

Instructions for PLAR Assessors and Associate Dean/Designate

Thank you for agreeing to assess the attached portfolio(s) for Recognition of Prior Learning credit.

What is PLAR?

PLAR stands for *Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition*. It is also sometimes referred to as PLA (Prior Learning Assessment) or RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning).

The University of Regina PLAR policy follows the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) best practices for assessing and awarding prior learning credit.

See Appendix III for a complete list of CAEL Standards.

One of the basic standards for prior learning credit is that **credit is to be awarded for learning; credit will not be awarded for experience alone**. It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate learning at a university level within the portfolio submission.

Why do we take part in PLAR?

With growing numbers of mature students, many learners are beginning post-secondary programs with a high level of knowledge obtained through employment, volunteer work, and other personal endeavours. While not all experiential learning will translate into degree-level outcomes, many students are able to demonstrate a commitment to learning that includes university-level academic learning that closely matches expected course or program outcomes. PLAR is designed to improve access to higher education for non-typical learners, to recognize learning regardless of where it occurs, and to avoid the duplication of learning for students.

Who do I contact for questions about PLAR?

The RPL Centre is housed at the University of Regina's Centre for Continuing Education. The PLAR Coordinator can be reached at 306-585-5807. Portfolios can be sent by mail to Robin Markel, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Regina, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina, SK, S4S 0A2 or by email Robin.Markel@uregina.ca or learnmore@uregina.ca.

ASSESSOR Responsibilities

The assessor is usually a faculty member or other subject matter expert. The assessor is responsible for:

- Reviewing the student's portfolio
- Determining if more information is required from the student (i.e., interview, evidence of learning, letters of attestation, etc.)
- Recommend credit be awarded or no credit be awarded
- Forward PLAR submission package to Dean/Associate Dean or designate for review after assessment

The assessor should look for:

- Evidence of learning at a post-secondary level
- Student's ability to reflect on learning and experience
- Expected learning outcomes for the course, program, and/or elective credit

ASSOCIATE DEAN/DESIGNATE Responsibilities

The role of the Dean/Associate Dean is that of approver for assessor recommendations of both credit and no credit awarded.

The approver will:

- Review the student's portfolio
- Review the assessor's comments and recommendation for credit or no credit
- Approve the assessor's recommendation, **or**;
 - Consult with the assessor and/or request more information from the student via the PLAR Coordinator, **or**;
 - Consult with another faculty member(s), **or**;
 - Deny the assessor's recommendation
- Return the portfolio and assessment to the Associate Dean's Administrative Assistant or to the PLAR Coordinator as faculty procedures dictate

The approver should look for:

- Evidence of learning at a post-secondary level
- Student's ability to reflect on learning and experience
- Expected learning outcomes for the course, program, and/or elective credit

Scoring Rubric for PLAR Block Credit or for Course Competencies

Assessors may use the following rubric as a general scoring guide. Students who apply for PLAR credit on a course-by-course basis will be addressing competencies as identified in current course outlines obtained from the faculty.

The scoring rubric contains scoring in accordance with the University of Regina's Grading System and Descriptions as well as general degree competency outcomes adapted from the Council of Ontario Universities (with permission).

See Appendix I for the Council's Degree Level Expectations.

See Appendix II for a complete outline of the University of Regina Grading System.

	Creditable Level of Knowledge				Not Creditable Level of Knowledge		Student's Score
	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	0-49	
	An outstanding performance	A very good performance	Above average performance	A generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance	A barely acceptable performance	Unacceptable performance	
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	An outstanding level of general knowledge and general understanding of key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in the discipline.						
	Student has a broad understanding of some of the major fields in the discipline and how the fields may intersect with related disciplines.						

	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	0-49	Score
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge cont'd	The student has an exceptional ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information.						
	Student has exceptionally detailed knowledge in one or more areas of the discipline.						
	Student demonstrates exceptional critical thinking skills.						
	Student can easily apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.						

	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	0-49	Score
Knowledge of Methodologies and Research	Student has an understanding of methods of inquiry or creative activity that enables the student to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; devise and sustain arguments or solve problems; describe and comment upon aspects of current research/scholarship in the discipline.						
	Student has the ability to review, present, and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to develop an argument; made sound judgments; apply underlying concepts, principles and use this where appropriate in the creative process.						

	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	0-49	Score
Application of Knowledge	Student has the ability to use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts, and information; propose solutions; frame appropriate questions for problem-solving; create a new work.						
	Student has the ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.						
Communication Skills	Student has the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, using structured and coherent arguments, and, where appropriate, informed by key concepts and techniques of the discipline.						

	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	0-49	Score
Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge	Student has an understanding to the limits to their own knowledge and ability; an appreciation of the uncertainty and ambiguity of and limits to knowledge, and an appreciation of how this might influence analyses and interpretations.						
Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts; working effectively with others; and behaviour consistent with academic integrity.						

Appendix I Degree Level Expectations – Bachelor’s degree level¹

1. **Depth and Breadth of Knowledge:** Students demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline; broad understanding of some of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines; ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline; some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline; critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline; and ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.
2. **Knowledge of Methodologies:** An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods.
3. **Application of Knowledge:** The ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to develop lines of argument; make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study; and the ability to use a basic range of established techniques to: analyze information; evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study; propose solutions; and make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.
4. **Communication Skills:** The ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.
5. **Awareness of the Limits of Knowledge:** An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations.
6. **Autonomy and Professional Capacity:** Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making; working effectively with others; the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.

¹ Council of Ontario Universities. *Ensuring the Value of Diversity Degrees in Ontario: A Guide to Learning Outcomes, Degree Level Expectations and the Quality Assurance Process in Ontario*. Taken from the Internet on September 27, 2013. <http://www.cou.on.ca/publications/reports/pdfs/ensuring-the-value-of-university-degrees-in-ontari>

Appendix II University of Regina Grading System and Descriptions

Prior learning credit should be awarded for learning at no less than a level of 60% in accordance with the University of Regina's Transfer Credit (General Calendar Section 2.8.2.1) and Grading System and Descriptions (General Calendar Section 5.9).

90-100 An outstanding performance with very strong evidence of:

- an insightful and comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;
- a clear ability to make sound and original critical evaluation of the material given;
- outstanding capacity for original creative and/or logical thought;
- an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.

80-89 Very good performance with strong evidence of:

- a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;
- an ability to make sound critical evaluation of the material given;
- a good capacity for original, creative, and/or logical thinking;
- a very good ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.

70-79 Above average performance with evidence of:

- a substantial knowledge of the subject matter;
- a good understanding of the relevant issues and a good familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- some capacity for original, creative, and/or logical thinking;
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- an above-average ability to organize, to analyze and to examine the subject material in a critical and constructive manner, and
- to express thoughts both in speech and in writing.

60-69 A generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance with evidence of:

- an acceptable basic grasp of the subject material;
- a fair understanding of the relevant issues;
- a general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- an ability to develop solutions to moderately difficult problems related to the subject material;
- a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner, and to express thoughts in writing.

50-59 A barely acceptable performance with evidence of:

- a familiarity with the subject material;
- some evidence that analytical skills have been developed;
- some understanding of relevant issues;
- some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;
- partially successful attempts to solve moderately difficult problems related to the subject material and to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner;
- basic competence in writing.

0-49 Unacceptable performance.

Appendix III CAEL's 10 Standards for Assessing Learning²

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- I. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for *learning*, and not for *experience*.
- II. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
- III. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
- IV. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
- V. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.

ADMINISTRATIVE STANDARDS

- VI. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
- VII. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
- VIII. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
- IX. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and professional development for the functions they perform.
- X. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

² Whitaker, Urban (2006). *Assessing learning: standards, principles, & procedures*. Philadelphia, PA: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.