

ApplyTexas

**Texas Higher  
Education  
COORDINATING BOARD**

# **ApplyTexas Testing Environment User Guide**

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## Introduction

This guide is for ApplyTexas Gatekeepers and institutional staff who manage and update application settings. It explains how to use the Testing Environment to review changes before they are made visible to students, and provides a simple, consistent process for testing, tracking results, and reporting issues.

Using the Testing Environment helps ensure that updates work as expected and reduces disruptions for students and staff. While testing helps limit downtime, there may still be occasional maintenance windows or brief periods when the system is unavailable.

IHE testing occurs in two ways:

- **Feature Testing:** Scheduled opportunities to review new updates before they are released
- **Configuration Testing:** Testing your own application changes before making them live

Changes made in the Testing Environment will not affect what students see until they are published in the Live Environment. This guide walks through when and how to test, and how to determine when your changes are ready to go live.

## Environment Overviews

The ApplyTexas system provides two environments, Testing and Live, to support a controlled application management process. Each environment serves a distinct purpose in ensuring that institutional changes are validated before being made available to students.

- The **Test Environment** allows institutions to safely configure, preview, and validate application changes without impacting the live student-facing content. It is used for both scheduled feature testing led by THECB and independent configuration testing conducted by institutions.
- The **Live Site** is the production site where finalized configurations are managed and published. Changes made in this environment directly impact what students see and experience in the live Applicant Portal.

## Environment Summary

Environment Name	Description	What happens to changes	URL
Applicant Portal Testing Environment	Used to preview and validate test applications as a student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes are not visible to students; used for preview only</li> </ul>	beta.applytexas.org
Applicant Portal (Live Site)	Used by students to complete and submit applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays live applications and published changes</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.applytexas.org/">https://www.applytexas.org/</a>
Admin Portal Testing Environment	Used to configure test applications and test new features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are not visible to students</li> <li>• Can be viewed in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment</li> <li>• Appear in the staging area of the Live Admin Portal</li> </ul>	beta-admin.applytexas.org
Admin Portal (Live Site)	Used to configure, stage, and publish applications to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be published for students to see</li> <li>• Directly affect the live Applicant Portal (Live Site)</li> </ul>	<a href="https://admin.applytexas.org/">https://admin.applytexas.org/</a>

**Note:** Changes made in the Testing Environment will not affect what students see until they are published in the Live Environment.

## Getting Started: Accessing the Testing Environment

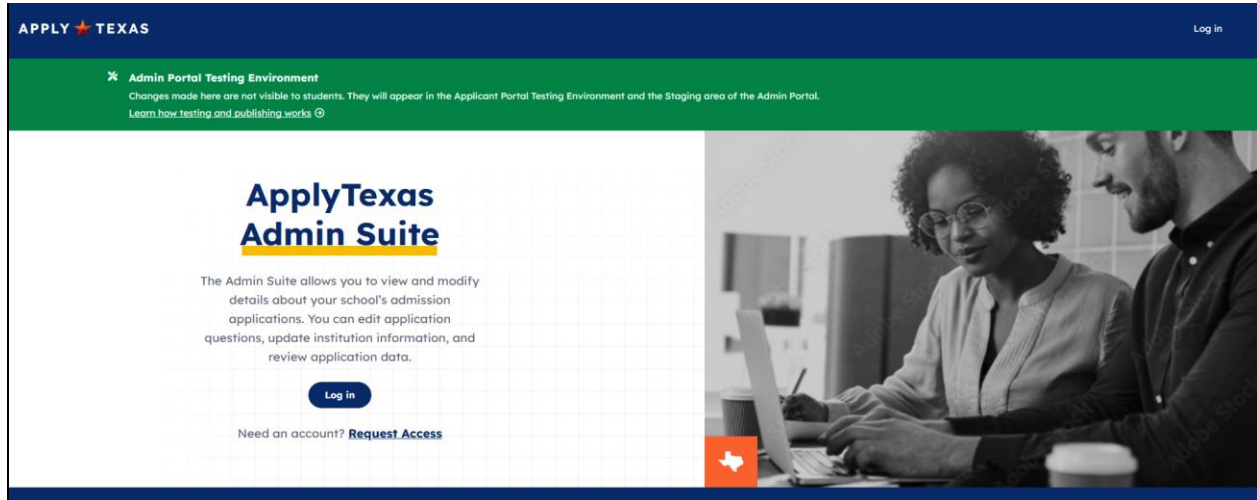
### Accessing Testing Environments

You must use your **existing login credentials** to access the testing environments – account creation is currently disabled. The login experience is the same as the Live Environment. Existing login credentials must be registered with THECB ahead of each testing window.

