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Prepared by the Department of Labour and Workplace Skills

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Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Main Entry under title.

The GED Handbook / Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workplace Skills

Foreword

The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) recognizes the need for a continuum of programming to meet the needs of adult learners. Two services that are offered are the Adult High School Diploma and General Educational Development (GED) tests.

This handbook is produced as a guide for individuals that require more information on what the General Educational Development (GED) tests consists of and how it works. The handbook contains answers that may not be on the GED website.

Adult High School Diploma program guide and GED handbook is also available online at www.goNSSAL.ca under educator/documents and resources.

Individual paper copies may be requested from Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development, Adult Education Division, Skills & Learning Branch, PO Box 578, Halifax, NS B3J 2S9, Canada.

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**SECTION 1 – INFORMATION ON NOVA SCOTIA
SCHOOL FOR ADULT LEARNING (NSSAL)**



1 Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)

The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) began in November 2000 in response to the recognized need for a continuum of programming to meet the needs of adult students. Although quality adult literacy and upgrading programs for adults existed previously in Nova Scotia, the program delivery system was fragmented. There was a lack of collaboration between delivery agencies and coordination of the various programs offered through community-based organizations, regional school boards, and campuses of the Université Sainte-Anne and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). Some programs were offered through Nova Scotia Academic Upgrading Program, others delivered the Public School Program (PSP), while others prepared students to write the General Educational Development (GED) tests. There was no integration among these programs; therefore, the pathway through the system was not clear to students, education and employment counsellors, employers, post-secondary receiving institutions, and the general public.

Often the learning achieved by adults in programs outside the public school system was not recognized either by post-secondary institutions, by employers, or by the public. In addition, the credits received in the adult system and the public school system were not portable outside their respective systems. This confusion over the various credentials offered in the programs and their limitations in meeting the needs of adults adversely affected the students' personal, economic, social, and cultural lives.

Goals of the School

Develop and coordinate a system of literacy and adult basic education programs and services to meet the needs of the students.

The school coordinates the programs and services that are available to adults through a variety of agencies and institutions. The programs of NSSAL are not delivered from one physical location but rather come from multiple delivery points across Nova Scotia. Each of the delivery partners receives and refers students through the appropriate assessment and counselling services to ensure that they meet their educational goals. Information on the programs and services of the school is available from the regional offices of the Adult Education Division, Department of Education, partner departments such as Community Services and Service Canada, and delivery organizations and programs.

The mandate of the school is to ensure that adults throughout the province have opportunities to obtain the programming they require to meet their needs.

Community-based learning organizations, such as the Community Learning Networks, provide the foundational pieces (Levels I and II) of the Adult Learning Program (ALP). Level III may also be delivered in community-based programs.

NSCC is the primary delivery agency for the ALP, Levels III and IV, and the Université Sainte-Anne for the formation générale des adultes (FGA).

Regional school boards provide PSP credits that are required by adults to meet the entrance requirements for some community college courses and universities. These may be obtained through adult high schools, alternative schools, evening classes, or distance education courses.

Provide students with a recognized credential that will allow them access to further education, training, and employment.

The Department has created the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults (NSHSGDA) and its French equivalent, the Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires pour adultes de la Nouvelle-Écosse (DFESANÉ). The diploma was implemented on September 1, 2001.

Delivery of credits, criteria, policies, and principles for the diploma was established by NSSAL.

The diploma requires the completion of 12 credits. All adults 19 years of age or over and out of school for one full year or more who do not have a high school graduation diploma are eligible for the diploma. This includes adults who currently hold an NSCC Academic Upgrading Level IV or a GED certificate.

The Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults is unique because it accepts credits obtained through a number of different educational programs and venues. In recognition of the learning that adults have obtained through their life experiences, a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process is in place. Therefore, students are assessed before beginning their studies to analyse where they have already met the outcomes of the curricula.

Increase accessibility to and mobility between programs

NSSAL provides tuition-free programs for adults. However, institutions may charge fees for registration, medical, and graduation.

