proficiency at different levels and/or across the four dimensions (reading, writing, speaking, listening); test might usefully apply to a narrow curriculum but would not be able to cover the full curriculum range expected in LINC; test might apply to certain levels but could not apply to all levels;

In particular, The CLB Placement Test (CLBPT), which is currently used in assessment centres for placement purposes, while attractive from an existing usage and practical application view, would not meet the design requirements. The reasons are: CLBPT assesses generic proficiency and can't allow for different class content covered by different classes over the learning period; CLBPT evaluates only three CLB 'competencies' in each of the four domains through basically three tasks./activities for each domain (R,W,S,L) and has to conclude a BM placement across all of the 10 CLB BMs...the concern is that with this approach, the test would not have enough specificity and assess sufficient competencies to accurately determine a BM or LINC level with enough confidence and consistency.

- II. ***Review and select an existing assessment 'tool'*** typically used to determine mid course progress and/or offer low stakes or partial assessments, and use as an exit test. The existing tools considered were the new CIC Summative Assessment Manual (SAM)V1 & V2 covering BMs 1-4, and the CLB Exit Assessment Tasks for BMs 5-6 & 7-10. Both these tools are relatively new, and in the midst of being promulgated with training and use orientation programs emerging and as such they are still not widely known or experienced. Hence most participants either didn't know of these tools or had heard but were only notionally familiar with them and hence could not comment on their applicability as an exit test. Those who were somewhat familiar or quite familiar were not confident they could be used as exit tests. The introductions to these tools affirm their purpose as interim feedback on learning outcomes (SAM) or as partial aids to the instructor to determine status of students at end of a course (Assessment Tasks 5-10) and not intended as exit tests. The implied judgement is that they are useful for the purpose intended but would not be complete enough or focused enough to serve as stand alone exit tests covering all of CLB/LINC 1-10. It should be noted that both instruments are of high quality, are current and well designed and in fact portray many of the attributes and qualities desired in an exit test model and nicely align to the design parameters of the proposed LINC exit test as will be seen in the next section on the proposed model. Therefore, they should be considered as useful guides to and resources for the development of the proposed exit tests and in fact, as the development proceeds, it may be discovered that

they can be the source of a significant portion of the content and task design employed in the new composite proposed exit test.

III. ***Select and redesign/adapt an existing test or tool.***

As each of the above tests and tools were considered for immediate use as a standardized exit test, the question was also asked as to whether any had enough promise in the inherent design and elements to consider investing in an adaptation or redesign development process. In general, participants felt there would be such significant deconstruction, and rebasing to fit the design requirements, that would take as much time and effort as starting fresh and with the danger that the resulting adaptation would fall short of the desired product. Hence this option was also ranked as undesirable.

IV. ***Don't have a standard test, allow instructors to assess proficiency independently, but require all classes/courses to determine student proficiency level at end of each class and to record/report the result.*** This approach met with interesting views. Most felt instructors should apply a standard test and all should assess exit proficiency, but some felt instructors are already providing this function through their own approaches and could continue to do so. On balance, it was agreed that a move to a common standardized exit test was preferable and that simply reporting the results of instructors' own testing (or estimate without a test) would not meet the requirement of standardization and a common testing regime.

Note: One of the reasons for creating an exit test is to provide information on program progress and status including newcomer numbers and progress. In the author's view this is an important goal in its own right and CIC should not have to wait until an exit testing system is developed and implemented, in order to obtain this data. It is apparent that the LINC instructors are well trained, certified and capable of not only instructing but assessing the proficiency of their students through a variety of means they have developed, some independently, some using program aids. In addition, instructors consider assessment and the communication of results to be an important and integral component of the course and the relationship with the student and evidently take this seriously. Therefore it is recommended that CIC proceed to institute an immediate reporting system whereby LINC instructors must undertake an 'estimate of the proficiency level' of each student at the end of each course and report this status centrally using a set format based upon the format recommended in point 9 above (including comparison with the entry rating or previous rating for each student). This 'assessment estimate' would be guided by certain principles and brief guidelines but in essence would be left to the instructor to undertake using whatever tools or aids available, ranging from exit assessment instruments they are using to mid course assessment aids etc. and allowing the instructor to make an informed judgment based on accumulated informal assessments and observations occurring throughout the course, even if that meant making the estimate without the aid of a formal assessment instrument. The author is convinced that the potential differences in rating and deviations that may arise across the system would not be significant (the instructors can do this and do it well) and are out weighed by the benefits of receiving reasonably accurate performance information where none exists now. The resulting profile of LINC students, classes, and level progress will be 'good enough' to meet the need for national performance information and feedback and will institute an important principle and practice while the formal LINC exit test and regime is being developed.

