N North

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

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WHAT IS PLAR

Benefits to Students

Reduces time spent earning a credential*
Builds self-confidence and improves motivation for learning*
Enhances the integration of better prepared students*

Benefits to the College

Improves the college's services to applicants
Enhances the integration of better prepared students*

Benefits to Business/Industry and Community

Provides appropriate services to adult learners
Recognizes previously acquired skills and knowledge no matter how they are obtained

* Aarts, S. et al (1999). A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. Toronto: Cross-Canada Partnership on PLAR.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS

Students review course outlines and learning outcomes to determine if there is a match between their existing knowledge and what is to be taught. If they believe they have achieved a high percentage of the course learning outcomes, they may apply for PLAR.

Role of Students in Preparing for PLAR

Identify the specific Northern College credit course(s) in which you are interested in obtaining credit through the PLAR process

Contact Student Services who will direct you to the site-designated PLAR staff

Obtain appropriate course outlines and pay applicable fee at Student Services

Review course learning outcomes for possible matches to your own learning. A significant majority of the outcomes, as found in the course outline, should be met prior to application.

Collect evidence to support your experience-based, college-level knowledge, i.e. resume, work samples, letters from employers, performance appraisals, etc.

If you wish to pursue the PLAR process to obtain academic credit, you will need to:

Visit Student Services, complete the Request for Advanced Standing Form and pay the PLAR fee by the date stated in the Academic Calendar – Last Date to Apply for Advanced Standing

Consult with the PLAR staff member for referral to appropriate faculty assessor

Consult with a faculty assessor.

Academic credit is not awarded for experience; it is awarded only for verifiable learning at the college level. Though all learning is valuable, credit award is not automatic.

NOTE: **Students are advised to attend classes in the course until a decision is made.**

Role of PLAR Staff

Help students become aware of the purpose and nature of PLAR, including the process and roles and responsibilities of all members

Help students clarify goals in seeking PLAR

HOW EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS DOCUMENTED AND ASSESSED

Various methods may be used in combination, including:

Tests or exams (verbal and/or written)

Structured interviews

Portfolio of evidence

Case study assignments, essays

Performance observation, skill demonstration, product assessment, simulation

Review of non-college transcripts, licenses, certifications

Letters of validation confirming skills and experience

The faculty assessor may ask for additional documentation or work samples from the student and request permission to contact former employers to confirm experiential 3uden3..599

The PLAR portfolio should contain:

1. A title page with name, address, phone number, fax number (if applicable) and email address.

2. A cover letter indicating the specific course(s) for which credit is requested.

3. A Table of Contents with page numbers if the portfolio is lengthy.

4. An Educational Plan/Career Plan. (Include a brief description of educational plan to

Obtaining Letters of Validation

Employers, work associates or community leaders have first-hand knowledge of a

Portfolio Development Course

The purpose of the portfolio development course is to:

guide participants through a process of deep reflection and analysis of their past experience, current situation and future aspirations;

thoroughly document past learning skills and competencies;

organize and present 'evidence' of pas

INFORMATION FOR FACULTY ASSESSORS

Guidelines for PLAR Implementation

1. **Eligibility for PLAR**

   Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is available to all persons who have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or are 19 years of age or older. Additional course-specific requirements may be specified where relevant (e.g. workplace experience for a field placement).

7. Requirements for Graduation

A student who left the college prior to graduation may be able to use PLAR to receive credit for the courses necessary to complete his/her diploma/certificate (please refer to policies A- 35 Interruption of Studies K W W S Z Z Z P \ Q R U W K H U Q F D G R F V D S $ 35 $ G Y D Q F H G 6 W D Q G L Q J and A-42 Timelines for Program Completion K W W S Z Z Z P \ Q R U W K H U Q F D G R F V $ 35 7 L P H O L Q H V I R U 3 U R J U D P & R P S O H W L R Q The student will be credure SC assessed against the current curriculum – not the one in existence when the student began his/her studies. The student will be asked to document involvement in related learning experiences.

