

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE DIRECTIVE	NO. OF PAGES 5	DIRECTIVE NO. E35
	ORIGINATOR Vice President, Academic	
	APPROVED BY President's Executive Committee	
TITLE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION	EFFECTIVE DATE 2007.10.31	REPLACES 2006.12.13

PREAMBLE

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) assumes that adults may acquire college level learning through life experience such as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary work, travel and other learning experiences. In order for this learning to be credited, it must be described or demonstrated; assessed as to its nature, extent, and depth; and deemed equivalent and current when compared to course learning requirements or program learning outcomes.

PLAR is to be distinguished from the transfer of academic credit process, in that PLAR focuses on the evaluation of experiential learning rather than on the determination of equivalency of formal educational courses and/or programs. In PLAR, a letter grade or credit (CR) is awarded; whereas in the transfer of academic credit process an exemption is provided.

POLICY

1. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is available to persons interested in pursuing a College credential, who, through work and life experience, have acquired learning that is equivalent to the course learning requirements of one or more College course(s).
2. To be eligible for PLAR, candidates must be 19 years of age or older, or have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent.
3. Following formal acceptance to PLAR, the candidate's prior learning is assessed by academic staff who have subject matter expertise in the area. If the learning is deemed equivalent to College course learning requirements, credit(s) will be awarded.
4. PLAR candidates will be bound by the College's residency policy which states that, for any credential, a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the hours of the program of study must be taken and successfully completed at the College. Programs may require a residency immediately prior to graduation.

5. PLAR candidates in the College bachelor of applied studies degree programs may be awarded no more than fifty percent (50%) of the total number of hours of the program of study based on prior learning assessment and recognition.
6. Normally College courses will be available for candidates to earn credit through PLAR. In some cases, such as capstone courses or courses that are subject to external standards, programs may designate a course as one that is not eligible for PLAR.
7. Candidates who receive credit for courses through PLAR must go through the regular admission process, in order to gain entrance into a College program.
8. PLAR procedures and processes will respect current standards for PLAR.
9. When candidates apply for PLAR with extensive related experience, efforts will be made to assess their prior learning against program or curriculum level learning outcomes to enable them to earn credit for multiple courses.

PROCEDURES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Orientation, Advising and Acceptance to PLAR
 - 1.1 Candidates seeking prior learning assessment will contact the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Office.
 - 1.2 The PLAR Office will:
 - assess eligibility
 - orient the candidate to PLAR policies and procedures
 - provide academic advising
 - assist with relevant application/registration procedure(s)
 - contact the appropriate academic department to arrange specific assessment process
2. Demonstration/Documentation of Prior Learning - Course Level
 - 2.1 Challenge Procedures
 - 2.1.1 The general requirements for successfully challenging a course through PLAR are established by each program and published in the course outlines. Challenge procedures may include written, oral, or performance tests; the development of products or combinations of any of these. The type of challenge test is determined according to the nature of the learning being assessed. Challenges are prepared by subject matter experts consistent with course learning requirements. Normally, challenge tests are made available within four (4) weeks

after receipt of a PLAR application. Course outlines are available to PLAR candidates for review.

2.2 Portfolio Assessment

2.2.1 A portfolio to be used for prior learning assessment and recognition is prepared by the candidate and will address the requirements identified in the Portfolio Guidelines.

2.2.2 Portfolio Guidelines are available from the PLAR Office.

3. Assessment and Evaluation of Prior Learning

3.1 PLAR candidates must fulfill assessment requirements within three (3) months of an application.

3.2 The assessment is undertaken by academic staff who are approved by the program academic administrator and supported by the PLAR Office.

3.3 The assessor will complete his/her initial assessment within two (2) weeks of receiving the completed test, portfolio or other evidence of learning.

3.4 When a student is not successful, the assessor may ask a candidate to complete additional assignments. At the discretion of the assessor, independent learning contracts designed to complete the learning requirements may be facilitated for PLAR candidates who meet partial learning requirements through PLAR.

3.5 Successful PLAR credits are transcribed with either a letter grade or a “CR” (credit) designation. Unsuccessful PLAR attempts are not recorded on the student’s transcript.

3.6. A formal record of the assessment process and results will be completed, available to the candidate and retained by the PLAR Office for five (5) years.

4. Program Level/Year Block Challenge

4.1 To be eligible for program level or year block challenges, candidates must present extensive relevant experience and learning.

4.2 Normally the assessment is a combination of:

- a portfolio
- an interview with a panel of subject matter experts
- a performance test

- 4.3 Assessments are based on program learning outcomes and/or year/level outcomes.
- 4.4 Fees for assessments are identified and reimbursed to the academic department(s) providing the assessment.
- 4.5 An educational plan is developed to identify courses or activities required to earn the desired credential. The plan is based on an analysis of the learning gaps identified in the assessment process.
- 4.6 CR (credit) designation is used to transcribe successful PLAR credits.

5. Appeal Process

- 5.1 Candidates may appeal the assessment. To do so, the PLAR candidate must communicate a request, in writing to the PLAR Office within ten (10) working days of the mailing of the assessment results. The candidate will outline the reasons why an appeal is warranted. A fee will be charged, which will be refunded, if the decision is changed in the applicant's favour.
- 5.2 Upon receiving a written request for appeal from the PLAR candidate, the PLAR Coordinator will organize an Appeal Committee
- 5.3 The Appeal Committee will consist of:
 - an appropriate academic administrator
 - a faculty member, who has not been the applicant's advisor or assessor and who is knowledgeable of the relevant program/course
 - an academic with knowledge of PLAR processes
- 5.4 The PLAR Office will call and convene the appeal meeting within ten (10) working days. The parties in turn, (applicant and assessor(s)), will be invited to attend and present their views. The deliberations of the committee will take place in-camera.
- 5.5 The Appeal Committee will render its decisions in writing to the applicant within ten (10) working days of the review meeting.
- 5.6 The results of the Appeal are final and binding on all parties.

6. Service Fees for PLAR

- 6.1 The fee schedule for PLAR services as established by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will apply and is published on the PLAR website.

Fees will cover:

- delivery of tests
- evaluation of test(s)
- evaluation of a portfolio and oral interview, if required
- support for an independent learning contract, as required

RELATED DIRECTIVES

Admissions Policy - E17

Advanced Standing - E6

Grading System - E11

Confidentiality of Student Records - E19

Course Load - E7

Transfer of Academic Credit (External) – E10

Registration – E12

Glossary of Terms

(original signed by)

Vice President, Academic