



Buyer Beware

Report on PLAR Policies & Procedures
of Post-Secondary Educational Institutions in Canada

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BACKGROUND

This report is a complement to the Cooks Qualifications Framework. In the Cooks Mapping (Framework) project, an initial comparative mapping of the competencies and levels of various industry certifications and educational programs in the cooking sector was completed. This resulted in a draft outline for a Qualifications Framework for the sector, based on quality assurance principles of practice for articulation, assessment and recognition.

The natural extension of a framework of existing Qualifications is to consider the role of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (also referred to as Prior Learning Assessment or Recognition of Prior Learning) in a framework. This is particularly important for those individuals with training from other countries, as it is not always a straight-forward process to assess foreign credentials. As well, many of those trained in tourism in other countries have been trained in the workplace (similar to Canada), and they have no formal credentials. A true Qualifications Framework needs to include the option of recognition of informal and non-formal work-related learning as a complement to formal Qualifications. This is beginning with other national and regional (e.g.

European) Qualifications Frameworks, and is particularly important in a field such as culinary where there are a large percentage of uncredentialed workers in the field.

As more individuals come to Canada with industry and workplace training and skills development, and as the culinary sector struggles to raise the bar of professionalism and safety in the field, the value of PLAR and the need for it will only increase. An initial web-based scan of post-secondary educational institutions policy and procedures related to PLAR was completed to try to identify pan-Canadian benchmarks and provide information to prospective learners...

PLAR and its implementation are constantly developing, particularly with increasing numbers of pilot projects, so this scan provides a 'slice' of the picture only. Also, because the research was done strictly on the web, this report will not include any policies of institutions that do not have their policies and procedures available through public access. The transparency emphasized in the PLAR process may help to push more accessibility to these in the future.

Main Activities Completed:

1. Updated DATA BASE OF LINKS TO POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS of current PLAR information and policies and procedures. CTHRC partnered with the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) to make use of the existing data base containing links to PLAR Policies and Procedures of all the recognized post-secondary institutions in Canada (see www.recognitionforlearning.ca).
2. ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES to attempt to identify benchmarks in PLAR/RPL policies across the country. This was done using topics under two categories: ACCESS to PLAR and ACADEMIC policies, led by a pan-Canadian Advisory Committee. It was important to include all accredited post-secondary institutions, not just those which provide tourism training, as tourism programs include many skill areas that are transferable to other programs, and it is important for immigrants and Canadians alike to be able

to put forward transferable skills for assessment and credit in related areas of study. In particular, many career tourism employees move on to areas of specialty and management positions and are looking for additional credentials or recognition/credit for advanced standing.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An expert Advisory Committee of PLAR experts from across the country was convened to oversee the topics used for comparison within the two categories of Access and Academic, and to recommend how the information would be presented. The committee members were:

- Deb Blower, PLAR Facilitator, Red River College, Winnipeg MB
- Suzanne Cirtwill, Research Assistant PLAR, Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, Halifax NS
- Diane Gordon, PLAR Coordinator - Apprenticeship, NS Dept. of Labour and Workforce Development, Halifax NS
- Alison Govier, Project Manager, CTHRC
- Martha Ireland, Program Manager Prior Learning and Competency Assessment Evaluation and Documentation, Gateway for International Professionals, Ryerson University, Toronto ON
- Bonnie Kennedy, Executive Director, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, Ottawa ON
- Micheline McWhirter, Assistant Registrar, Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, Halifax NS
- Philip Mondor, Senior Vice-President, CTHRC
- Leah Moss, Coordinator, Recognition of Prior Learning and Competencies(RAC)/ Reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences, Commissions scolaires Anglophones, Montréal QC
- Amanda Roberts, PLAR Coordinator, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Calgary AB
- Michelle Thomason, Manager and Registrar, Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, Halifax NS

DATA BASE UPDATE

The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) maintains the www.recognitionforlearning.ca website, a central coordinated source of PLAR resources and a platform for a PLAR community of practice. As part of this website, there is a section on PLAR contacts, and the searchable contact data base of post-secondary institutions in Canada is located here. This data base includes direct links to the PLAR information, processes and policies of the institution where it is available, as well as the main website of the institution.

The full searchable data base can be seen at: <http://recognitionforlearning.ca/practitioner/contacts.php>. The data base is introduced on the site in the following manner:

The data base was updated on 166 English entries and 106 French entries. Of the 166 English entries, 83 having some type of procedural or policy notations regarding PLAR on the site. The update was completed May of 2008. The French entries were updated as to links only, with no policy analysis done.

Often, the policies had been written in more 'user-friendly' language on the site rather than add actual policy documents. On some sites, initial information was linked to policies for further detailed information if the reader

wished. This is valuable for educators, researchers, policy makers, and for individual learners who wish to do more in depth exploration of policies for decisions in where to apply in order to be able to challenge a higher number of credits or advanced standing with their current skills and abilities.

The information found on these sites provided the basis for our review and analysis.

NOTE: It is recognized that many institutions have policy documents not available on the web, so lack of inclusion in this report does not indicate lack of policies at the institution. However the focus of this research was on available information to the learner (and other researchers for policy development).

RESULTS OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Some Challenges for Individuals Considering PLAR at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada

FINDING GOOD INFORMATION EASILY AND EFFICIENTLY

Institutional approaches vary as to what is included in PLAR, or under what categories related policies and procedures might be found. Therefore finding applicable information through the web is not always easy for an individual.