V. ***Start fresh and develop a new exit test*** through a formative design and development process while drawing from the rich background and elements in existing tests and tools (notably in particular the SAM and Exit Assessment Tasks 5-10). Based on the discussion and input from

participants and the analysis of the options as outlined above, this study proposes that the optimum way forward is to start fresh and develop a new exit test. This approach is explained in the following sections.

Recommended Approach for Development of Exit Test

Design Target Qualities

The best approach given all the factors and expectations, is to start fresh and develop a new exit test. The design should be guided by these target qualities:

- Respond well to all six reasons for an exit test (as stated at the start of this paper) with the greatest emphasis on meeting reasons 1-3 (feedback to student, rating aid for newcomer use in pathway management, assist instructor to manage class and provide feedback on course)
- Use the Canadian Language Benchmarks structure as the underpinning foundation
- Be applicable across all CLB benchmark levels and all LINC levels
- Be open to the idea of more than one test instrument to respond to the variation in learning focus and complexity over the LINC/CLB levels. In particular consider the split between LINC/CLB 1-4 and 5-10 as a natural delineation point for differently focused test instruments
- Demonstrate a priority on assessing language proficiency associated with end of class exit outcomes
- Recognize variations in language curriculum and/or learning outcomes allowing for a controlled degree of tailoring to accommodate learning/learning outcomes. Use LINC curriculum guidelines and associated learning outcomes to provide a starting point for accommodation of learning/learning outcomes
- Lend itself to common and consistent application across Canada in all LINC programs using a standardized approach
- Be practical to use, with reasonable administration and interpretation requirements delivered over an acceptable time frame
- Be deliverable in a mix of group and individual forms to allow individual assessment particularly on speaking, while optimizing the test time through group assessment
- Utilize demonstrated behaviours or practices at each level as a dimension of design

Model options

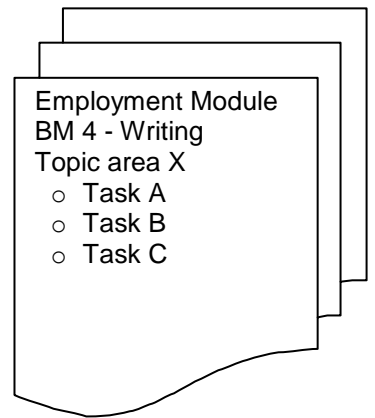
Next, the following model options evolved over the study engagement and were reviewed with helpful suggestions as the sessions progressed. The model options were as follows:

Option 1: One standard exit test for all CLB BM/LINC levels. For each level, each of the four dimensions (R,W,S,L) would be assessed, using a set number (e.g. 3) of tasks that provide a balance of curriculum oriented content (what learned) and behavioural/demonstrated activities ('can-do' type).

	BM 3 - Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Task A ○ Task B ○ Task C

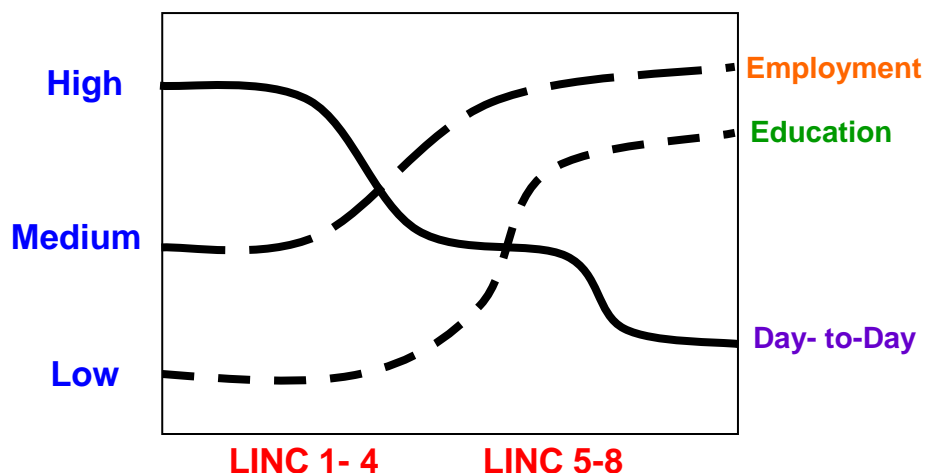
Option 2: A modular series of standard exit tests, all based on the same design and applied in the same way. The different modular versions would be based on three thematic orientations, i.e.