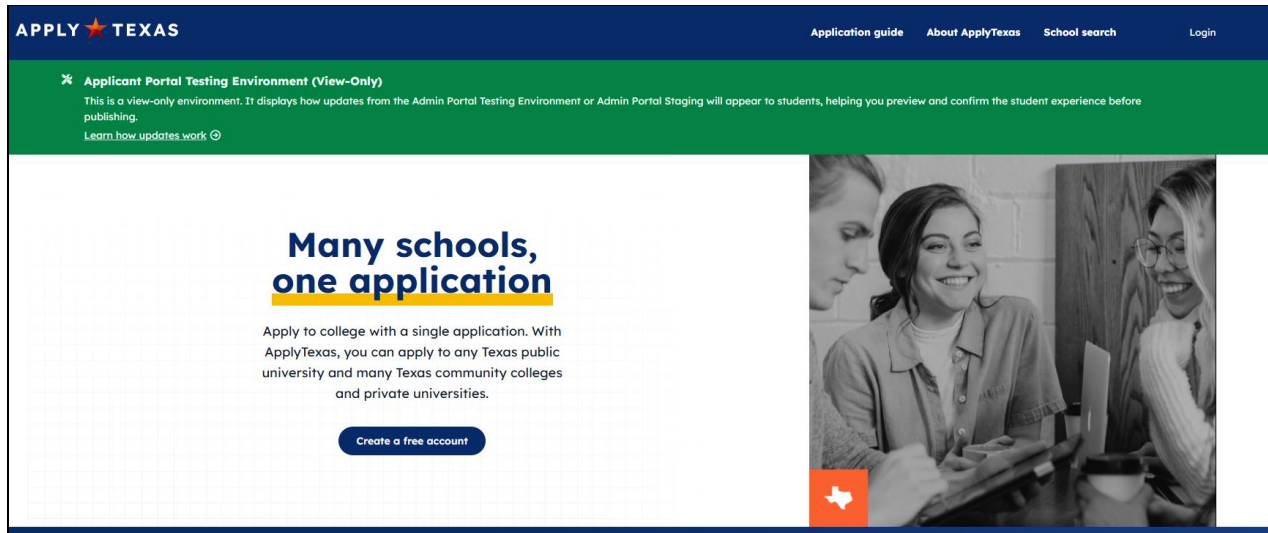
#### Important Notes:

- Separate email accounts must be used for the Applicant, Admin, and Counselor Suite portals. Using the same email across portals may cause access issues.
- Testing environments include a green banner to help distinguish them from the Live Environment (see screenshots of the Admin and Applicant Portal Testing Environments below).
- If the Testing Environment is not available, you will be routed to a maintenance page

### Admin Portal Testing Environment:



### Applicant Portal Testing Environment:



## How Changes Move Between Environments

Changes made in the Admin Portal Testing Environment and Live Staging are reflected in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment for preview. However, these changes are not visible to students until they are published in the Live Environment.

The chart below shows where your changes appear across Testing, Staging, and Live environments.

Where the change is made	Where you can see it	Visible to students?
<b>Admin Portal Testing Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant Portal Testing Environment</li> <li>• Staging area of the Admin Portal (Live Site)</li> </ul>	<b>No</b>
<b>Staging area of the Admin Portal (Live Site)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant Portal Testing Environment</li> <li>• Admin Portal Testing Environment</li> </ul>	<b>No</b>
<b>Live area of the Admin Portal (Live Site)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant Portal (Live Site)</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Applicant Portal Testing Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications submitted can <b>only</b> be viewed in the Admin Portal Testing Environment – applications will have no impact on the Live Site</li> </ul>	<b>No</b>

## Feature Availability Across Environments

The Testing and Live Environments function similarly and use the same login credentials and core data. However, some features are intentionally limited in the Testing Environment.

In the Testing Environment:

- The publish toggle (Staging → Live) option is not available
- The application transmissions page is not available

The Testing Environment is also used to review new features before they are released. These updates will be available during scheduled testing windows communicated by THECB.

## Types of Testing

IHEs use the Testing Environment in two ways: Configuration Testing and Feature Testing. Each serves a different purpose but follows the same general process of reviewing changes before they go live.

Testing Type	What it is	What you test	When to use it
Configuration Testing	Testing your own application changes before making them live	Application settings <i>(ex: majors, questions, deadlines)</i>	Before new application cycles or making mid-cycle updates during specific testing windows shared by THECB
Feature Testing	Testing new updates or functionality provided by THECB	New features and system updates <i>(ex: EDI updates, user experience updates)</i>	Before new features go live during specific testing windows shared by THECB

### \*Example: Feature Testing (Application EDI transmissions)

1. Complete an application in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment
2. Access the Admin Portal Testing Environment
3. Search for the Application ID and view the submitted application
4. Download and review the Application EDI

**Note:** Only Application EDI will be available to test in the Testing Environment.

## Testing Schedules

### Feature Testing

Feature Testing follows scheduled timelines aligned with system updates. During these short windows, Institutional Partners can review and validate new features before they are released. Registration will be required, and communications will be sent ahead of the windows

### Sample Feature Testing Schedule

May 2026				
M	T	W	T	F
11	12 <b>THECB - Testing Environment</b> Identify/fix bugs as needed	13 Identify/fix bugs as needed	14	15
18	19 <b>Institutional Partners - Testing Environment</b> Gather feedback and/or defects	20 Gather feedback and/or defects	21 Feedback closeout	22
25 Final regression on Testing Env.	26 ★Release to Users	27	28	29

**Note:** This is a sample timeline for reference only. Actual testing windows will be communicated by THECB.

## Configuration Testing

Configuration Testing can be performed during longer testing windows to review application changes before publishing. Registration will be required, and communications will be sent ahead of windows.

### Sample Configuration Testing Schedule

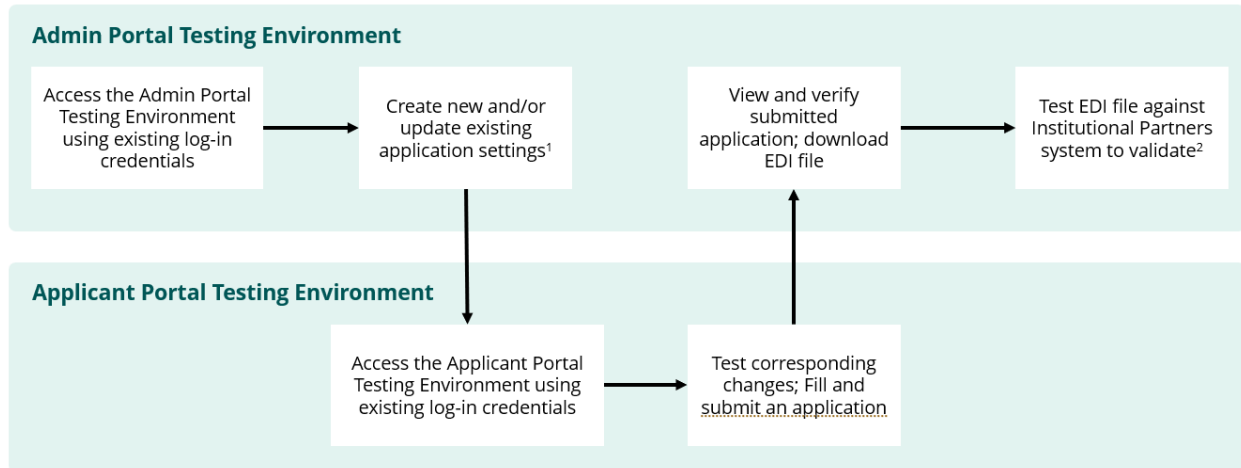
June 2026				
M	T	W	T	F
8	9	10	11	12
<b>IHE testing in Testing Env.</b>				
Gather feedback				
15 Review feedback / determine if stories need to be created / prioritized	16	17	18	19

**Note:** This is a sample timeline for reference only. Actual testing windows will be communicated by THECB. However, Configuration Testing should not be conducted during Feature Testing windows or communicated blackout periods. THECB will communicate these periods in advance.

## Testing Process Flows

### Feature Testing

The diagram below represents a high-level process flow for Institutional Partners users conducting Feature Testing in the Testing Environment

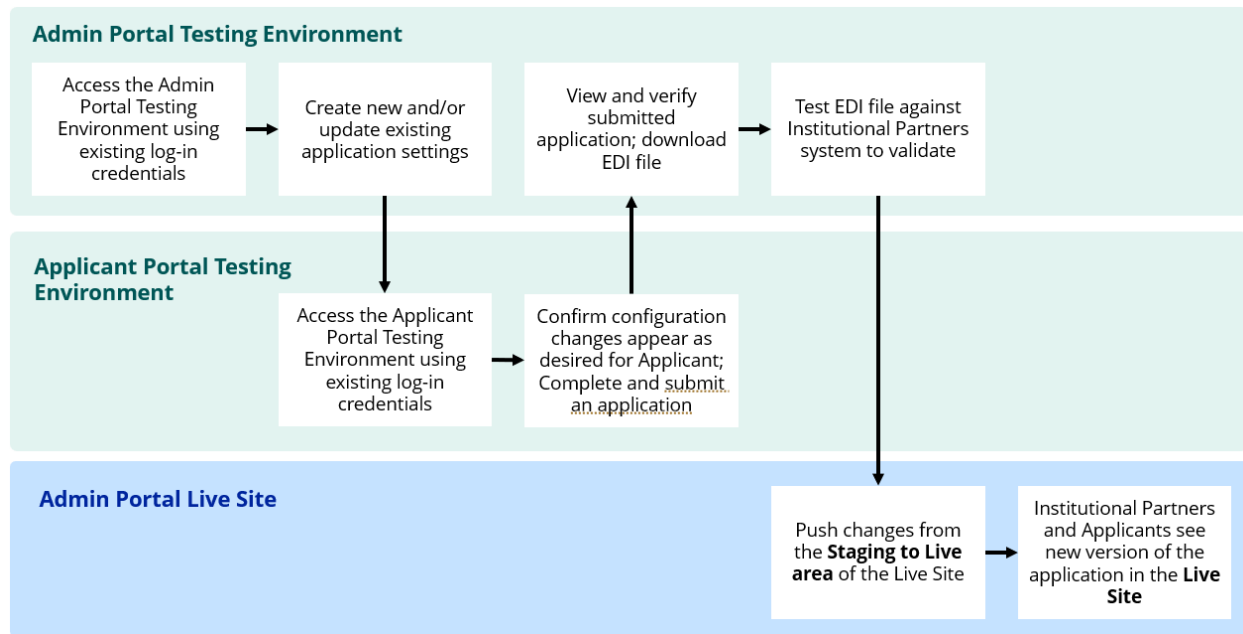


**<sup>1</sup>Note:** An overview of new features to specifically test will be provided ahead of the testing window, as applicable

**<sup>2</sup>Note:** EDI files will not be sent through SPEEDE in the Testing Environment – EDI files will need to be tested by manually running the EDI files

### Configuration Testing

The diagram below represents a high-level process flow for Institutional Partners users conducting Configuration Testing in the Testing Environment



## Feedback and Issue Reporting

To help us quickly assess issues and improve the Testing Environment, all feedback and defect reports must be submitted using the [Smartsheet feedback form](#) (one submission per issue is preferred).

If you are experiencing access issues (e.g., trouble accessing the Testing Environments), contact the College and Career Advising Division at: [CollegeandCareerAdvising@higherred.texas.gov](mailto:CollegeandCareerAdvising@higherred.texas.gov).