We found a range of key words or terms were necessary to find information on various sites. Searching under 'Prior Learning Assessment', 'Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition' or 'Recognition of Prior Learning' needs to be supplemented with key words of 'challenge', 'challenge exams', and 'challenge for credit', also 'equivalence' and 'diverse qualifications'. On some sites, PLAR is found through references to flexible assessment, experiential learning, previous learning, recognition of other learning, advanced standing, advance standing, advanced placement, lifelong learning, transfer of credit(s), credit transfer(s).

For a few websites, there were no search mechanisms, and an individual would need to consider the 'logical paths' to find PLAR. This may be found through "prospective students", "admissions", or "regulations", and often this would lead to the "academic calendar" or "student handbook". In most instances, these documents had references to PLAR or a section on policies which eventually takes the individual to PLAR or plar-like criteria. Sometimes "current students" and "student services" would lead to PLAR.

In some cases, the only available PLAR processes are through Continuing Education, where "adult learner", "mature student", "continuing education" may lead eventually to PLAR options.

Searching for 'PLAR policies' is the least likely term to produce strong results at the majority of institutions.

With these challenges and lack of consistency in finding specific information about PLAR and its particular context for that institution, it is no wonder PLAR is not seen as a consistent practice across Canada.

Another challenge with this research was that there was little consistency in the manner in which information was provided on sites, nor in the depth of the information provided.

One unanticipated product of value has resulted from this challenge in research. It was agreed by the Advisory Committee that a 'checklist' for institutions to consider when developing policies and procedures on PLAR might be a useful tool. This could also be adapted to become a 'checklist of possible questions' for advisors in ensuring that (potential) candidates have all the necessary information.

DEFINING 'PLAR'

The term used by most post secondary institutions across Canada is Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) or simply Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Other terms used include 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL), 'Challenge for Credit', 'Recognition of other Learning Experiences' (described as PLAR and Credit Transfer at Grant McEwen College), 'Prior Learning, Flexible Assessment and Recognition' (assessment of non-formal learning at Langara College), 'Recognition for Previous Learning' (Advanced credit and PLAR at Medicine Hat College), and 'Relevant Experiential Learning' (for PLAR) (Nursing at UBC).

There is a lack of consistency in the definition of what is included within PLAR in Canada. The most common approach identifies PLAR as assessing 'other than formal learning' as the learning being assessed and recognized. Most institutions define credit transfer and PLAR separately. Some institutions on the other hand, have a much more inclusive definition, including credit transfer as well as non-formal learning assessment under PLAR/RPL.

BC institutions are the most consistent, as they use (& reference) the following context for PLAR that is used by BCCAT, differentiating it from credit transfer.

"What is the difference between Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and transfer credit?"

"While transfer credit based on articulation is one way of recognising a student's prior learning, articulation is a very different process from those used in the PLAR policies in place in our institutions. Prior Learning Assessment refers to the assessment of what a student can demonstrate that he/she knows, or is able to do. The learning may have been acquired in informal or non-formal settings, such as work experience or on-the-job training or personal study, and the assessment is carried out by a qualified assessor.

"The awarding of credit based on a PLAR process is an after-the-fact assessment of what a student has learned. In contrast, the awarding of transfer credit is normally a proactive process "that is, the articulation processes establishes the equivalence of courses, and the transfer credit is based on the results of the articulation, and not on what the student knows. Transfer credit based on articulation is normally awarded before a single student takes the course."

- BCCAT "How to Articulate Handbook" - Frequently Asked Questions.

A listing of terms used and definitions from select post-secondary institutions is included as Appendix B. Many of these attempts to incorporate some of the principles of good PLAR practices including transparency, valid and flexible assessment by qualified individuals, and the type of learning being assessed and recognized.

As an individual looking for PLAR services at post-secondary institutions in Canada, one must ensure s/he clarifies what is included in PLAR at the institutions being considered, and how it relates to Qualifications Recognition and Transfer Credit.

Summary of Post-secondary institutions/PLAR Policies & Procedures

The following compilations and examples are based on information available from 83 Colleges and Universities where PLAR information web-pages were found.

British Columbia = 21

Alberta = 12

Saskatchewan = 4

Manitoba = 5

Ontario = 30

Nova Scotia = 4

New Brunswick = 2

Prince Edward Island = 1

Newfoundland and Labrador = 3

Northwest Territories = 1

In Nova Scotia there are a number of different campuses of Nova Scotia Community College, but all are covered by a central policy. New Brunswick is similar with numerous New Brunswick Community College campus locations.

Numbers in charts portray only a partial view of policies which may exist, as we were not able to find related policies on the websites for many topics. This may mean no policies exist, or it may mean they are not available to the public on the website.

There was such a range of policies and procedures found across the country that it is difficult to establish benchmarks at this time.

Instead of attempting to identify benchmarks with the limited information available and the range of policy, we have provided examples to demonstrate ranges of policy statements in order to give institutions food for thought in developing policies. This approach also identifies possible questions that individuals should ask to clarify policies on PLAR services offered.

Hopefully as PLAR progresses and increases in institutions and more Quality Assurance processes are implemented, greater consistency in some policies will be considered within jurisdictions and ultimately across the country.