- a *Survival or Day-to-Day orientation* covering a range of settlement basics and core language concepts necessary for day to day living in Canada
- an *Education orientation*, to assist students on their educational pathway and help prepare for entry to higher education
- an *Employment orientation*, to assist students in enhancing their employability and to increase competency in workplace communication language skills

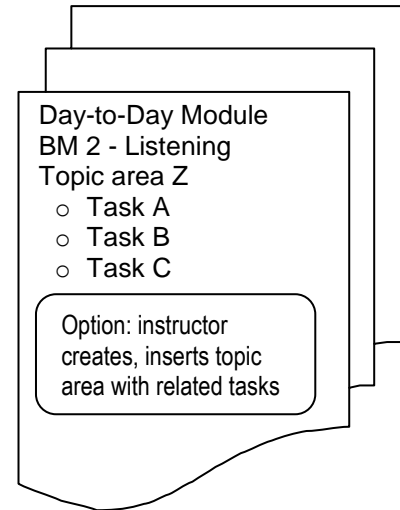


Then, each of the three thematic modules could have further sub modules for each BM level dealing with different topic areas with both content elements and activity elements to be tested. Thus, a tailored exit assessment test package could be compiled from the whole set to align to the mix of day-to-day, education and employment emphasis in that course and enabling further tailoring by selecting relevant topic areas from each thematic sub module at each BM level. Assessment would utilize a balance of curriculum oriented content (what learned) with reference to LINC curriculum learning outcomes, and behavioural/demonstrated activities ('can-do' type) for each topic area.

Note: in the graphic depiction below, we symbolically trace the relative interest/relative emphasis in course focus (high, medium, low) for each thematic area (day-to-day, education, employment) across the LINC course levels 1-8. So, we can see at the lower LINC levels the highest emphasis is likely to be on life skills/day-to-day content which decreases as we move up the higher LINC levels. Employment starts with a medium emphasis (always present) and grows quickly to represent the highest language interest at medium and higher levels. The educational focus (pursuit of higher ed or occupational training) is a low priority at lower levels of LINC and grows to a high interest as LINC 5 and up are reached. This notional relationship suggests how different LINC courses might be designed (i.e. a class might have a dominant emphasis on day-to-day life skills at LINC 2 with a small proportion on employment (say 20% of the course) and then a LINC 8 class might have a total emphasis on employment or education. Thus, based on the relative emphasis of these three thematic orientations, the instructor (or whoever is testing) could select sub modules and topic areas from the modular versions to align to their course profile.



Option 3: A similar modular series of standard exit tests, but with the **option** for the instructor **to create and insert their own content oriented topic area with tasks** in the relevant sub modules for the BM being assessed. This allows the instructor to incorporate content relevant to their class circumstances. A template would be provided, with guidelines and standards for creating the insert as it would have to replicate the level and standard of the provided topic area test section. Over time, as instructors created these inserts, a menu of quality topical inserts could be built for each level and provided to enable instructors to find a topic area that related to their course focus and use it to insert into the test section. As the list of optional quality inserts grows, stabilizes and becomes the preferred source of topic areas/tasks, the whole package will start to look and function much like option 2 (i.e. there is a commonly used set of topic areas for each level and dimension) but the difference is that the option always exists for the instructor to create and insert a new topic area/task set to fit local conditions.



Reactions to and preferences for the options

Participants saw benefits in all three options. Option 1 does have the benefit of simplicity and high standardization but was generally thought to not respond enough to variations in curriculum focus and local conditions and seemed to rigid/lacked flexibility and hence was ranked least attractive of the three options. Option 2 was well received and in general preferred by the SPOs and Assessors given its balance of standardization and flexibility and curriculum responsiveness with the latter achieved by the different thematic versions and topical choices within each version. Option 3 was also well received and in general preferred by the instructors given its balance of standardization and responsiveness to local conditions/curriculum and in particular the flexibility and acknowledgement of the instructor's role that it enabled by allowing instructors the option to create/insert topical areas/tasks at any level of the instrument. In these reviews, participants often again raised the question of who would deliver the test, whether independent standardized testing should be a priority and how it would affect the choice of options. They also suggested that it was more important for instructors at lower levels to have the flexibility of test instruments that allowed some alignment to their curriculum/local conditions, whereas at higher levels, if the three thematic versions were used, that should provide a good balance of course focus with standardization. On balance, groups converged toward a solution that used either or both option 2 and 3, that supported test delivery by both assessors and class instructors, and that differentiated the approach between lower and higher LINC levels.

