

Support Job Position Description

Section I: Position information

Effective date	2025-01-01	☐ Update only	☒ Classification review
Position title	PLAR Advisor		
Position number	999453		
Classification level	R1		
Position affiliation	☒ AUPE ☐ Excluded		
Location	Virtual, Home Office		
Department	Learner Support Service		
Reports to	Coordinator, Learner Services		

Position summary

Briefly describe the main purpose(s) of the position.

Provide detailed, individualised PLAR related information and guidance to undergraduate students and prospective students. Coordinate the end-to-end PLAR processes through collaboration with mentors, academics, program coordinators, deans, and other relevant stakeholders.

Duties and responsibilities

Organize by key responsibility area and include % of time spent where possible.

Information, Critical Assessment, Academic Advising & Student Support - (75%)

PLAR Expression of Interest

Assist students and prospective students with the interpretation of PLAR requirements, procedures, and policies. Confirm PLAR requirement alignment within program regulations by conducting one-to-one appointments, via Teams video, telephone, and email response.

Strategize with students regarding program choices, focusing on the consideration of how and when PLAR may contribute to program completion plans.

Advise students and prospective students regarding considerations for PLAR potential and suitability. Provide program specific, comprehensive information about PLAR, including individualized support and feedback based on academic standing/progress, experiential background, academic and professional aspirations, and historic PLAR assessment results.

Provide students with alternative available options to obtain credit when PLAR potential is uncertain.

If PLAR potential may improve significantly within a different program, provide relevant options for potential AU undergraduate programs. Determine when to recommend academic counselling, academic advising, or other support services appointment for specialized support.

Preparation for mentoring

Critical assessment and determination of PLAR potential and suitability through review of program regulations (PLAR maximum, portfolio style and focus, historic PLAR results), review and interpretation of academic records and student profiles, student's experiential background, and future educational aspirations. Engage in collaborative discussions with each student as a part of critical assessment of student readiness for PLAR.

Review student submissions and DegreeWorks profiles. Identify limitations: limited room for potential PLAR credit, experience too closely aligned with credit on record, recent changes in employment, short term employment, limited professional growth. Advise students on the impact these factors may have on PLAR potential. Discuss options to overcome perceived impediments or barriers that may impact student success. Guide students through the development of their front-end pieces - autobiographical and critical incident essays.

Provide typical (historic) PLAR award information to help establish reasonable expectations.

Provide PLAR focused course selection guidance to ensure preservation of areas where PLAR credit may be granted. Provides referrals to Academic Advising teams for validation of course selection and program planning support

Critical review of student files includes recognizing the need/benefit of additional support from academic advising and referring as appropriate.

Support PLAR mentors as they guide students through PLAR portfolio development. Offer a fresh set of eyes and perspective on portfolio content and mentor feedback and guidance to students.

Participate in and coordinate the development of online PLAR portfolio development resources for students and potential students.

Portfolio assessment coordination (20%)

Establish focus of learning claims within portfolio. Identifying areas of expertise within program-based submissions and confirming which courses are targeted within course-based submissions.

Identify potential assessors, with similar areas of expertise. Collaborate with program coordinators, professors, deans, to identify potential assessors.

Provide onboarding support to assessors. Familiarize new or returning assessors to the assessment process, expectations, and requirements.

Create comprehensive, individualised, PLAR assessment packages for each assessor.

Provide detailed PLAR assessment process guidance to assessors, as needed, through email, phone, or Teams meetings.

Engage in collaborative discussions with assessors regarding their findings, feedback, and potential award considerations. Negotiate adjustment of PLAR award as needed and appropriate.

Compile assessment results, consider straight average and majority, use assessors' feedback, allocation guidance and program guidance to identify a suitable, well supported PLAR credit award.

Negotiate nature and placement of PLAR award as needed and appropriate, with input from Office of the Registrar (OOR), Academic Advisors, assessors, and program coordinators, as needed.

Provide students with assessment progress updates upon request.