ACCESS Policies and Procedures

Registration: *Does an individual need to be registered as a student in order to be eligible to access PLAR?*

	Must be registered	Don't need to be registered	Not stated or unclear
British Columbia	8	5	8
Alberta	4	1	7
Saskatchewan	2		1
Manitoba	4		1
Ontario	4	6	20
Quebec			4
Nova Scotia	1	1	2
New Brunswick	2		
Prince Edward Island			1
Newfoundland & Labrador	1		2
Northwest Territories	1		
TOTAL	27	13	46

Notes and examples:

- There is a range of requirements noted; some indicate PLAR is open to potential or current students (e.g. Malaspina College, Conestoga College, Cambrian College, Fanshawe College), some note individuals need to have completed an application for admission (e.g. Medicine Hat College, NBCC), or have been admitted to the program (College of New Caledonia, In some institutions they note PLAR may provide special access to programs as opposed to advanced credits (e.g. Dalhousie U).
- Some institutions note a requirement only to meet the eligibility criteria for the course or program in order to be able to apply for PLAR (e.g. Grant MacEwan College, Confederation College). However for some, this follows the requirement to be registered (Grant MacEwan), where others (Confederation) do not require individuals to be registered.
- Emily Carr College of Art & Design allows individuals to obtain up to 9 credits of PLA without being registered. If they wish to challenge more than 9 credits, they must be registered.
- With the information available on websites it is difficult to identify if individuals are able to access *advising* services related to PLAR prior to registration. It is assumed that these services would be part of the counseling services available to prospective students, but that would take a completely separate search to identify. It would be worth institutions considering identifying this within their promotional information about PLAR.

An individual considering PLAR as part of their application to an institution should clarify the advisory services and supports available prior to registration if this is a consideration.

Course Clusters, Programs

Cluster/Program PLAR: *Is PLAR available only on a course-by-course basis, or can it be accessed in course clusters or program-based?*

COURSE AVAILABILITY FOR PLAR

Not all courses at an institution are available for PLAR, and policies identify this in a variety of manners. Some examples include:

- Mount Royal College: 'Each department shall also compile and maintain a list of courses for its area which shall *not be* considered for credit or recognition through the PLAR methods indicated.'
- Langara College: 'Programs/departments are responsible for determining programs and courses that may be obtained through the Flexible Assessment process. The College has implemented a PLFAR (prior learning and flexible assessment and recognition) service for Langara College students. Opportunities for PLFAR are dependent upon the resources available to support the process, and therefore *will only be available from time to time*. Students are advised to check with the relevant department to confirm whether flexible assessment is available within the department.'
- North Island College: 'Courses which may be challenged will be identified in the College Calendar.'
- McMaster U: 'Credit can be granted only for those courses listed in the current McMaster calendar. Not all courses in all disciplines are available for challenge. Faculties and departments are free to determine which, if any, of their courses are open for special assessment.'
- A number of institutions note that a course being credited through PLAR is not considered as part of a full time course load in regards to eligibility for student loans.

COURSE CLUSTER OR PROGRAM-BASED ASSESSMENT

Very few institutions offer (or at least note they offer) PLAR of course clusters or program-based PLAR on an institutional wide basis. This is often because it is up to departments to identify if they wish to do this. Offerings appear to be very limited at this time. Examples of offerings are:

- Algonquin College: "When candidates apply for PLAR with extensive related experience, efforts will be made to assess their prior learning against program or curriculum level learning outcomes to enable them to earn credit for multiple courses. Course challenge or Program Level/Year Block challenge available."
- Confederation College: "Portfolio may be used for block of credits."
- Malaspina U College: "Requests for prior learning assessments will be processed as either a comprehensive assessment or as a course challenge. Requests for a Prior Learning Assessment will normally be processed as a comprehensive assessment when the credit request is for nine credits or more in one department or discipline."
- SIAST: "Course level challenge available. Block Assessment available where learning covers two or more courses and the K&S are cumulative in nature, and a culminating course provides for an integrated application of learning from those developmental courses. Program level certification where there is a requirement for 'updated credentials' for the certification of experienced workers. SIAST provides process that recognizes combinations of

previous credentials, recent training courses, workplace and experiential learning (equivalency reviews with PLAR).”

Individuals should not assume that institutions who note they offer PLAR services provide it for all courses, and should clarify availability and specific process of PLAR for their specific program area of interest.

PLAR Assessment Costs

Cost: *What is the cost for PLAR assessment?*

Same as course fee:	7 institutions
50 % of course fee:	10 institutions ¹
Different formula or set fee:	9 institutions
Varying fee (usually according to type of assessment):	11 institutions
Base fee set by government:	Ontario Colleges

Notes/comments:

- If institutions fees are program-based rather than course-based, PLAR fees may be in addition to the program cost. Royal Roads University indicates “Learners who successfully challenge a course are given credit for that course but are required to pay the full tuition fee for the program”.
- Some institutions note that full time students are not required to pay additional fees for PLAR (e.g. Nova Scotia Community College, Okanogan U College).
- Unsuccessful PLAR attempt usually requires a student to pay full tuition fee to register for the course.
- SAIT identifies PLAR fees for ‘work experience’ separately.
- Some institutions charge an advising fee when PLAR methods other than a challenge exam are used (e.g. North Island College)
- Okanogan U College charges a range for Portfolio Assessment (75% without workplace based assessment, 100% of regular course fee with a workplace assessment).
- Red River College and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Technology both indicate the fees are based on the ‘cost of services performed and not on the amount of credit awarded’. They then outline the varying fees for different types of assessment methods.
- In Ontario, the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities initially set the base fee for PLAR at Colleges while allowing a small percentage increase annually. This has resulted in varying fees, but within a range of \$80-\$110 per course (Approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of most regular course fees). Some charge additional fees for services beyond the basic assessment.
- Fanshawe College notes the PLAR fee of \$84 applies to both the challenge exam and portfolio assessment, but also covers “consultation with PLAR Advisor and Faculty Assessor, creation and development of assessment

¹ A % of course fee is often used for challenge exam format of assessment.

tools, evaluation of results, evaluation of a portfolio and oral interview if required, minimal academic support (preparation and follow-up in case of conditional credit where a learning contract is established).”