The school provides a smooth transition for students from program to program by requiring that all programs deliver outcome-based, standardized curricula that are approved by the department and connected to the public school curricula. There is a standardized placement assessment process for adults entering the programs that the school supports. It provides a matrix of compulsory credits that are accepted toward the diploma and guidelines for the delivery institutions to follow when making decisions about elective credits. There are referral protocols for the transfer of students from one type of program to another. Programs that deliver the credits for the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults and the Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires pour adultes de la Nouvelle-Écosse use a common transcript (see Appendix B).

Principles of Adult Learning

Listed below is a selection of adult learning principles that the Adult Education Division of the Department of Education considers in its policies and practices.¹

- Adults need to know why they are learning something and how it affects them directly. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance. When they consider it important to acquire a new skill, knowledge, or attitude, they are more ready and willing to engage in the learning process.
- Adults have a lifetime of experiences that should be tapped as a resource for ongoing learning. Adult learners bring various levels of prior exposure to a variety of topics, and this should be acknowledged. Connecting learning to past experience also makes learning more meaningful for adult learners.

¹Principles of adult learning were based on: Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd (1970). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy*, New York Association Press (p. 3).

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- Adults learn more easily using hands-on and task-oriented methods of instruction rather than content-oriented methods. Learning activities should often be in the context of common tasks to be performed. Adults want to apply knowledge and skills immediately. Retention decreases if the learning is applied only at some time in the future.
 - Adults have a need to be self-directed and decide for themselves what they want to learn. When possible, instruction should allow learners to discover things for themselves, providing guidance and help when needed. Also, when possible, adult learners should be involved in the process of deciding what and how they learn and also what learning should be assessed and how.

**SECTION 2 – EXPLANATION OF GENERAL
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED)**



2 Explanation of General Educational Development (GED)

What are the GED tests?

The General Educational Development (GED) is an international high school equivalency testing program for adults. It consists of a series of five tests in the following areas:

- Language Arts Reading
- Language Arts Writing
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science

The GED tests are designed to measure the skills that correspond to those of recent high school graduates. They involve the ability to understand and apply information; to evaluate, analyze, and draw conclusions; and to express ideas and opinions in writing. Adults who pass the five tests receive a Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.

Many adults who did not graduate from high school have acquired skills through work, community, family and study experiences, at or above a secondary school level. The GED allows these adults to demonstrate academic abilities that are equivalent to those of high school graduates. The content of the test items measures skills relevant to adult experiences.

The tests were originally developed by the GED Testing Service in Washington, DC, but the Canadian version has been adapted to Canadian standards.

Schedule of GED Tests

The testing sessions are regularly scheduled during the GED testing year which runs from January to December.

Once registered to write the tests, confirmation letter will be mailed informing of the logistics of tests.

Why write the GED tests?

Adults who have not completed high school write the GED tests to earn an official document stating they have a Grade 12 secondary school equivalency standing.

People want to gain their GED for many reasons:

- to gain employment
- to qualify for a better job
- to get a promotion within their company or organization
- to apply for admission to educational and training institutions
- for personal satisfaction

Is there Another Option?

The Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults is another option if you have not graduated from high school. This diploma is equivalent to receiving a high school diploma and therefore, is recognized by employers, universities and colleges throughout Canada.

The diploma requires the completion of 12 credits. All adults 19 years of age or over and out of school for one full year or more, who do not have a high school graduation diploma, are eligible for the diploma. Credits that have been obtain in the past may be transferrable towards the diploma. Tuition is free.

Who may take the tests?

To write the GED tests in Nova Scotia, you must meet all of the following requirements at the time of application:

- You must be at least 19 years of age on the date of the tests.
- You must not have received a Grade 12 certificate from any institution.
- You must have been out of the public school system for one year.

You must provide government issued photo I.D. for proof of identification and age at the time of application. If you apply by mail, please attach a photocopy of the necessary identification. You may also be asked to provide proof of last grade attended.

Who accepts the GED certificate?

GED certificates are awarded in all the Canadian provinces and territories and are awarded in all of the American states and territories.

In some jurisdictions, GED test scores are accepted as being equivalent to secondary school graduation requirements for the purposes of employment, promotion, and licensing. Some post-secondary institutions (such as community colleges and universities) also accept GED test scores for admission purposes.

The Department of Education cannot guarantee that a GED certificate will be accepted by employers or post-secondary institutions in every instance.

If you plan to use the GED certificate for community college, university entrance or for a job application, you should first ask the institution or workplace involved if the GED is acceptable or meets their minimum requirements.

How long do the tests take to write?

The five tests take a total of seven (7) hours and fifteen (15) minutes to complete. There is time allot for registration, initial instructions, and breaks between tests. The tests are written over a two-day period.

Under certain circumstances, individuals may be granted additional time to write the tests. For information, see Section 6, *Special accommodations* to write the GED tests on page 11.

**SECTION 3 – DETAILED INFORMATION ON
SUBJECTS COVERED ON TEST**



3 Detailed Information on Subjects Covered on Test

What is on the GED tests? What subjects do the tests cover?

The GED tests are designed to measure understanding in subject areas comparable to a high school program. You are required to write an essay for Part II of the Language Arts, Writing test. All other tests consist of multiple choice questions. In Mathematics there are 10% alternate format questions (not multiple choice).

Language Arts Reading

(*format*: 40 multiple-choice questions, *time*: 1 hour and 5 minutes)

This test measures your ability to understand culturally diverse reading passages and answer questions in two content areas:

75% Literary Texts: \$ drama \$ poetry; 8-25 lines \$ prose fiction prior to 1920 \$ prose fiction 1920 - 1960 \$ prose fiction after 1960

25% Non-Fiction Texts: \$ non-fiction prose \$ critical reviews (200-400 words) \$ business documents

Language Arts Writing (Part I and II)

The Language Arts Writing test is intended to measure your ability to use standard written English clearly and effectively. It contains two parts and you must complete both parts to receive a mark.

Part I

(*format*: 50 multiple-choice questions, *time*: 1 hour and 15 minutes)

The questions will measure your ability to correct, revise, and organize passages in the following areas: sentence structure (30%), word usage (30%), mechanics (25%), and organization (15%). Part I will be worth approximately 60% of your total mark for the Language Arts Writing test.

Part II

(*format*: Essay, *time*: 45 minutes)

Part II requires you to write an essay of approximately 200-250 words on a topic which is based on general knowledge and has been chosen to interest and engage the writer. No specialized knowledge is required to respond to a topic. You are encouraged to draw on your own observations and experiences. You are encouraged to plan, write, and revise your essay. The essay will be worth approximately 40% of your total mark for the Language Arts Writing test. You must achieve an average essay score in order to pass. Examinees who score high on the multiple choice, but fail to pass the essay must retake the entire Language Arts Writing test (Parts I and II).

The scores earned on both parts of this test are combined and reported as one mark.

Mathematics

(*format*: 40 multiple-choice questions, 10 alternative format questions, *time*: 1 hour and 30 minutes; in two parts, 45 minutes each, *tool*: Casio fx 260 Solar calculator)

The Mathematics test places emphasis on your ability to solve realistic tasks. The situations are natural rather than contrived and deal with the world of work, the consumer, technology, family experiences, etc. There are four content areas covered:

- 20-30% Number Operations and Number Sense
- 20-30% Measurement and Geometry
- 20-30% Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability
- 20-30% Algebra Functions and Patterns

The item sets require you to access multiple pieces of information including bar graphs, pie charts, tables, and diagrams. The test booklets are separated into two parts and contain a formula page. Part I permits the use of a calculator, Part II does not. You will have practice time with the calculator prior to the test. Everyone will use a Casio fx 260 Solar calculator which will be provided. The two parts of the Mathematics test are equally weighted and you must pass both parts.

Casio fx 260 Solar calculator

You will be required to demonstrate your mathematic skills using the Casio fx 260 solar calculator which will be provided to you for Part I of the Mathematics test (Part II does not include the use of a calculator). Although there will be a short demonstration of the calculator prior to the start of Mathematics Part I, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the calculator prior to the testing date.