NOTE: PLAR is not intended to replace supplementary exams for enrolled students. If a student has failed a course he/she may apply for PLAR only after 1 semester and on demonstration of additional relevant learning experiences.
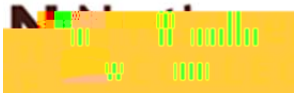
Summary of Assessment Methods

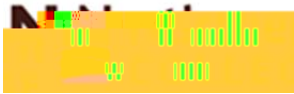This section describes various assessment

Assessment Approach #1: Exams and Tests (continued)

1.2   COURSE EXAMS

Advantages	Difficulties	Suggestions
very easy and inexpensive to administer and assess measure specific match of student learning to specific course/classroom content assesses student content knowledge	assess student ability to take college level exams as much as subject knowledge slanted to specific faculty member's point of view & subject biases little support to students who have trouble with objective tests little support to students whose learning is not compartmentalized intimidating for many students puts those who did not sit in the classroom at a disadvantage may be a weak indicator of a student's true knowledge of subject matter	useful in a very limited format should be developed as generically as possible testing only the most commonly accepted and taught material in the field should be made as non-idiosyncratic to instructor, department, or institution as possible

Assessment Approach #1: Exams and Tests (continued)

1.3 STANDARDIZED EXAMS		
Advantages	**Difficulties**	**Suggestions**
generic cross-culturally normed once widely used & reliability/validity established, then accepted easy to access and administer for faculty and students cost-effective	little support to students who have trouble with objective tests little support to students whose learning is not compartmentalized intimidating device for many students limited subject area availability	good option to make available for students should be used only when appropriate would require cross-college working teams this method requires extensive work & will be a longer term goal for PLA in Ontario

Assessment Approach #2: Equivalencies

2.1   PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Advantages	Difficulties	Suggestions
respectful of business/industry & employee learning and culture provide assessment for many individuals with minimum of evaluation can lead to long-term business/education partnerships cost-effective provide faculty assessment experience provide faculty opportunity to see state of the applied art in training & in the subject matter respects prior, often rigorous, learning	complex methodology requires significant up-front preparation of faculty for evaluation difficulty for institutions to do well without training or other background experience with PLA focus more on input than individual outcomes wide range makes it difficult to understand all elements	goal to provide program evaluations as service visit other institutions with program evaluation services in place to get information requires comparison of non-collegiate programs to college programs, including their method of assessment/evaluation non-collegiate program needs to have included an evaluation of the student this will probably be a longer term goal than some of the other assessment methods need to use specific faculty experts who are familiar with the field as quickly as possible develop an equivalency list which is available to the students and faculty

Assessment Approach #3: Individual Assessment

3.1	PRODUCT ASSESSMENT – WORK SAMPLE	
Advantages	**Difficulties**	**Suggestions**
very direct good opportunity for students with writing difficulties useful when student's skills or knowledge is difficult to observe in the creation of a product necessary to the assessment of learning in the arts	difficult to authenticate risk of plagiarism, doesn't demonstrate knowledge of theory difficult to administer and evaluate in an unbiased, objective manner receive only the end product, do not see the process	clear standards & criteria for assessment, evaluation & measurement should be established prior to the evaluation best done in conjunction with other assessment methods (e.g. interviews) verify interviews or letters from employer etc.

Assessment Approach #3: Individual Assessment (continued)

Assessment Approach #3: Individual Assessment (continued)

3.5 PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT		
Advantages	**Difficulties**	**Suggestions**
extremely student-centred enables the development of attributes, skills & understandings beyond simple assessment prepares & socializes students to higher education conventions	expensive process for an institution dependent upon writing skills of student, biased toward writing articulate students complex methodology	there is a section in this manual about portfolio assessment

Course Analysis Tools

Included are forms to assist in the analysis of courses and critical learning outcomes and for determination of appropriate PLAR methods. Remember that

APPENDIX 1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is PLAR?