- The range of fee cost per course of institutions which identify it in actual dollars rather than percentage ranges from \$50/course (College of the North Atlantic) to \$300 flat fee (Brandon University).
- University of Windsor identifies an application fee as well as the assessment fee. “A non-refundable fee of \$40 per course is charged to the student requesting a PLAR evaluation. If the student’s request is approved, an additional fee equal to 50% of the tuition fee for the course will be charged, regardless of whether or not the assessment is successful.” They go on to identify that fee revenue will be split 30/70 between the Registrar’s Office and the AAU conducting the PLAR evaluation.

It is important for the individual considering PLAR to request clear identification and details of all fees that might be associated with PLAR, and whether they may be in addition to full program fees.

Information and Support Provided to Individual

This information is often not identified in policies, so it is difficult to say how many institutions actually provide it as part of the service, or within the PLAR fee. 27 institutions indicated either a requirement or an option for individuals to discuss their interest in PLAR with an advisor or individual as part of the process.

- Some indicate a simple support such as “The College will provide a mentor for students who will be responsible for providing guidance throughout the prior learning assessment process”,
- Athabasca University provides much broader responsibility identification with the statement: “The Centre for Learning Accreditation (CLA) will manage AU’s PLAR process, which will include: maintaining a current and informative web site; maintaining informative student resources; responding to student enquiries and PLAR-related student advising; coaching and mentoring students through the PLAR process; locating and training assessor-experts; liaising and communicating with assessors, faculty, and university personnel for the purposes of and during assessment. PLAR applicants may access online resources from the CLA web site or request hard copy resources from the CLA office at no charge. PLAR applicants may consult with CLA staff by engaging in a mentoring process during the portfolio preparation period.”
- Kwantlen University College indicates a *requirement*, “Before applying for PLA, a student must meet with the PLA Advisor in his or her program area for detailed information regarding requirements and process. May meet with PLA Coordinator or the Counselling and Advising department for support and preparation.” Other institutions have similar requirements to meet with an Advisor, or at least to participate in an orientation before applying for PLAR.
- Some institutions (e.g. Malaspina U College) state that programs and departments that choose to offer course challenges/PLAR are responsible for identifying a department contact person, developing a listing of the courses open for course challenge, and an outline of how students can access information on the course outcomes and goals used for assessment.
- Many institutions note the availability of both PLAR Advisors and Academic Departments to provide support information.

Individuals considering PLAR should clarify the resources available to identify the course outcomes required to prove learning as well as resources and support services available to identify requirements, assist with identifying and proving learning, and to assist with meeting system requirements.

- Many institutions note the offering of a Portfolio development workshop or course, but some are not offered on a regular basis. Some charge a fee for this, some don't.
- Relatively few institutions actually note in their website information that details of course outcomes, assessment methods and processes are available for specific course PLAR. This is a resource that individuals considering PLAR should request. SIAST has developed a "PLAR-ready" course data base, and others are developing the same type of resource. The term 'PLAR-ready' should indicate that course outcomes, assessment methods, PLAR process, and timelines are available for student review and support.
- Some institutions now have - and identify - a PLAR Facilitator/Coordinator whose role it is to support system-wide development of PLAR and to be the central resource (examples are. Athabasca U, Thompson Rivers U, SIAST, Red River College, Nova Scotia Community College), with PLAR advisors and department contacts as additional resources of the system.

Assessment Processes

Assessment processes: *Is there a single form of assessment used for PLAR, or a range of flexible methods available?*

Most institutions which identify assessment processes note a range of possible assessment strategies available. 43 institutions identify a range of methods, 4 identify only Challenge Exams + Portfolio Development as available assessment methods, and 1 identifies the Portfolio as the only option.

ACADEMIC Policies and Procedures

Transcript: *How is the PLAR credit identified on the transcript, and is the mark used for the student's GPA? Is unsuccessful PLAR identified on the transcript?*

	Grade/% (same as course)	Other form of notation	Note PLAR or different form of CR on transcript		Included in GPA		Non Successful PLAR noted on transcript	
			Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
BC	14	1	7	3	5	2	1	3
AB	6	1	4	1	2	4	3	1
SK	1			1				
MB	3	2	1	1	1		1	3
ON	12	2	1	2	2	2	1	5
QC								
NS								
NB								
PE								
NL		2	1			1	1	
NT								
TOTAL	36	8	14	8	10	9	7	12

Notes/Comments and examples:

- BC Colleges are relatively consistent in their policies in this regard, at least in reference to identifying PLAR credits as marks in the same manner as those taking regular courses. Statements such as that from Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, "Credit granted through PLA is resident credit since NVIT faculty has evaluated the learning based on our education standards. NVIT accepts PLAR credit awarded at other public post-secondary institutions in the same manner as transfer credit. When credit is granted based on the assessment of prior learning a grade will normally be assigned. The faculty member conducting the assessment will utilize the regular standard for assigning grades in the course or program" is one of the broadest acceptance of PLAR. Others such as North Island College note similarly that "Credit received through the assessment of prior learning, where assessment is done by faculty in North Island College programs/disciplines, will be considered as resident credit. The method of recording PLA on student transcripts will be based on provincial policy. North Island College will recognize credit earned through PLA at other public British Columbia Institutions. The award of such credits to students will be governed by previously negotiated transfer credit agreements."
- Most Ontario colleges identify they will use a grade, percentage or similar credit rating as in the regular course, but some indicate a notation only of 'CR'.
- Some institutions identify that they may give assigned credit where the evidence of learning through PLAR fits course outcomes, and 'unassigned credit' in other situations (example University College of the Fraser Valley

“when the evidence submitted is evaluated as being appropriate for academic credit because it shows the skills and knowledge equivalent to university learning even though they are not considered to be equivalent to specific courses”. This is most prevalent at the University level where unassigned credits are more common in programs.