Model Option Recommendation: Recommended that options 2 and 3 be the basis for the approach to designing the test. The recommended preference is to design the test package so that:

- the lower levels (CLB 1-4/LINC 1-4) use option 3 (allowing option for instructors to create/insert topic areas/tasks according to a standard) and allow test delivery by the class instructor (or other instructors and assessors of course) and;
- the higher levels (CLB 5-10/LINC 5-8) use option 2 (allowing option of tester to choose from and create a mix of three different thematic versions and further choose among sub topic areas in packaging an overall test instrument for each level) with the test delivery by a certified tester other than the class instructor (including other certified instructors and assessors).

Way Forward

Path to develop and implement a testing approach and regime

All participants expressed interest in how the decision process would proceed and if the exit test does advance, then how it would be developed, tested and implemented. Generally, they advocated for an expert development, involvement of representative stakeholders, solid piloting to test various factors and a phased roll out. They also appreciated this engagement to date and the opportunity it provided to provide thoughtful input to the feasibility analysis.

Resolution – Recommendation: Given the need for and welcoming response to the concept of a LINC exit testing regime and the evident logical model for such a regime, it is recommended that CIC proceed to develop and implement a testing approach and regime. The proposed architecture of the test approach is outlined in the previous section of this report. The instructive input and good will achieved through involvement of stakeholders to date in this study should be continued with further involvement of representative stakeholders at each stage of the development and implementation process. As well, a sound piloting strategy should be used to assess: how the test would be applied through alternate agents, principally assessors from language assessment centres and certified LINC instructors; how the test would be applied on site in the class room or at a separate location such as an assessment centre; how the test would be applied to achieve standardization of assessment and relatively consistent results; the extent to which and how the test would be tailored to fit variations in class curriculum according to different local or class conditions (see test model design explained later); best practices for interpreting and communicating the results to the student and new terminology for public use of the results; the regime for recording and reporting the results centrally and nationally, etc.

Implications for CIC Ontario Region resourcing

The impact on resourcing of a fully developed and implemented exit assessment regime as recommended in this report cannot be completely known at this time. However, there will be an increased demand for CIC staff resources to manage this new aspect of the program (FTE complement as well as O&M), as well as increased program funding to support development, piloting, training, delivery of the exit assessments and the recording/reporting protocol. While time did not permit a full costing estimate at this time, the author recommends that this proceed as part of the development and implementation plan and that adequate increased resources be targeted for the Ontario region to ensure success.

Summary Recommendations

To respond to the need for, interest in and feasibility and practicality of instituting an exit assessment/test regime for LINC, it is recommended that CIC:

1. **Proceed to institute an exit assessment regime for all levels of LINC** and that the term ‘Exit Assessment’ become the applicable term for all elements of the regime, e.g. LINC Course/Class Exit Assessment, LINC Exit Assessment Instrument, etc.
2. **Position and promote the assessment regime with the six statements of purpose/rationale** and with the greatest emphasis on meeting reasons 1-3 (feedback to student, rating aid for newcomer use in pathway management, assist instructor manage class and provide feedback on course), Note: for performance evaluation, recognize focused nature of exit test results and see as quantitative indicator of proficiency levels and progress and not as an indicator of the quality/quality factors of the LINC program
3. **Base the development of the assessment regime on:**
 - a. A common language proficiency standard which must be the CLB system
 - b. Common, consistent design, resulting in a test that is applied consistently throughout the country yielding comparable results wherever delivered
 - c. Priority to be on assessing language proficiency
 - d. A recognition of variations in language curriculum and/or learning outcomes allowing for a controlled degree of focus on learning/learning outcomes
 - e. Starting point is a focus on exit outcomes. Test design would also accommodate flexibility to enable use in mid class progress testing where applicable.
 - f. Demonstrated behaviours or practices at each level assessed.
 - g. Testing conditions and practice that convey relative seriousness, reference to standards, relative formality of the test results, an appreciation of the proficiency level achieved, acknowledgement of the public meaning of the results and its public use by the student (Note: the author avoids use of high vs low stakes labels as it appears there is wide variation in interpretation and application of these terms)
4. **Start fresh and develop a new exit assessment instrument** through a formative design and development process while drawing from the rich background and elements in existing tests and tools (notably in particular the SAM and Exit Assessment Tasks 5-10).
5. **Commission the design of the assessment instrument with the target qualities:**
 - a. Uses the Canadian Language Benchmarks structure as the underpinning foundation
 - b. Is applicable across all CLB benchmark levels and all LINC levels
 - c. Is open to the concept of more than one test instrument to respond to the variation in learning focus and complexity over the LINC/CLB levels. In particular consider the split between LINC/CLB 1-4 and 5-10 as a natural delineation point for differently focused test instruments
 - d. Demonstrates a priority on assessing language proficiency associated with end of class exit outcomes
 - e. Recognizes variations in language curriculum and/or learning outcomes allowing for a controlled degree of tailoring to accommodate learning/learning outcomes
 - f. Lends itself to common and consistent application across Canada in all LINC programs using a standardized approach
 - g. Is practical to use, with reasonable administration and interpretation requirements delivered over an acceptable time frame
 - h. Is deliverable in a mix of group and individual forms to allow individual assessment particularly on speaking, while optimizing the test time through group assessment
 - i. Utilizes demonstrated behaviours or practices at each level as a dimension of design

