
Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Procedures

Policy Sponsor:	Director, Centre for Learning Accreditation
Name of Parent Policy:	Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy
Policy Contact:	Director, Centre for Learning Accreditation
Procedure Contact:	Director, Centre for Learning Accreditation
Effective Date of Procedures:	April 23, 2008
Review Date:	These procedures will be reviewed annually.

Purpose

To provide consistent established procedures to fulfill the Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy and to describe the process of assessment, the conditions of assessment, and the fit of assessed PLAR credit into a learner's AU program of study.

Definitions

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)	PLAR is a systematic process to evaluate and give credit, where appropriate, to learning that has been gained through work experience, informal training, and life experience.
Program-Based Portfolio Assessment	Learner-centred PLAR assessment using program-based outcomes as criteria.
Course-Based Portfolio Assessment	Learner-centred PLAR assessment using course-based outcomes as criteria.
Extra-to-degree	Successfully completed and recognized course credit that does not fit within a student's AU program.



Procedure

Confidentiality

1. All materials submitted by applicants for PLAR assessment are considered confidential and are protected by the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. All materials are to be used only for the purposes for which they were submitted.
2. Assessors for PLAR assessment shall be trained regarding FOIP and confidentiality by the AU FOIP/Policy Coordinator in coordination with the CLA.
3. FOIP notifications will be clearly printed on all appropriate PLAR assessment materials.
4. PLAR students' materials will be stored in locked cabinets in CLA offices and storage areas.
5. PLAR students' materials will be retained by CLA offices for a period of three months, for subsequent reference or pending appeals. One copy of the students' materials will be transferred to semi-active records and be kept for a period of at least one year. Remaining copies will be destroyed at the end of the three month period by shredding.

Application/Eligibility for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

1. Students enquiring about the PLAR process will be provided with appropriate resources, offered coaching or mentoring, and directed to program advisors or faculty as required.
2. CLA determines applicants' eligibility in cooperation with the Office of the Registrar:
 - i) Only active program students enrolled in AU programs, that allow PLAR credits, and who have completed all transfer credit processes, where applicable, are eligible for PLAR.
 - ii) Applicants will submit either three paper or one electronic copy of their completed portfolio to the CLA office along with the PLAR fee.
3. PLAR applicants will submit a [PLAR Application Form](#), together with payment, to CLA, either electronically or by paper copy (mail or fax). PLAR applicants will have a 12-month period of time, from the receipt of their application, in which to complete their PLAR work, during which time they will be considered active students.
4. CLA staff will review applicants' portfolio submission to determine completeness and appropriateness before distributing materials to assessors.
5. Eligible portfolios will be distributed to assessors within 30 days' of their arrival at CLA or according to assessor availability.
6. Students whose portfolios are deemed inappropriate or incomplete will be contacted by CLA staff accordingly, offered assistance, or re-directed to another route for pursuing their AU credential.



7. PLAR-awarded credits held by students who then change programs are subject to review by CLA in collaboration with the student's new Program Director. If necessary and possible under the new program regulations, such students may submit a new PLAR application.
8. Athabasca University program students who are teaching or who have taught courses at the post secondary level are entitled to submit a "PLAR for Teaching Post Secondary Courses at an Approved Institution" application as part of a PLAR portfolio.