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a formal process to **evaluate learning** that has taken place outside college or university programs through:

> Industry or workplace training/experience
> Independent study or non-college courses
> Travel and residency or teaching in foreign countries
> Volunteer and community activity
> Military training and service
> Life experiences, culture and heritage

PLAR

4. **When is the best time to apply for PLAR**

   Students must complete the Request for Advanced Standing form and pay all applicable fees by the date stated in the Academic Calendar – Last Date to Apply for Advanced Standing. The Academic Calendar is available in the Student Handbook

5. **Is PLAR the same as transfer credit?**

   Traditional exemption policies and procedures for a transfer credit are based on an equivalent course taken at another recognized institution. PLAR takes place when assessment of learning is required (because learning did not take place in a recognized academic setting, transcript does not provide adequate information, or if transcript

APPENDIX 2

FORMS

PLAR FORM - REQUEST FOR ADVANCED STANDING
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOGNITION

Student First Name

Phone Number

Student Last Name

Email

Student Number

Address

I hereby apply for advanced standing in the following Northern College course (ONE form per course request):
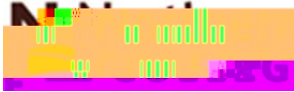
PLAR Client Description Form

Please complete and return this form to the faculty assessor.

To be completed by the applicant (one per course)

Student Name:	**Student #:**
Course number and course name for which you are seeking PLAR:	
Diploma or Certificate you are working toward:	

Please describe your prior learning as it relates to the specific learning outcomes listed in the course outline.

Date: _____

Course Analysis Worksheet

Course Title			
Most Important Intended Learning Outcomes (summary of the critical knowledge, skills, attitudes)	**Weight or Relative Importance %**	**Criteria for Success (How do we know that the student has been successful?)**	**Assessment Methods**

Course Analysis Worksheet (continued)

| |
|---|
| Assessment Process |
| Assessment Tools |
| Supports for students preparing for a challenge (e.g. text, course outline) |
| Requirements for successful completion of course |
| Comments: |

COURSE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET - SAMPLE

Course Title: HOTL 199 FRONT OFFICE OPERATIONS			
Most Important Intended Learning Outcomes (summary of the critical knowledge, skills, attitude)	**Weight or Relative Importance %**	**Criteria For Success (how we know the student has been successful?)**	**Possible Assessment Methods**
1) a) Identify the role of the Front Office in a hotel and its relationship to other depa			

Assessment Process for PLAR:
1. Review of portfolio and resume submitted including reference check with employer to verify the work experience.
2. Successful completion of testing and submission of case study/project

Assessment Tools:
1. Submission of portfolio/resume, employer reference and personal interview
2. Case Study Project
3. Front Office Accounting/Yield Management Testing
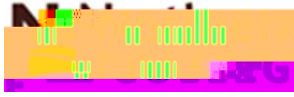
FORM I – PLAR Portfolio Checklist for Documentation

An essential part of the Prior Learning portfolio is documentation that serves as evidence for the assessor that the student has acquired the skills and knowledge described in the portfolio. Students must be prepared to prove/demonstrate that the evidence or product is of their own creation. Several types of documentation might be appropriate, depending on the individual circumstances. This checklist is provided as an example only.

Documentation		Comments
Direct samples of work: - reports written - blue-prints produced - drawings, designs…. - A/V tape of performance - other		
Letters of validation that the experience took place (from supervisors, etc.)		
Letters of validation of the specific learning which resulted.		
Letters of validation or evaluation of the product.		
Proof of awards, commendations		
Official Job Descriptions		
Licenses		
Certificates		
Membership in professional organizations		
Course outlines, syllabi, assignments		
Books read on topic		
Other:		

FORM II – PLAR Portfolio Assessment Form (Faculty Assessor's Notes)   PAGE _____OF _____

Student Name: _____Student Number: _____ Assessor's Name:_____

Course Title & Code: _____Program: _____ Date of Evaluation: _____

Please check

Course Learning Outcomes (to be completed by assessor)	Mastered	Not Mastered	Comments
			To what extent have the course topics been addressed? How has the student demonstrated mastery of the outcomes? To what extent does the student possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes covered in the course? Describe strengths/weaknesses.

Please check one of the following recommendations:

Credit Award   Credit Denial

Date: _____   Faculty Assessor Signature: _____

FORM III – PLAR Credit Denied

Student Name: _____ Student Number: _____

Course Name: _____ Course Number: _____

Please check one of the following recommendations:

           Credit Denied   Unable to determine – follow-up required

Please check all of the following that apply: