

Policy Number:	9022p
Policy Title:	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)
Approved by:	Academic Council
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Purpose

The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Procedure establishes the process for the granting of academic credit for learning gained through non-formal or unrecognized education, training, or experience.

Responsibility

Students are responsible for:

- applying for a prior learning assessment
- supplying all the necessary supporting documentation
- building a prior learning portfolio (note: PLAR assessment is dependent on the portfolio completion and the time taken to complete the portfolio)
- paying the PLAR fee prior to the assessment commencing

Registrar's Office is responsible for:

- initial processing of PLAR requests, ensuring PLAR fee is paid, and collecting supporting documentation to be forwarded to the appropriate Department Chair(s)
- undertaking preliminary assessment of educational or training programs submitted for PLAR
- maintaining records regarding PLAR assessments and outcomes
- maintaining student records of credit earned through PLAR and updating degree pathways and transcripts accordingly
- notifying students of the outcome of PLAR assessments including the right to appeal

Finance Department is responsible for processing all PLAR payments.

Department Chair(s) are responsible for:

- determining whether a PLAR request shall proceed for analysis and assessment
- appointing a Reviewer(s), with the appropriate discipline expertise to assess the applicant's portfolio of work, to a Review Committee; conflict of interest will be taken into consideration
- approving or rejecting the reviewer's PLAR assessment and recording their decision
- providing the written decision and supporting documentation for a PLAR assessment to Registrar's Office for the official records and communication with students
- contacting the student, if applicable, to arrange for any additional elements for the review of their learning, including possible interviews, assignments, tests, or other projects for assessment

Reviewers are responsible for:

- assessing the portfolio and analyzing whether or not credit should be granted
- providing a written report and recommendations to the Department Chair(s)

Admissions Appeals Committee is responsible for reviewing and adjudicating appeals of prior learning assessments.

PLAR Review Committee

1. When a PLAR application is received by the Registrar's Office, the application with evidence will be sent to the appropriate Department Chair(s). The Department Chair will then review the evidence submitted to determine if a PLAR Review Committee can proceed.
 - a. If evidence submitted is sufficient, the Department Chair will convene/select a review committee made up of a minimum of two (2) content or discipline experts, in which the Department Chair may be one. There should be no conflict of interest between the content expert and the student who submitted the PLAR application.
 - b. If insufficient evidence is submitted, the PLAR request may be denied or returned to the Registrar's Office. The Department Chair(s) and/or the PLAR Review Committee members may contact the applicant, if applicable, to request further evidence or schedule a meeting to collect more information.
2. Once the selected PLAR Review Committee receives the evidence for review, they will have two (2) business days to review the evidence submitted and send their report and recommendations back to the Department Chair(s).
3. The Department Chair(s), with the recommendations from the PLAR Review Committee, will decide to grant or deny PLAR credit.
 - a. If PLAR is denied, applicants may appeal the decision following the appeals process.
4. The final decision will be sent by the Department Chair(s) to the Registrar's Office for communication to the student. All documentation, evidence, reports, and decisions will be stored with the Registrar's Office and will remain in the student profile.

Evidence

1. All PLAR credit awarded by UCW requires evidence. The primary responsibility for preparing the evidence lies with the student. The student must show that the credit applied for demonstrates an appropriate balance of theory and practice. Proof of these elements can be shown through careful citation of accomplishments and/or demonstration of skills and knowledge.
 - a. The student must submit an adequate amount of evidence to support their PLAR application. If an adequate amount of evidence is not received, the Department Chair(s) reserves the right to decline the application.
2. Examples of evidence may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Equivalencies
 - b. Examinations
 - c. Portfolios
 - d. Resume / work experience
 - e. Practicums / internships
 - f. Micro-credentials
 - g. Certificates

Equivalencies

PLAR credit for course equivalencies is awarded to learners who have completed and been evaluated in programs outside of the standard college or university system. These non-formal programs and credentials are evaluated by UCW, and credit may be granted if the program or credential meets UCW learning outcomes for equivalent courses or programs.

1. Examinations

- a. PLAR examinations are given to measure a student's knowledge of content, or achievement of the learning outcomes listed in a UCW course.
 - i. Challenge exams are created for students who have not attended the course but who wish to show that they have achieved the course outcomes. Challenge exams are usually designed by an instructor for the relevant course.
 - ii. Standardized exams may also be used to measure achievement in a certain UCW subject.

2. Portfolios

- a. In cases where other measures of learning assessment are not available, UCW may use portfolios to certify skills and knowledge gained through other means. A portfolio is a collection of and/or can do documents or e-documents that demonstrate what skills and knowledge the learner knows and can demonstrate. A portfolio can be used alone or with other assessment tools.

Appeals

The Admissions Appeal Committee reviews all appeals of PLAR. Their decision is final. All appeals must be submitted in writing to the Registrar's Office by the established deadline.

Definitions

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

Word/Term	Definition
Assigned Credit	In the case of transfer or PLAR assessments, credit given in the form of a specific named UCW course.
Associate Degree	A two-year academic program offered at BC institutions in accordance with a Provincial government approved and regulated framework.
Course Challenge	A method of PLAR in which a student's knowledge is determined through the writing of a comprehensive examination that is designed to determine a level of knowledge compared to the specific learning outcome of a designated course; similar to a comprehensive final exam.
Credit	The value given to a course that indicates its relative weighting to other courses across a program or institution. Credits usually reflect the expected number of class/contact hours and/or workload of a course.
Portfolio	A collection of materials that demonstrates an individual's previous learning and connects it to the desired formal recognition. A portfolio will include a combination of components such as: a resume, projects, assessments, records, tests, or other assessable materials that are tangible evidence of the applicant's learning outcomes from prior experience.
Portfolio assessment	The process by which a student's portfolio is reviewed and evaluated by a faculty member with expertise in the academic area for which credit is sought.

Word/Term	Definition
Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)	Process of formal recognition of skills and knowledge gained through informal learning, unrecognized learning, work and/or life experiences, and is assessed through a rigorous examination of formal and information courses, professional development, work, interviews, tests or other means that allow learning to be clearly demonstrated and assessed for credit.
Recognized institution	A post-secondary institution that is approved, accredited, or otherwise deemed to be an institution officially authorized to grant academic credentials by the federal, provincial, or state authority of that jurisdiction.
Residency requirement	The minimum number of courses or credits that must be completed through UCW to meet graduation requirements.
Reviewer	A content or discipline expert who has specific academic knowledge and expertise to evaluate prior learning.
Transfer credit	Indicates the granting of credit toward a credential by one institution for programs or courses completed at another.
Unassigned credit	Credit granted for prior learning, whether transfer or PLAR, that does not equate to a specific UCW course but is considered eligible to be counted toward a UCW degree or program.

Related policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
9007	Admissions
9008	Transfer Credit