Course Credit Attainable Through the PLAR Process

1. Each program council will determine a maximum amount of PLAR credit available through the PLAR assessment process. Each program will be responsible for submitting to the CLA a list of criteria to be referenced by PLAR applicants. Lists of program criteria will be posted on the CLA web site and maintained by CLA.
2. Course credit obtained through portfolio-based or course-based PLAR processes will not meet AU residency requirements.
3. PLAR applicants may receive credit toward their program through either program-based or course-based portfolio methods using the approach determined by the appropriate program council. A request for exception will be brought forward by CLA to the student's Program Director, as warranted by a student's situation or program process. The final decision will rest with the Program Director.
4. PLAR applicants may receive credit toward their program by using the "PLAR for Teaching Post Secondary Courses at an Approved Institution" route when applicable.
5. Credit received through PLAR will be granted for demonstrated learning related to the applicant's AU program. PLAR credit is granted for learning, not experience. Learning must be clearly demonstrated, supported by documentation, and presented according to PLAR guidelines. PLAR credit will not be awarded for learning already documented on the student's transcript from transfer credit or successfully completed courses.
6. PLAR-awarded credit that does not fit within the student's program will be declared "extra-to-degree".
7. Students who have received a "Not-to-take" designation for a course or courses, prior to engaging in the PLAR process, will not receive PLAR credit for those courses.
8. PLAR-awarded credit may be awarded as assigned credit (i.e., HLST 320) or as unassigned credit (i.e. ACCT 4XX).

Assessment of Learning Using the PLAR Process

1. PLAR applicants will submit their completed portfolios to the CLA as described above. CLA personnel will review the documents for completeness, accuracy, appropriateness and confidentiality.



2. When appropriate, CLA will send students' portfolio materials to a content-specific assessment team with instructions on assessment procedures, assessment documents and a pre-paid return envelope if required. Assessors will receive a summary of students' transfer credits and pertinent program information in their assessment package in order that they can fully understand what credits have already been awarded or earned and so they can make informed decisions on the quality and quantity of students' demonstrated knowledge relative to their AU program.
3. The assessment team will be selected from program faculty, subject matter experts or representatives of professional groups. Program-based portfolios are independently assessed by three assessors. Course-based portfolios are assessed by a minimum of two assessors per content area as determined by the CLA Director.
 - a) Assessors will be paid the approved honorarium for portfolio assessment.
 - b) Assessors may decline to review a portfolio.
 - c) An updated list of assessors will be provided to Program Directors annually.
 - d) CLA will consult with Program Directors when seeking assessors with specific content expertise.
4. Assessors must return completed information and all students' portfolio materials to CLA by the date indicated.
5. The CLA Director shall convene meetings of assessors to resolve contradictions, inconsistencies, or difficulties in placing credit on the student's record.
6. In consultation with the Office of the Registrar, CLA determines appropriate placement of PLAR-awarded credit on students' program records. The Office of the Registrar records PLAR results on students' record systems. Credits gained through prior learning assessment shall be recorded on transcripts as a notation in accordance with practices established through the Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic and Office of the Registrar.
7. A final letter containing PLAR results will be compiled by the CLA Director and sent to the student. Copies will be sent to the assessment team, the Office of the Registrar and to the Director of the student's program.
8. Students requesting documentation of PLAR credits designated extra-to-degree will be issued an official letter, under seal, outlining their receipt of such credit.
9. CLA will maintain a list of assessors with appropriate credentials and content expertise. Assessors may reside within AU, within other recognized post-secondary institutions, or within business or industry. Portfolio teams will be selected to accommodate the knowledge areas demonstrated by portfolio applicants. Each portfolio's assessment team will include a minimum of one assessor internal to AU.



Appeals

1. Portfolios may be appealed up to a period of three months following the date of issuance of the final letter.
2. Students wishing to appeal PLAR results will forward a first-level appeal, in writing, to the CLA Director who will decide on the appropriate action to be taken. First-level appeals can result in any of the following: no change; a re-assessment using the same team, another team or some combination.
3. Should there be no satisfaction as a result of a first-level appeal, any subsequent appeals will follow the Appeals process as outlined in the [Student Appeals Policy](#).

Training of PLAR Assessors

1. PLAR assessors must be familiar with and knowledgeable about AU's PLAR process.
2. PLAR assessment training workshops will be offered regularly to both PLAR assessors and potential PLAR assessors.

PLAR Learning Resources

1. PLAR applicants may access online resources from the CLA web site or request hard copy resources from the CLA office at no charge.
2. PLAR applicants may consult with CLA staff by engaging in a mentoring process during the portfolio preparation period.

Applicable Legislation/Regulation

Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

[Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition \(PLAR\) Policy](#)
[Student Appeals Policy](#)

History

N/A