Social Studies

(format: 50 multiple-choice questions, time: 1 hour and 10 minutes)

This test measures your ability to use knowledge and information about fundamental social studies concepts. It will contain at least one excerpt from a historical document and at least one practical document. It consists of reading passages, graphics or visuals. It includes items with a specific focus on the Canadian community (40%) and others which deal with the global community (60%) in four content areas:

- 40% History
- 20% Economics
- 25% Civics and Government
- 15% Geography

Science

(format: 50 multiple-choice questions, time: 1 hour and 20 minutes)

This test integrates thinking skills with National Science Education Content Standards:

- 45% Life Science
- 20% Earth and Space Science
- 35% Physical Science

Please note that the Science and Mathematics tests use metric terms and measurements.

SECTION 4 – PREPARATION FOR GED TESTS



4 Preparation for GED Tests

Do I need to prepare for the tests?

It is recommended that adults may need to enrol in upgrading and/or GED preparation programs before writing the tests. The purpose of these programs is to review certain subject matters and/or to build on essential reading, writing and math skills. Some adults who may not need to take a formal course may want to work with GED preparation materials to practice test-taking skills.

GED Preparation Programs

Please contact the GED Testing Service in the Adult Education office nearest you to get information on upgrading and GED preparation programs.

Cape Breton and Victoria Counties
Adult Education Office, GED Service
360 Prince Street, Ste. 39
Sydney, NS B1P 5L1
Phone: (902) 563-2312
Fax: (902) 563-3719
Email: gouthrg@gov.ns.ca

Colchester, Cumberland and Pictou
Counties
Adult Education Office, GED Service
60 Lorne Street, Ste. 3
Truro, NS B2N 3K3
Phone: (902) 893-5988
Fax: (902) 893-6104
Email: mccallsb@gov.ns.ca

Halifax Regional Municipality
Adult Education Office, GED Service
4th Floor, 2021 Brunswick Street
PO Box 578
Halifax, NS B3J 2S9
Phone: (902) 424-4227
Fax: (902) 424-1171
Email: macdonat@gov.ns.ca

Hants, Kings, Annapolis and Digby Counties
Adult Education Office, GED Service
PO Box 487, 236 Belcher Street
Kentville, NS B4N 3X3
Phone: (902) 679-6203
Fax: (902) 679-6235
Email: oreillcb@gov.ns.ca

Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne and Yarmouth
Counties
Adult Education Office, GED Service
75 High Street
Bridgewater, NS B4V 1V8
Phone: (902) 543-0649
Fax: (902) 543-0648
Email: whitevl@gov.ns.ca

Guysborough, Antigonish, Richmond and
Inverness Counties
Adult Education Office, GED Service
226 Reeves Street
Port Hawkesbury, NS B9A 2A2
Phone: (902) 625-3761
Fax: (902) 625-4264
Email: macdonli@gov.ns.ca

GED Online Practice Tests

This website provides online practice tests to help you prepare to write the GED tests. Link:
<http://steckvaughn.harcourtachieve.com/en-US/gedpractice>

GED Online Preparation Program

New Brunswick Branch offers online preparation programs in both French and English. For more information call Linda O'Brien at 506-444-3492 or email linda.o'brien@gnb.ca.

GED Books

If you are unable to find these resources in your local bookstore or library, please contact the publishers directly.

Steck-Vaughn Complete Canadian GED Preparation

ISBN: 7747-1631-2 \$27.50

Publisher: Thomson Nelson ph.no.1-800-268-2222

Website: <http://www.nelson.com/nelson/highered/ged/NEW-ged-prep.htm>

Canadian Official GED Practice Tests

Canadian Test PA - 5 Pack ISBN: 0-7398-5775-4 \$41.50

Canadian Test PB - 5 Pack ISBN: 0-7398-5776-2 \$41.50

Publisher: Thomson Nelson ph.no. 1-800-268-2222

Canadian French GED Official Practice Test

French Test PA - 5 Pack ISBN: 0-7398-8595-2 \$41.50

French Test PB - 5 Pack ISBN: 0-7398-8602-9 \$41.50

Publisher: Thomson Nelson ph.no. 1-800-268-2222

Barron's How to Prepare for the GED

5th Canadian Edition

ISBN: 0-7641-2959-7 \$27.50

Publisher: Barron's ph.no. 1-800-247-7160

website: <http://barronseduc.stores.yahoo.net/test-preparation.html>

The Nova Scotia Department of Education does not endorse any particular book or publisher.