### When to submit feedback

Submit a Smartsheet form when you encounter:

- **New feature issues:** A new feature is not working as expected
- **Downstream impacts:** A new feature breaks or negatively impacts your downstream system(s) (e.g., EDI not generated as expected)
- **Configuration testing findings:** Changes made in the Admin Portal Testing Environment do not display correctly or behave as expected in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment
- **User experience suggestions:** Ideas to improve usability, clarity, or workflow that may be considered for future updates

**Before submitting:** Clear your cache and/or use an incognito browser window, then retest the issue.

## What to include in your Submission

To ensure your issue can be reproduced and resolved efficiently, include:

- **Issue type:** Bug, feature issue, downstream impact, or suggestion
- **Description:** What you expected vs. what happened, and where the issue occurs
- **Steps to reproduce:** Clear steps from login to the issue, including relevant details
- **Severity:** Critical, High, Medium, or Low
- **Impact:** Who or what is affected
- **Supporting information (recommended):** Screenshots, error messages, date/time, and any patterns noticed

## What happens after you submit

- The ApplyTexas team will review submissions, triage them, and may follow up for clarification or additional information
- If a system-wide issue is identified (impacting multiple IHEs or core functionality), the agency will provide status updates via email through resolution

## Notes on user experience suggestions

IHEs are encouraged to submit usability and experience suggestions during configuration and feature testing. These suggestions are valuable but may be reviewed and scheduled for future updates rather than addressed immediately.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I preview my changes in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment if they are in Staging?

Yes. Changes made in the Admin Portal Testing Environment or Live Admin Portal – Staging can be previewed in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment. This allows you to review how your configurations will appear to students before publishing.

### How do I log into the Applicant Portal Testing Environment?

Use the URL provided by THECB to create a separate test account for each testing session in the Applicant Portal Testing Environment; do not use your Admin or personal account. You may use a temporary (“dummy”) email address (ex: yopmail.com or inboxes.com) and should keep a record if you plan to reuse it later.

## **How do I log into the Admin Portal Testing Environment?**

Use the URL provided by THECB and log in using your existing Admin Portal credentials.

## **Why don't I see my changes?**

Changes made in the Testing Environment are not automatically pushed to Live – you must use the push to Live functionality within the Admin Portal Live Environment to publish your new configurations.

## **Can I test EDI transmissions?**

Yes, you can test Application EDI transmission in the Testing Environment; currently Essay and Scholarship EDI are not available to test.

## **Why does the Testing Environment look different from the Live Environment?**

There are a few reasons you may be seeing different content in the Testing Environment when compared to the Live Environment:

- A green banner will be visible in the Testing Environment to distinguish it from the Live Environment; the green banner will not be visible in the Live Environment
- Certain features are not available in the Testing Environment, including the push to Live related features
- Configuration changes made in the Testing Environment will not be visible in the Admin Portal Live Environment until they are pushed to Live
- During Feature Testing, there will be new functionality available in the Testing Environment that is not yet available in the Live Environment until it is released in a future sprint.

## **Are changes made in the Testing Environment automatically pushed to Live?**

No. Changes made in the Testing Environment are not automatically pushed to Live. To make changes visible to students, you must publish them from the Admin Portal Live Environment using the Staging → Live publish settings.

## **Can multiple users from my institution test at the same time?**

Yes! There is no limit to the number of users who can use the Testing Environment at the same time.

## **Can I use the same login credentials across environments?**

No. Separate accounts should be used for:

- Admin Portal
- Applicant Portal
- Testing vs. Live environments

Using the same email across portals may result in access issues.

### **What's the difference between the Admin Portal Testing Environment and Live Staging?**

- The Admin Portal Testing Environment is used to safely configure and test application changes
- Live Admin Portal – Staging is where changes are prepared before being published

Both can be used for validation, but only changes published from Live Staging to Live will be visible to students.

### **Who should I contact when I'm experiencing an issue with the Testing Environment?**

There are two methods for reporting issues, depending on the type of issue:

- Access Issues (ex: trouble accessing the Admin Portal Testing Environment): Contact the College and Career Advising Team at: [CollegeandCareerAdvising@highered.texas.gov](mailto:CollegeandCareerAdvising@highered.texas.gov)
- All Other Issues (ex: technical issues encountered during testing): Submit a support request using this form: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/019d902cd20871fb8301d8f84c123978>