- Many note a grade or credit is assigned in the same manner as for regular courses, or if a grade is not possible from PLAR process, then a CR will be assigned.
- A few institutions note that a minimum grade such as B grade or better, or a 65% or better is required to gain credit through PLAR. Others indicate equivalent assessment expectations (e.g. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology) “expected levels of achievement will be the same as those required by any student regardless of how the credits are earned.”, and U of Manitoba notes “departments will not specify a higher standard of achievement than for students in the course’.
- Very few institutions note whether PLAR credit from other post-secondary institutions (assuming it is noted as PLAR on the transcript) will be accepted from other post-secondary institutions. The examples from BC note acceptance from other post-secondary institutions, while the University of Windsor is an example of one which notes “PLAR credit is not accepted from any other post-secondary educational institution.”
- There is not enough information available to make strong statements about whether challenging a course through PLAR affects scholarship or funding as a full-time student. Only 4 institutions reference this as a possible impact of completing PLAR, but it is raised with enough clarity that it should be considered and clarified by all individuals.
- The transcribing of unsuccessful PLAR varies considerably, from simply transcribing as ‘F’ in the same form as other course assessments, to 11 institutions noting no transcription at all. 3 institutions (SIAST, Red River College and Fanshawe College) are examples of noting this information is retained on the student information system for internal tracking, but not noted on the student transcript.

It is important for individuals considering PLAR to clarify how successful or unsuccessful PLAR will be noted on their transcript, whether it affects full-time student status and any implications to Grade Point Averages, scholarships and student loans. If PLAR is noted on a transcript it may also affect transfer to other institutions, depending on the accepting institution’s policy.

Max credit through PLAR/Transfer Credit (sometimes stated as Residency Requirement)

The following table indicates the maximum credit (% of a program) identified as allowed through PLAR or through PLAR and Transfer of Credit combined.

Province/Territory	< 50%	50%	75%	75% >
British Columbia	3	4	3	2
Alberta	1	1	3	
Saskatchewan				1
Manitoba	2	1		1*
Ontario	1	2	11**	
Nova Scotia			(1 at 66%)	
New Brunswick	1	1		
Prince Edward Island		1		
Newfoundland & Labrador	1		1	
Northwest Territories	1			
TOTAL	10	10	19	4

* Red River College indicates the potential of credit through PLAR beyond 75% "If warranted, additional credits may be granted by the Dean of a School in consultation with the program Chair/Manager and the PLAR Facilitator".

** Ontario Colleges are consistent at 75% maximum.

- Universities tend to have lower maximum credit allowances than most Colleges, although Royal Roads and UNB School of Extended Learning allow up to 50% credit through course challenge in a degree program. U of Manitoba allows up to one year's credit through challenges, and U of Winnipeg allows a maximum of 30 credit hours. UNB notes 30 credit hours or 25% (whichever is less) as maximum credit through challenge, but allows faculties to identify their own 'more restrictive' policy.
- Athabasca U states that "each program council will determine a maximum amount of PLAR credit available".
- Malaspina University College is an example which notes that "Credit granted through PLA is resident credit as Malaspina faculty have evaluated the learning based on our educational standards".

Appeal: *Is there an appeal process stated? Does it differ from the regular academic appeal process? What is the cost for an appeal?*

Of the institutions which noted the appeal possibility on their PLAR information pages, the results were as follows:

Province/Territory	Regular	Special	No Appeal
British Columbia	13		
Alberta		1	1
Saskatchewan	1		
Manitoba	2		
Ontario	6	2	2
Nova Scotia	2		
New Brunswick			
Prince Edward Island	1		
Newfoundland & Labrador			
Northwest Territories			
TOTAL	24	3	3

The following are examples of those who note special PLAR Appeal processes:

- Athabasca U offers a two-tiered approach: “Portfolios may be appealed up to a period of three months following the date of issuance of the final letter. 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 Academic Appeals Policy”.
- Algonquin College policy states: “Appeal to PLAR office within 10 working days of assessment results. \$25 Fee charged (refunded if successful). Appeal committee established (academic administrator, subject matter expert faculty member other than candidate assessor, & academic with PLAR process knowledge). Candidate and assessor can present views.”
- University of Windsor notes: “student whose request for a prior learning assessment is denied, or who fails to receive a course credit through the PLAR process, may appeal in writing to the appropriate Dean. Only one appeal per course credit will be allowed and the decision of the Dean is final.”

Repeating PLAR Following Unsuccessful PLAR Attempts

There are varying policies of institutions regarding the option for individuals to apply for credit through PLAR more than once for the same course. A limited number of institutions even mention this policy on their information sites. 8 institutions note the option to apply for credit through PLAR a second time if unsuccessful the first time, all but 2 noting that the pre-requisite for this is “demonstrated additional learning” having taken place (and often a time frame of 6 months to 2 years following the first attempt).

7 institutions simply state an individual can only attempt PLAR once for any course.

Allowance to Apply for PLAR for Credit for a Course which has Previously been Failed in Regular Classes

There are a limited number of institutions which state a policy on this. All institutions which note permission to apply for PLAR on a course which has been failed through the regular process indicate the need for a time delay such as 1 year as well as proof of additional new learning in order to be able to apply for PLAR.

Other institutions indicate that PLAR can not be requested for any course which an individual failed through regular attendance. Two institutions state that PLAR is not available for any courses which an individual has ever registered for. This policy statement information is often combined with the statement regarding the possibility (or not) of repeating PLAR for an unsuccessful attempt.

