

Learning contract

To assist you in the successful completion of your PLAR portfolio

What is a learning contract?

Learning contracts serve as an important tool in many types of learning experiences. Jointly negotiated by learner and provider (mentor, teacher, or facilitator), the learning contract provides a structure for the intended learning, including allusions to timeline, content, and process. Learning contracts should be signed off by both parties and amended, in the same way, as appropriate.

Learning contracts were popularized by Malcolm Knowles' work on adult learning and contribute to mature learners' ability to maintain self-direction in their learning. They give learners the opportunity to both think about and control their learning process, which the preparation of a PLAR portfolio is part of.

Because the portfolio is a "developmental" or "generative" document that will grow over time, the learning contract approach provides a useful framework and roadmap for its construction.

Why will a learning contract be useful to me now?

The PLAR portfolio is a detailed piece of work that will take you some time to prepare. We cannot predict how long it will take you as that depends on how much energy you devote to it and how much time you can spend working on it. Most learners approach the portfolio on a part-time basis while continuing with other life, work, and academic commitments. We feel that the learning contract can help serve as guideline for time management, thus ensuring successful completion and eventual assessment of prior learning knowledge toward your degree program at AU.

How does it work?

You and your CLA mentor will agree on terms for the completion of your portfolio in a collaborative manner. We will begin by sending you this learning contract that has been prepared for you outlining the different parts of the agreement that we can put forward. You will complete the form with the parts of the learning agreement that are under your control. Together, you and your mentor will agree that the learning contract contains the correct information. The completed learning contract will form the basis for your engagement with CLA as you work on your portfolio.

What if the learning contract needs to be changed?

Things change, plans change, life gets in the way. When it is clear to the learner or mentor that the contact needs revisiting, either can initiate a re-drafting of terms.

Learning contract

Between _____
(Learner)

and _____
(AU mentor)

for the purpose of completing a learning portfolio for PLAR assessment at Athabasca University.

Part 1: Learner's commitment to product

I will complete the following tasks related to my portfolio:

Task:

Estimated date of completion:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Write a narrative autobiography* | _____ |
| 2. Write other front-end pieces* | _____ |
| 3. Submit preparatory draft of learning statements* | _____ |
| 4. Discuss progress to date with mentor* | _____ |
| 5. Submit first mini-draft of learning statements | _____ |
| 6. Submit second mini-draft of learning statements | _____ |
| 7. Project portfolio completion date | _____ |

*Initial timing suggested by mentor

Part 2: Learner's and mentor's commitment to process

As an engaged learner:

Learner initials:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. I will strive to honour my timeline. | _____ |
| 2. I will let my mentor know when I cannot meet my targets. | _____ |
| 3. I will review assigned webinars. | _____ |
| 4. I will ensure portfolio requirements are met, as outlined on the checklist. | _____ |

As an engaged mentor:**Mentor initials:**

5. I will honour the time and energy that learners can invest in the PLAR process. _____
6. I will respect the learner's request to revise the learning contract. _____
7. Throughout the portfolio preparation process, I will advise learners of my concerns if the portfolio does not meet requirements. _____

Part 3: Signatures

Please note: Typing your name in the signature line below will be considered equivalent to signing a hard copy of this document.

Learner signed: _____ Date: _____

CLA signed: _____ Date: _____

Conversation checklist

During the scheduled conversation (see above), we will discuss any or all of these topics. Other topics may also be raised by either mentor or learner.

1. Method(s) of contact
2. Student status (at AU)
3. Nature of learning statements (Use preparatory draft submission to review the importance of learning statements, their format, and the process of development)
4. Supporting documentation
 - a. Letters of attestation (where to start, process)
 - b. Primary and Secondary Source documentation
 - c. Other elements of supporting documentation (such as: statement of purpose forms)
5. Review portfolio checklist
6. Timeline
 - a. Negotiate dates/portfolio completion date
 - b. Establish renegotiation process
7. Questions? Concerns?