Consider and assess grounds for informal appeal. Engage in collaborative discussions with the Director, LSS, to determine the most appropriate approach to informal appeal. Coordinate the informal appeal process accordingly.

Administrative and systems support (5%)

Support regular review and maintenance of CLA website:

- Contribute to website content development
- Request and monitor website changes

Maintain various data collections, including but not limited to HEAT cases, and spreadsheets for 'mentor to be assigned' queue, mentoring roster, assessments in progress, assessments completed (including results and assessor participation).

Enter and retrieve data to and from various student record systems including but not limited to Banner, Access, DegreeWorks, and contact tracking systems (HEAT).

Waitlist/Queue Management:

- Place students within queue with front-end pieces received and PLAR potential established.
- Provide 'what can I do while I wait?' guidance.
- Select students for mentor assignment based on queue position, PLAR readiness, with prioritization based on need considered.
- Extend offers of mentoring services and answer questions which may arise (timing, workload, expectations, completion timelines...)

- Track students' movement through queue.
- Watch for milestones which may impact retention in queue (program progress, completion, change, or inactivity).

Process PLAR fee payments, extensions, and refunds.

Create letters of permission (within Banner), track their expiration and issue extensions, when suitable.

Process letters of attestation (LOA); receive, review, stamp as received and distribute letters to students. Guide attestors through letter revision, as needed, to ensure the documentation will meet the students' needs.

Assessor payment coordination and processing.

Negotiate & validate placement of previously granted PLAR credit with new program application (reactivation or program change) with relevant stakeholders in the Office of the Registrar.

Maintain course learning outcomes document. Monitor new course openings, course revisions, temporary and permanent course closures. Source course learning outcomes from course syllabi or from course coordinator, as needed.

Contribute to the development and delivery of PLAR related presentations to other AU teams and external agencies or organizations (like post-secondary institutions designing or revamping their PLAR processes).

Coordinate and support the training of new staff.

Serve on internal and external committees as required.

Represent Athabasca University's PLAR process at events or displays as requested by the Director or designate.

Other job-related duties as assigned by Director or designate.

Occupational health and safety

Employees:

Responsible to participate in the AU OHS program as required.

Supervisors:

Responsible for awareness of one's OHS Responsibilities as an AU employee and supervisor, for participating in the AU OHS Program as required, and for ensuring the participation of employees in the AU OHS Program as required.

See: <https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li008>

Classification factors

Context and complexity

Independent, in the moment, decision making required.

Assess, organize and process activities with confidence and accuracy.

Be sensitive to and cognizant of student needs.

Recognize areas where students may require additional support to ensure understanding and knowledge of university and/or PLAR culture and process.

Ability to research, review, and verify information that relates to the student's record or program of study while adhering to FOIP regulations.

Uphold the expectations that a positive reputation of the university is maintained and enhanced. Creating and maintaining a positive, professional image for AU staff and services both internally and externally. Given the ongoing and direct contact with students, tutors, faculty, and staff, a great deal of tact and diplomacy is required.

Accuracy must be ensured when gathering and disseminating information regarding PLAR process, PLAR potential/suitability, or student records. Errors could directly impact public relations between the University and its students and stakeholders and impact a student's graduation potential.

Participation is required in proposing, developing, and enhancing services for all students (student resources, website updates, webinars, etc.).

The performance of diverse tasks and a high degree of co-operation is required for those working virtually.

The high volume of work involved in this stand-alone (one deep) position creates pressure to keep a steady flow of processing and maintaining service to our PLAR students (candidates and participants) and our PLAR assessors. A tolerance of disruption and an ability to manage time and priorities are required due to changing procedures to meet new needs, pressure of increasing PLAR interest and registrations, and the unpredictability of student and assessor generated concerns.

Proficiency in Banner, HEAT, DegreeWorks, O365 applications (Outlook and Teams).

Work problems

As front-line (first contact) for PLAR, responsible for relationship building, creating a positive and supportive environment, encouraging open, accurate, informative and engaging discussions.