6. **Commission development that utilizes options 2 and 3** (as outlined in this report) as the basis for the approach to designing the assessment instrument. The recommended preference is to design the assessment package so that:
 - i. **the lower levels (CLB 1-4/LINC 1-4) use option 3** (allowing option for instructors to create/insert topic areas/tasks according to a standard) and allow test delivery by the class instructor (or other instructors and assessors of course) and;
 - ii. **the higher levels (CLB 5-10/LINC 5-8) use option 2** (allowing option of tester to choose from and create a mix of three different thematic versions and further choose among sub topic areas in packaging an overall test instrument or each level) with the test delivery by a certified tester other than the class instructor (including other certified instructors and assessors).
7. **Mandate the delivery and administration of the assessment regime** according to:
 - a. The LINC Exit Assessment should be made available for delivery primarily through assessment centre assessors and class instructors.
 - b. Those administering the test should be trained and certified on the assessment instrument and its application and interpretation.
 - c. As this report recommends an assessment approach where the model is somewhat different for the lower and higher levels. The lower level assessment CLB/LINC levels (1-4) can be administered by either an assessor from an assessment centre or an instructor, where the instructor can be from his/her own class or another class environment; whereas the higher level assessment (CLB/LINC 5-10) must be administered by an assessor or an instructor drawn from a qualified pool that ensures the instructor does not test his/her own class.
 - d. The LINC Exit Test should be a requirement to be applied at the conclusion of every LINC class. Should a student have to leave a class before the class concludes, the test should be available if requested and generally applied to ensure the student leaves with knowledge of the level attained. Students should also be able to access the test if needed for pathway pursuit such as higher ed or job placement.
 - e. The authority for using the test results to manage student placement and movement should rest with the instructor while emphasizing that in general the test should act as both a gate and an automatic promoter to the next level class.
 - f. The LINC Exit Test should be placed with a third party custodian agency such as the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks, who will: manage licensing and distribution to licenced delivery agents; define and promulgate security rules and guidelines; undertake such measures as needed within the realities of the LINC system to prevent misuse and abuse; and ensure the test is kept up to date including regular refreshment reviews and revisions as needed.
8. **Require that communicating the results of the assessment** be based upon:
 - a. An agreed terminology commonly used to indicate and explain the results of the exit assessment to the student. The vocabulary of ‘pass – fail’ should be avoided both in person and in the recording of results. Assuming the exit assessment assesses proficiency in terms of CLB benchmarks as well as LINC levels, both should be part of the proficiency positioning explanation. As well, the student should be informed of their proficiency in behavioural terms as well, for example using the CCLB ‘Can-Do’ checklists to make the results more meaningful.
 - b. Providing a portable individual record to each student. When a portable settlement and language progress record is developed (see the Pass port concept recommended by COIA) CIC should adopt this model and incorporate the exit assessment results into the passport process and instrument.

Note: As the use of the results by the student for their settlement pathways is a critical need that demands a more communicative approach, CIC must develop a better terminology for explaining test results for public use that uses comparative standards and examples as well as behavioural terminology.

9. **Ensure that recording and reporting the assessment results follow a common procedure** of on-line recording and reporting and are instituted into the LINC program on a mandatory basis. The format for recording the LINC exit assessment results should draw upon the points noted for delivering results to the student, i.e. "completed level X...ready for level X + 1..." As well, at each point of recording, results should be noted and compared over an agreed time period, e.g. level 6 months ago – level at this time/on this date. As noted in the point above, the test results should also be recorded in the personal, portable newcomer progress instrument, referred to as the newcomer progress passport. Record design should incorporate tracing/tracking of individual students.
10. **Proceed to institute an immediate reporting system** whereby LINC instructors must undertake an 'estimate of the proficiency level' of each student at the end of each course and report this status centrally using a set format based upon the format recommended in this report (including comparison with the entry rating or previous rating of each student). This 'assessment estimate' would be guided by certain principles and brief guidelines but in essence would be left to the instructor to undertake using whatever tools or aids are available, ranging from exit assessment instruments they are using to mid course assessment aids etc. and allowing the instructor to make an informed judgment based on accumulated informal assessments and observations occurring throughout the course, even if that means making the estimate without the aid of a formal assessment instrument.
11. **Acknowledge that LINC instructors/teachers should be seen as key agents in the exit assessment approach.** They should be provided training and be certified in the application of the exit test and generally should be exposed to more training in assessment methods/practices in general for their use in the classroom for interim progress assessment as well as exit assessment.
12. **Pursue the cases where LINC is delivered through channels other than CIC funded SPOs, to seek the adoption of the new exit testing regime as a key component of LINC delivery.** Over time, this should progress from a desired option to a required and integral standard in any LINC program wherever delivered.
13. **Pursue talks to examine the interest and appetite for a standardized language assessment instrument(s) and regime that could be used by both ESL and LINC in Ontario** for their own assessment purposes, whether as a placement test, progress test, or exit test or combination. In light of the COIA recommendation to proceed toward implementing a common language assessment and referral system in Ontario (incorporating both ESL and LINC programs), it would seem opportune and necessary to pursue this common assessment question in the COIA context.
14. **In relation to community colleges,** by establishing a standardized LINC exit test, this would add credibility and consistency to the LINC level rating carried by a newcomer student, thereby reducing and over time eliminating the requirement for a prospective newcomer CC student to be retested and sent to remedial training and would enhance the portability of the language level achievement record.
15. **Recognize the adoption of an LINC exit assessment regime as worthy in its own right and should be implemented to meet the needs and purpose stated regardless of any further consideration of the LINC model** Nevertheless, it is apparent that further strengthening of LINC is in order and thus the exit assessment initiative should be utilized as a launch point for movement toward a more formalized system. **LINC should be strengthened and moved toward a more formal system** incorporating:

- a. Standardized texts/curriculum content for each level. Initially the focus should be on developing standard texts to act as a resource for instructors, then moving to mandating the texts as central to the standard curriculum at each level while still allowing local tailoring and augmenting of curriculum to accommodate local conditions or the special profile of the student group etc.
 - b. Standard exit testing regime as outlined in this report
 - c. Formal required progress and proficiency results recording and reporting regime
 - d. Service standards for each LINC level
 - e. Enhanced training and ongoing refreshers/updates for LINC instructors to support delivery of the more formal system, deliver the exit testing regime, strengthen skills in general assessment practices, adopt the recording and reporting practice, increase ability and practice in teaching emerging workplace communication skills
16. **Continue with further involvement of representative stakeholders at each stage of the development and implementation process.** As well, a sound piloting strategy should be used to assess: how the test would be applied through alternate agents, principally assessors from language assessment centres and certified LINC instructors; how the test would be applied on site in the class room or at a separate location such as an assessment centre; how the test would be applied to achieve standardization of assessment and relatively consistent results; the extent to which and how the test would be tailored to fit variations in class curriculum according to different local or class conditions (see test model design explained later); best practices for interpreting and communicating the results to the student and new terminology for public use of the results; the regime for recording and reporting the results centrally and nationally, etc.
17. **Develop a full costing estimate** as part of the development and implementation plan and that **adequate increased resources be targeted for the Ontario region** to ensure success of the development, piloting and implementation.

Annex – Stakeholder Interview Questions and Lines of Enquiry

A. CIC NHQ

1. need and purpose of an exit test in LINC;
2. issues and challenges in applying a test;
3. pros and cons of using the CLBPT as the LINC Exit Test;
4. options for test delivery – by both assessors (central and itinerant) and instructors; selected SPOs
5. potential refinements that could improve the test over time and address issues/shortfalls;
6. how the need for both low stakes test and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
7. since the CLBPT is a placement test, it positions the student in a ‘range’ – therefore, are there implications for how the test is applied and how the results are used (e.g. should there be two tests, one for placement and a second for promotion within LINC classes)
8. should the exit test be a ‘gate’ (i.e. can’t proceed to the next level of instruction until passed the test) ...if so, does this imply the need for ‘service standards’or, is it simply to inform the student of status and progress and provide the instructor and LINC system with progress and outcomes data....in either case, does passing it obligate the student to move to the next level, i.e. can’t stay at the level just passed
9. how could/should an exit test be available for on-line use; could the CLBPT be used on-line as an exit test; could the LINC Home Study exit test be used instead or in addition
10. how should Quality Assurance be designed into the testing regime
11. as there are different instructor certification bodies across Canada, how do we bring consistency in certifying instructors to apply the exit test
12. requirements for the exit test to ensure it can be used across Canada (i.e. nationally)
13. suggestions on piloting the exit test.

B. CIC Ontario Region

1. need and purpose of an exit test in LINC;
2. issues and challenges in applying a test;
3. pros and cons of using the CLBPT as the LINC Exit Test;
4. potential refinements that could improve the test over time and address issues/shortfalls;
5. how the need for both low stakes test and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
6. options for test delivery – by both assessors (central and itinerant) and instructors; selected SPOs
7. suggestions on piloting the exit test.
8. needs and issues specific to the Ontario region;
9. suggestions on which assessors and SPOs to consult

10. How would the costs of administering the Exit Test be accommodated, i.e. the fee charged by assessors, the admin costs, the SPO costs to manage, training and prep costs for assessors and instructors, etc.
11. Consult with CIC Ontario Region on capacity and HR requirements in the regional office to implement testing under this initiative.

C. Ontario Govt - MCI

1. need and purpose of an exit test in second language training;
2. issues and challenges in applying an exit test in general and using the CLBPT in particular;
3. whether and how the proposed CLBPT as an Exit Test could be used in Ontario funded ESL or blended ESL-LINC classes or what changes would be needed to use it;
4. how will school boards react to the idea and the use of the CLBPT in particular
5. How will Ontario colleges react, i.e. those that deliver language training and/or test for language proficiency; how will they see the CLBPT in relation to the TOEFL
6. How will Ontario Universities react, i.e. those that deliver language training and/or test for language proficiency; how will they see the CLBPT in relation to the TOEFL and/or the IELTS
7. how the need for both low stakes test and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
8. options for test delivery – by both assessors (central and itinerant) and instructors; selected SPOs
9. early suggestions on piloting the exit test.
10. Suggestions for assessors and SPOs to consult on this question

D. Language Assessors

1. need and purpose of an exit test in LINC and ESL;
2. issues and challenges in applying a test; pros and cons of using the CLBPT in LINC and potentially with ESL classes;
3. potential refinements that could improve the test over time and address issues/shortfalls;
4. how the need for both low stakes test and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
5. whether any in-class preparation would be required prior to administration of the assessment;
6. how and when the test should be administered; are students more likely to do the test if administered on site; how to apply/schedule the test given ‘continuous intake’ of students to LINC classes
7. who would be able to apply the test (e.g. assessors, language instructors in general, special itinerant assessors, etc);
8. what training would be required to prepare those qualified to deliver the test;
9. how would assessment centres need to be expanded and resourced to deliver a significant scale of these new tests
10. how should Quality Assurance be designed into the testing regime

11. early suggestions on piloting the exit test.

E. CCLB

1. issues and challenges in applying an exit test; pros and cons of using the CLBPT in LINC and potentially with ESL classes;
2. potential refinements that could improve the test over time and address issues/shortfalls;
3. how the need for both low stakes test and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
4. Licensing and ownership of CLBPT, how made available and fee basis for use
5. What are four different streams of CLBPT used for and how could they apply to the proposed LINC Exit Test approach

F. Language Instructors

1. how the use of the proposed exit test could be optimized;
2. how and when the test should be administered; are students more likely to do the test if administered on site; how to apply/schedule the test given ‘continuous intake’ of students to LINC classes
3. assuming language instructors would/could deliver the test, what training would be required and what other in-class preparation would be needed;
4. how the need for both low stakes test (e.g. an Exit Task) and high stakes test could be accommodated in a testing regime;
5. if instructors applied the exit tests, should testing for this ability be part of the qualifications renewal process
6. remaining implementation issues and suggestions for addressing them;
7. suggestions on who and where the pilots should be run.

G. Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)

1. need and purpose of an exit test in LINC;
2. issues and challenges in applying a test;
3. pros and cons of using the CLBPT as the LINC Exit Test;
4. potential refinements that could improve the test over time and address issues/shortfalls;
5. options for test delivery – by both assessors (central and itinerant) and instructors; selected SPOs
6. would SPOs who deliver LINC/language training be interested in incorporating and building the capacity to provide a LINC Exit Testing regime into their services or prefer to see the assessment centres provide that service or both

H. CIC NHQ – IMIT (ICAMS management)

1. Obtain advice from experts in IMIT in CIC and others working with ICAMS and HARTS on the flexibility of the systems to accept new information on client assessments.

Annex – Stakeholders Interviewed and/or Contributing to the Study

CIC Ontario Region

Lucille LeBlanc, Regional Director General, Ontario Region

Wilma Jenkins, Regional Director Settlement and Intergovernmental Affairs, Settlement Directorate

Darlyn Mentor, Director, Settlement Programs and Intergovernmental Affairs Settlement Directorate

Sheila McMullin, Regional Program Advisor, Settlement Directorate

Elisete Bettencourt, Regional Program Advisor, Settlement Directorate

Margarita Boody, Operations Manager, Toronto Office, Settlement Directorate

Canadian Center for Language Benchmarks

Gay Hamilton, Executive Director, CCLB, Ottawa

Jennifer McKay, Project Manager, CCLB, Ottawa

Sylvia Dancose, NCLC Project Manager, CCLB, Ottawa

Marianne Kayed, Project Manager, CCLB, Ottawa

CIC National HQ Staff

Elizabeth Ruddick, Director General, Research and Evaluation Branch

Deborah Tunis, Director General, Integration Branch

Marion Clark, Director Evaluation, Research and Evaluation Branch

Patrick McEvenue, Senior Policy Analyst, Integration Branch

Guy Routhier, Acting Senior Program Advisor, Integration Branch

Denise Legault, Manager, Integration Branch

Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC)

Sheila McMullin, Co-Chair, CIC Ontario
Sheila Carson, Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario, Thames Valley District School Board

Sharon Rajabi, TESL, Toronto District School Board

Teresa Costa, Manager, Language Assessment and Referral Centre

Margaret Villamizar, Greater Essex County District School Board, Language Assessment and Resource Centre

Nancy Phillips, Centennial College

Elizabeth Sadler, Mohawk College

Barbara Krukowski, Co-Chair, Ontario Association of Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA), Burlington

Sheila Nicholas, CESBA, Guelph

Anneliese Pfaller, LINC Childminders

Shelley Stewart, LINC Childminders, Ingersoll

Assessors from LINC Assessment Centres

Margaret MacLeod, Language Assessment Centre
YMCA, GTA

Esther Bruins, Guelph Multicultural Centre, Guelph

Velma Lang, YMCA of Niagara, St Catharines

Carolyn Cohen, Senior Project Advisor, Centre for
Education and Training, Peel

Teresa Costa, YMCA Language Assessment and
Referral Centre, Toronto

**Managers/ Program Managers from Service
Provider Organizations delivering LINC**

Eva Terluin, Program Coordinator, Ukrainian
Cultural Centre, Toronto

Corinna Chow, Manager LINC, Woodgreen Cultural
Centre, Toronto

Parveen Amlani, Program Manager, TNO,
Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, Toronto

Pamela Richardson, Program Manager, LINC
Coordinator, Learning Enrichment Foundation,
Toronto

Teachers/Instructors from LINC programs

Antoinette Zichy, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood
Office, Toronto

Rita Carrasco, The Learning Enrichment Foudation,
Toronto

Jonathan John, Woodgreen Immigrant Services,
Toronto

Maria Maksimowska, Ukrainian Cultural Centre,
Toronto

Christopher Sloan, CIC (ex LINC teacher)

**Ontario Government Ministry of Citizenship and
Immigration (MCI)**

Mourad Mardikian, Acting Manager, Language
Training Unit, MCI

Joseph Colanna, Policy Advisor, Language Training
Unit, MCI