Tutors

Contact your local literacy group, library or adult education office for contact information on tutors.

**SECTION 5 – GED APPLICATION AND
SERVICE FEES**



5 GED Application and Service Fees

What is involved in the application?

To apply, you must mail or deliver a completed application form and appropriate fees to the adult education office nearest to the area in which you wish to write. Faxes will not be accepted. Please to ensure to include your money order or cheque and copy of your photo identification information. Your completed application form and fees must be received at the adult education offices **2 weeks** prior to your preferred testing date. Any application incomplete will not be processed.

What is the cost and method of payment?

Cost:

- Application to write the GED Tests is \$40.60
- Application to rewrite the GED Tests (one or all tests) - \$40.60

Method of Payment:

- Fees are non-refundable.
- Debit, MasterCard, Visa, & Money Orders accepted (no personal cheques)
- Money Orders should be payable to "Minister of Finance"

What type of Photo ID is accepted?

Government issued photo ID which contains: photo, name, date of birth, and signature. Any of the following documents are accepted:

- Drivers License
- Passport
- Firearms Registration
- Military ID
- NSCC Student ID
- Out of Province Health Cards if they contain Photo ID

Can Social Assistance or Workers' Compensation pay for the test?

Department of Community Services can assist. It is up to the individual to make this arrangement. The individual is responsible to ensure all documentation (ie. signature, and identification) and fees are included with the application by the testing deadline date. There is no review of past records to find copies of identifications or contacting agencies.

Cancellation Policy

The GED fees are **non-refundable**. Notification of cancelling a testing date must be given to the regional office **ONE WEEK** prior to testing date. If notification is **less than one week** then the individual will have to submit a new application form and pay the application fee.

Reschedule to write the tests must occur within **8 months** of the initial application date. If not, the individual will need to submit a new application form and pay a new application fee.

Failure to show up for the tests without proper notification will result in the individual submitting a new application form and repay the application fee.

**SECTION 6 – SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS
AND EDITIONS**



6 Special Accommodations and Editions

Special Accommodations

If you have specific learning and/or physical disabilities, you may be granted special accommodations to write the GED tests. These may include the following: extra time to write the tests, frequent breaks during testing, a separate testing area, a scribe, a special GED edition, etc.

There are two different forms to request special modifications. One is to request modifications because of motor or sensory disabilities. The other is to request special modifications because of a diagnosed learning disability or disabilities. You must submit a completed copy of the appropriate form, along with your application form, ID and fee. You must also provide written certification by an appropriate professional identifying and describing the disability which requires you to be allowed to write under special conditions.

For motor or sensory disabilities, appropriate certifying professionals include medical doctors, psychiatrists or other medical specialists. For learning disabilities, appropriate professionals include psychologists, educational diagnosticians, or psychometrists. Any request submitted without the appropriate supportive documentation, applications form and fees will be returned.

Due to the time required to review these cases, you must submit your application form, GED fee, special needs form, and medical documentation **at least FOUR WEEKS prior to the preferred writing date.**

Special Editions

A French version of the GED tests is available. Please mark the correct box on the application form if preferred to write the French version. All five tests must be successfully completed in one language before a certificate can be granted. Scores from the English and French editions cannot be combined.

The GED tests are also offered in large print. A written request for large print must be submitted with application.

The tests are also available in audio-cassette and Braille versions. The use of these two versions usually requires a special testing arrangement. A Request for Special Modifications of GED Test Administration form must be submitted with application.

**SECTION 7 – WHAT TO EXPECT THE DAY
OF THE TEST**



7 What to Expect the Day of the Test

What do I Bring or Not Bring

1. Government issued photo ID which contains: photo, name, date of birth, and signature. Any of the following documents are accepted:

- Drivers License
- Passport
- Firearms Registration
- Military ID
- NSCC Student ID
- Out of Province Health Cards if they contain Photo ID

Satisfactory identification must be presented at the time of writing or writing of the tests will not be allowed. The identification must have a sample of your signature. It will be verified with your signing of the roster at the time of writing.

2. All materials, including pencils, pens and calculator will be provided. The calculator for Part I of Mathematics will be given out.

3. No books, slide rules, computers or other materials may be used when taking the tests. No papers of any kind can be taken out of the testing room at the conclusion of the test.

4. For security purposes, non-essential items such as purses, backpacks, cellular phones, pagers and books will be stored at the candidate's risk.

Schedule / Logistics

Typically Language Arts, Writing and Reading tests take place on Friday. With Mathematics, Social Studies and Science tests on Saturday. This may vary depending on location. Confirmation letter, which examinees receive, will state the day and time. If you do not receive a confirmation letter by one week prior to testing date contact your regional adult learning office as soon as possible.

There are breaks in between tests and will be announced by the examiner.

Arrive 15 minutes prior to test time. Arrival after the testing start time, individual will not be able to write the tests. They will be required to register for the next testing session.

At the testing site, the examinees are to wait outside the testing room until the examiner states the room is ready. Once allowed in, the tables will be mark with the examinee's name. Please look for your name and sit in the allotted spot.

**SECTION 8 – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT TEST RESULTS**



8 What you need to know about Test Results

Notification of Results

Results will be mailed within 6 weeks. Results will not be given over the phone. Please notify your regional Adult Learning Office (stated in section 3) if your address has changed since your last test. Delay in test results may occur if address is not updated. Six weeks after you write the tests, you will receive a transcript indicating your standard score for each test. If you are successful on all five tests, you will also receive a Nova Scotia High School Equivalency Certificate.

Reading the Transcript

Results on each of the five GED tests are reported on the official transcript. The transcript consists of test name, status (pass or fail), standard score, percentile rank, and test date.

Status- Indicates if candidate passed or failed each of the tests. Passing score is 450 or higher for each test. If candidate has not taken all five tests, “Incomplete” is marked. Must pass all 5 tests to earn certificate.

Standard Score - Standard scores range from 200 to 800. A pass is a 450 score or higher. These scores compare performance to a grade 12 student and do not reflect how many questions the candidate correctly answered on a test.

Percentile Rank - Percentile ranks range from 1 to 99. They compare the standard scores of graduating high school students to your standard scores. For example, if your standard score on one of the tests has a percentile rank of 55, you have done as well as, or better than, 55% of the graduating high school students in that subject.

For rewrites, highest scores that you have achieved and not necessarily the scores from the most recent testing will be on the transcript. Recent scores are not reported if they are lower than previous scores.

Test Rewrite Policy

All tests must have been written at least once before any test rewrite is permitted.

To rewrite the GED tests, a new application form must be submitted along with the correct registration fee. Rewrites are permitted for one or more of the tests which were unsuccessful under the following conditions:

Rewrite on one particular test can occur only twice during the GED Testing Year (January to December).

First rewrite can take place after a 3 month waiting period. If standard score was less than 400, it is strongly encouraged to do some form of upgrading before rewriting. Consult your regional Adult Learning office for more details (see Section 3 for contact information).

For a second or third rewrite, you need to wait a minimum of 3 months from your last writing. Again, you are encouraged to do some form of upgrading. Regardless of the time between each testing, you cannot be tested more than twice during the GED testing year.

If you require a higher test score due to acceptance into a training program or meet employment requirement, then a test rewrite may be granted. Written request must be submitted, as well as a letter from the educational institution or employer, verifying the need for higher scores.

Requesting Extra copies of Transcript or Certificate

Test records will be kept by the Department of Education. Duplicate statements of transcripts or certificates can be obtained for a fee. Fill out the appropriate form outlining your request and submit to the GED Testing Service in Halifax. Please allow for 1 to 2 weeks for the marks or certificate to be sent to you. For more information, please contact:

GED Testing Service
Skills and Learning Branch
Department of Education
2021 Brunswick Street
4th Floor, Trade Mart Building
P.O. Box 578
Halifax, NS B3J 2S9
Phone: (902) 424-3626
Fax: (902) 424-1171