Incorporating analytical, interpretive, evaluative, creative and constructive thinking in complex situations.

Exhibiting the knowledge required to deal with uncertainty, variable conditions, circumstances with changing procedures, challenging situations, and emerging developments.

Initiative is required in accessing information and providing input or proposals towards the resolution of student service-related issues.

Ensure resolution or referral of student difficulties as they relate to their AU program. Act as liaison between student and AU departments.

Actively listening to what is not said in student conversations. Provide information and options that students may not consider.

Able to recognize and set your own priorities. Organize workload to ensure efficient and timely processing of daily tasks. Responsible for accuracy and completeness of work.

Given the near-virtual environment, the incumbent is required to set up and install their AU system, adapt to changing technology, and proactively resolve challenges prior to contacting IT support. (DegreeWorks, Banner, SRM)

Develop a functional understanding of Athabasca University policies, procedures, and programs and the ability to interpret them.

Authority

Performs duties with practices and procedures covered by precedent or policy. Considerable independent judgment under minimal supervision. Seek input from fellow PLAR team members and Director guidance as needed.

Exercises independent judgment in the assessment of student needs. Determine when to involve other AU departments, other institutions, and external agencies, as needed.

Represents the University by conveying information and/or decisions regarding policies and procedures to students by telephone, email, virtual/online appointments, and mail. Errors are not readily identifiable and can negatively impact public relations between the university and its contacts.

Research, preparation, and authorization of PLAR related plans and related correspondence to students.

Responsible for accuracy and integrity of data entry in various student records systems such as Banner and HEAT.

Responsible for organization of personal workload and completeness of work. Supervisory skills needed.

Contacts and communications

Extensive contact by telephone, email, instant messaging, and virtual meetings with students, staff, faculty, and external PLAR assessors. Maintaining a positive and professional communications approach will enhance relations with prospective learners, current students, alumni, and the wider university community.

Sequential communication with students and potential students as they progress through various stages of PLAR activity (research, interest, engagement, involvement, and completion).

Takes initiative in directing appropriate contacts within the university.

Regular contact (telephone, email, instant messaging, virtual meetings) with academic, professional, tutor and support staff from within the university community.

May have contact with external agencies or organizations.

Works closely, and in frequent consultation, with other members of the PLAR team.

The incumbent is required to uphold the utmost degree of confidentiality and to conform to the regulations and guidelines as outlined in Athabasca University policies regarding the collection, dissemination, and confidentiality of information regarding Athabasca University students.

Signatures for section I

Incumbent signature		Date Select a date.
Supervisor signature		Date Select a date.

Section II: Qualifications

Qualifications

Includes education, experience, skills, abilities, and any other special qualifications required. The qualifications relate to the position not the incumbent.

Minimum undergraduate degree *in a related area (ie: education, psychology, sociology, human services)

Minimum of 3 years work experience in a post-secondary education environment. Directly related experience in the provision of frontline student service. Experience in a Registrar's Office, Learner Support Service, or faculty setting is an asset, preferably within a virtual environment. *

Demonstrated commitment and ability to establish positive working relationships within relevant stakeholders and departments.

Strong time management, prioritization, multi-tasking, technical, organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills.

Ability to think clearly, logically, and search for solutions to potential issues.

Familiarity and competency with necessary job technology.

Demonstrated ability to work as a member of a team of highly motivated and experienced individuals. Ability to adapt to a fast-paced, constantly evolving, near-virtual environment.

Honesty, integrity, and commitment to maintaining high professional standards.

The ability to be patient, understanding and helpful given a high degree of contact with students, prospective students, AU staff, and academics (both internal and external) is necessary. Working with a team of service provides and assisting students are the critical components of this position.

Demonstrated use of written and oral communication skills is essential (e.g., listening, problem solving, conflict resolutions and investigative skills).

Flexibility in working hours and scheduled tasks may be required.

* An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

Signatures for sections I and II

Department Head signature		Date Select a date.
Executive Officer signature		Date Select a date.
Human Resources review		Date Select a date.