Assessors

Assessor roles/responsibilities: *Who assesses the candidate for individual PLAR? Is it a subject matter expert? Do institutions note that assessors have been trained in PLAR?*

- BC (9), Alberta (2), Saskatchewan (1), Manitoba (2), Ontario (6) and Nova Scotia (1) institutions note that assessors will be subject matter experts. NWT (Aurora) indicates the Registrar with support from faculty will assess PLAR.
- 2 institutions (Athabasca and Humber) note a team approach to PLAR assessment.
 - Athabasca process indicates “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.
 - Humber College indicates “A team of assessors may review a candidate's portfolio, interview the candidate and/or set a challenge process.”
- 3 institutions (Mt Royal College, Athabasca University, Fanshawe College) note options for using external experts for PLAR assessment.

- Mt Royal College: Faculty are considered subject experts and used as assessors except in cases where no qualified faculty are available for a particular assessment. In such cases a subject expert from inside or outside the College who is familiar with the relevant curriculum may be used.
- Athabasca: 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
- Fanshawe: Faculty are considered subject experts and used as assessors except in cases where no qualified faculty are available for a particular assessment. In such cases a subject expert from inside or outside the College who is familiar with the relevant curriculum may be used.
- Only 8 institutions in total note specifically that assessors will be trained in PLAR with some of these noting the possibility of continued professional development for faculty. A few note assessment by a 'Qualified specialist' which could include expertise in PLAR. Some website information implies training in assessment/PLAR for assessors, but does not state it.
 - Red River College highlights their training options in PLAR on their website, noting 'PLAR/RPL professional development and training' as a section of their PLAR web presence. PLAR course credit can be used by faculty for credit towards the Certificate in Adult Education at the College.
 - Red River College and SIAST offer PLAR training as credit courses (or audit), to individuals beyond their faculty. Both have initiated a Certificate Program in PLAR/RPL.

Individuals considering PLAR should identify the qualifications of PLAR assessors as subject matter experts and flexible assessment process experts.

Program Articulation

External Workplace Training articulations: *Does an institution have any process in place or agreements to recognize graduates of workplace training programs for advanced credit?*

As with articulations between post-secondary institutions for transfer of credit for courses, blocks or programs (example is 2+2 credits for recognizing 2 years of a diploma towards a 4 year degree program), there are efficiencies for institutions and individuals to be gained with recognition of equivalencies for all graduates of a program, rather than person by person assessments. As recognition of non-formal and informal learning is increasing, processes in place to recognize workplace learning programs that meet required criteria may become more important.

The advantage to this route is that then any graduates of the external course automatically gain credit (advanced standing) at that institution. No individual PLAR process is necessary for that learning. If this policy/process is in place in any number of institutions, then gaining recognition for emergent Line Cook and other industry training/certification may be possible through this route. Once a recognized post-secondary institution has granted this credit, it can be articulated to other institutions which accept transfer of credit from the granting institution. Again, the ability for credit for skills that may be transferable to other sectors or formal credentials is key.

Two examples of this process in place connected to PLAR information and services are:

- Red River College notes “Currently RRC uses four main approaches for the assessment of prior learning.” One approach noted is **External Course/Program Assessment**, described as “The College has developed a process for the evaluation of programs/courses offered through industry, business or community groups to determine equivalency to college courses. This process includes specific policies, guidelines and a fee structure for the evaluation of workplace training.”
- SIAST: SIAST notes working with employers for recognition of skills and certification of staff.

International Credentials

International Credentials: *Is there any identified capacity/process in place that is identified for Credential Assessment and Recognition process to be used for advanced standing or entry (is it identified under PLAR?), or does section on International Students and QR note anything about PLAR?*

There is a total lack of linkage between PLAR and information listed under international students. The whole area of internationally trained, or those with international workplace experience is becoming increasingly important for Canadian immigration, but it appears that the ‘awareness and promotional’ materials on the web don’t make the appropriate linkages. Some programs talk about bridging or gap training (a part of the PLAR process), but we found no linkages to the PLAR portion of the site. We anticipate this improving as the emphasis on immigration and international students increases with increasing levels of skill shortages in this country.

Additional Considerations

POLICIES REFERENCE ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES OF PLAR AND/OR QA

Some institutions acknowledge that their PLAR policies and procedures are based on existing standards and quality assurance processes for PLAR. Although not all note which standards they are based on in their materials, the fact that they have referenced standards is positive. As PLAR standards of practice are further developed and validated on a pan-Canadian basis, it will be important for institutions to identify which standards they adhere to. This in turn will provide greater confidence to potential users of PLAR.

Current standards and developing efforts include:

- The Canadian CLFDB PLAR Standards (1997).
- “Recognizing the Prior Learning (RPL) of Immigrants to Canada: Moving Towards Consistency and Excellence” June 2006. M Riffell for the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment.
- “Quality Assurance in PLAR Issues and Strategies for Post-secondary Institutions”, and “Quality Assurance in PLAR: A Guide for Institutions and Quality Assurance in PLAR: Annotated Bibliography” 2007. Joy Van Kleef et al for the Canadian Council on Learning.

- “Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation” 2009. Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials & Council of Ministers of Education.
- The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)’s beginning efforts on standards of practice and competency standards for PLAR practitioners.

LINKAGES TO QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

PLAR is simply an alternate process to classroom based training evaluation to recognize equivalent learning of individuals, assessed in a valid manner against identified levels of learning and outcomes. Formal Qualification Frameworks help to define and differentiate levels of learning so that qualifications and recognition can be ‘placed’ in relation to the full spectrum of recognized learning. Canada does not have formal Qualifications Frameworks, with the exception of Ontario. If they did, it would assist the linkages between PLAR and formal education. The Culinary Framework that is in development through CTHRC has the potential to identify and implement some of these positive linkages.

BASIC FINDINGS

General findings raise concerns about the lack of easy access to information, and lack of consistency in policy and procedures regarding PLAR across the country in post-secondary institutions.

- Finding the necessary information concerning PLAR processes and policies regarding PLAR at post-secondary institutions is not always easy. Some consistency in where and how it is found would be valuable to potential users.
- The terminology and definition used for PLAR lacks consistency, and this is a key challenge for potential users.
- There is a wide range breadth and depth of policies and procedures available on institutional websites. A checklist of types of policies might be of value to initiate some consistency in topics and the way information is described.
- In a number of institutions, PLAR is limited to single programs, and therefore information is not found centrally.
- There are limited stated articulations beyond those linking college credentials to university programs; increased articulations would be beneficial between academic and industry credentials and with workplace training programs. These would increase efficiencies for both institutions and learners.
- Information appears to indicate limited internal data bases of internal or external equivalencies of courses. This type of resource could increase efficiencies as well.
- Validated national standards for PLAR would assist with quality assurance, and would help support linkages to formal Qualifications.

The message we need to present is “Buyer beware!” We need to ensure that checklist type resources are available for individuals considering PLAR as the ultimate consumers.

SUMMARY

Web-based research has identified such a range of policies and procedures in relation to PLAR across the country as identified on post-secondary institutional websites, that it is not prudent to try to identify actual benchmarks. Instead this report provides descriptions and examples of the ranges found. Findings will be of value to:

- Institutions when revising or establishing PLAR policies and procedures, in that they will have a listing of considerations;
- Advisors of PLAR who can use the questions raised in this report as a checklist in working with learners;
- Individuals who may be considering PLAR, in that it raises questions for their consideration.

One example of a possible checklist for institutions is attached as Appendix A.

Awareness of questions to ask re PLAR processes and policies may be particularly useful to new immigrants and to those who are looking to immigrate to Canada, as it might be a factor in their location destination. If they are able to compare the PLAR policies and procedures of institutions it may encourage locating or training in regions with learner-friendly and organized PLAR processes that connect informal learning recognition to formal learning recognition. The same holds true for individuals in Canada looking for post-secondary education; having the possibility of gaining advanced standing through credit for their knowledge and skills learned through the workplace or informal learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Since this work was initiated, a number of projects and efforts have been in progress to identify principles and processes of quality assurance in the field of PLAR and Qualifications Recognition. With additional efforts and cooperative action, this work should help to establish benchmarks and to help increase the amount of policy and procedural information available to prospective learners.

More cooperative efforts need to be in place to identify how PLAR can be used in the workplace to identify skills and abilities, how it is used in some occupational certification programs, how it complements the Qualifications Assessment process for foreign trained, and where it may fit with Qualifications Frameworks in Canada.

CTHRC/CAPLA project on PLAR Policies and Procedures

Sample Checklist for Consideration when developing or revising PLAR Policies and Procedures at an Institution

GENERAL

1. What is the institutional philosophy regarding RPL as a whole, and individual PLAR as a part of it?
2. What is 'PLAR' called, and how is it defined? Does it include or is it differentiated from Credit Transfer and other credit options? Does this fit with other institutions in the jurisdiction (particularly regarding articulation)? Have we defined it clearly so there is clarity and transparency for the reader?
3. What principles and Quality Assessment process does the institution follow? Are they identified?
4. Do all 'schools' or divisions of the institution follow an institutional policy with flexibility for process and delivery?
5. Who 'owns' PLAR in the institution? Is it an overall institutional ownership, or does each department 'own' their own? What does this mean?
6. Is the information put into perspective of any provincial regulations, policies or resources (such as credit transfer data bases, block transfer Guides).
7. Is the PLAR information on our website and in our other public resources easily found, and is it linked to related information in our institution?

ACCESS

INFORMATION AVAILABILITY

1. Is information about PLAR easily found on the general website? Does it come up in a search using 'PLA' or 'PLAR'?
2. If processes vary by program, can the information found on the main PLAR site and in specific program sites, and are they linked? (all prospective learners have not decided on a program)
3. What breadth and depth of information can be found (efficiently) on the site? Are all related policies and procedures either available on the main PLAR site, or linked?
4. Is there any jurisdictional or national standard, policy or agreement that is used as a framework for PLAR in the jurisdiction?

PROCESS/REGISTRATION

1. Does the individual need to be registered at the institution in order to access advising about PLAR? Is this made clear on the website?
2. Does the individual need to be registered at the institution prior to applying for PLAR?
3. Does the individual need to be registered in the course/program prior to applying for PLAR? If so, what is the timing for application?

4. Is PLAR available for course clusters or programs as well as courses?
5. Once an individual has applied for PLAR for a course, can they withdraw?
6. Can an individual apply for PLAR a second time for the same course if unsuccessful the first time?
7. Can an individual apply for PLAR for a course they have failed in a 'regular' classroom setting?

COST

1. What is the actual cost for each course/cluster/program applied for with PLAR?
2. What is the cost of PLAR in relation to the cost of the 'regular' course?
3. If fees are on a full time program basis, is a PLAR fee in addition to full time registration?
4. Are there any additional fees to the PLAR assessment fee (i.e. application fee, advising fee, supplies fee)?
5. Is the PLAR fee refundable at any stage?
6. If PLAR is unsuccessful, does the individual pay for tuition in the course?
7. Is the cost of PLAR regulated at all by the jurisdiction?
8. Internally, does the PLAR fee go to the department or to administration area budget?

INFORMATION/SUPPORT

1. What support is available to an individual to assist with consideration of PLAR and preparation for PLAR?
2. Is resource and support information easily available on the web to prospective students as well as current students? Is it identified as to how to access the support (prior to and after registration).

ACADEMIC

PROCESS

1. Are assessment processes and criteria developed for courses/programs, or is it up to individual subject matter experts to develop them as required?
2. Is it indicated how many courses can be challenged at once?
3. Are the learning outcomes, assessment process and criteria for assessment for each course or program available to potential PLAR candidates prior to registration for PLAR?
4. Is there an internal course credit data base developed for transfer of credit between programs?
5. Is there a process in place for recording new PLAR development (and transfer of credit acceptance) to provide efficiency for the system through documentation and modeling precedent?

MAXIMUM CREDIT THROUGH PLAR/TRANSFER OF CREDIT

1. Has the institution set the maximum credit allowed for PLAR or a combination of PLAR, advanced standing and transfer of credit?
2. How do they define residency requirements? Is a course given credit through PLAR accepted as a credit for residency? Does PLAR credit allow a lighter course load, or are additional courses required?

APPEAL

1. Does an individual access regular institutional appeal process or separate for PLAR? Is this identified?
2. What is the timeline for appeal and response?

3. Are subject matter experts involved in the appeal?
4. Is there a PLAR expert involved in the PLAR appeal?

ASSESSORS

1. Is PLAR Training provided to assessors (voluntary or required)?
2. Are subject matter experts (assessors) trained in using the criteria for assessment and flexible assessment methods to increase reliability?
3. Is there a process in place for using external experts if necessary or valuable?

CONTENT

1. Are there broader RPL policies or completed processes in place that might make the individual process more efficient (e.g. assessment of external courses or certifications)? Is this information easily found as part of the PLAR process?
2. Is it clear to the candidate (or potential candidate) what types of evidence/proof is required for the PLAR process?

RECORDING

1. Is a PLAR process or challenge process, given a mark or some other method of assessment? What is put on the transcript, and is PLAR noted on the transcript?
2. Is the PLAR mark used as part of a GPA? (may be provincial regulations).
3. How is unsuccessful PLAR recorded (on transcript or on internal system)?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Does credit through PLAR restrict any related academic processes, such as application for student loans, scholarships, or full-time student designation?
2. Is gap training for courses available (e.g. Learning Plans) if a PLAR candidate has learning for some of the course but not the required level for credit, or do they have to register for the full course?

APPENDIX B

Definitions used for PLAR at sample post-secondary institutions in Canada, 2008

Note: some of these descriptions are taken from official policy documents, some from web-site information pages of the institution.

Note consistency of BC definitions from definition of BCCAT

Institution	Term	Definition
Algonquin	PLAR	<p>Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) assumes that adults may acquire college level learning through life experience such as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary work, travel and other learning experiences. In order for this learning to be credited, it must be described or demonstrated; assessed as to its nature, extent, and depth; and deemed equivalent and current when compared to course learning requirements or program learning outcomes.</p> <p>PLAR is to be distinguished from the transfer of academic credit process, in that PLAR focuses on the evaluation of experiential learning rather than on the determination of equivalency of formal educational courses and/or programs. In PLAR, a letter grade or credit (CR) is awarded; whereas in the transfer of academic credit process an exemption is provided.</p>
Athabasca	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)	<p>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</p>
Brock University	Challenge for credit	<p>Challenge for Credit is a policy that enables a student to gain undergraduate academic credit for his or her own learning and experience outside university. As a University which heavily supports part-time study, such a procedure recognizes that many people have opportunities in their place of employment to gain skills and knowledge equivalent to university courses. Challenge for Credit enables the learning and experience to be evaluated according to Brock's standards of achievement and give academic credit towards a Brock degree.</p>

Institution	Term	Definition
Cambrian College	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment, and recognition of learning acquired through a variety of formal and informal ways such as work, life experiences, training, independent study, volunteering, travel, military service, and so on. The recognition of such prior learning, if equivalent to college-level learning, can be used towards the requirement of programs at Cambrian College.
Capilano Collage	PLA (under transfer credit)	A process where students may receive college credits for learning acquired in formal and informal situations.
Carleton U	Challenge for credit	Challenge for credit is a Carleton University policy that enables students to gain undergraduate academic credit for their own learning and experience through work and related professional development. It is not intended to overlap in scope with transfer of credits or admission with advanced standing
College of New Caledonia	PLA	Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the assessment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through life skills, work, and study not previously associated with conventional college credit.
Conestoga College	PLA	<p>Prior Learning Assessment - a process that involves the recognition and evaluation of informal and non-formal learning acquired through employment, volunteer work, military training, hobbies, reading and other significant life experiences. (one item under their RPL policy which covers formal learning, QR, advanced standing etc.)</p> <p>They note 'experiential learning' as either intentional or incidental and encompasses the concepts of non-formal and informal learning.</p>
Conestoga College	RPL	<p>Conestoga recognizes prior learning of skills, knowledge or competencies that have been acquired through work, formal, informal, and non-formal education or training, experiential learning or self study in the form of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). - from policy</p> <p>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process by which skills, competencies and knowledge already gained in the workplace, in the community, in part-time or volunteer jobs, or while practising hobbies, can be assessed and accredited. This can be done in order to gain a promotion, to allow the candidate advanced standing in a formal training program thereby saving time and money, or merely for personal satisfaction. RPL measures formal and experiential learning against learning that would occur in a specific course or courses.- from student website</p>

Institution	Term	Definition
Confederation College	PLAR	PLAR is a process that uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on, identify, articulate, and demonstrate past learning, and compare this learning to college credit courses. Prior learning can be acquired through study, work, volunteering and other life experiences that are not recognized through formal transfer credit mechanisms.
Grant MacEwan	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) involves the assessment and evaluation of learning acquired through work/life experiences compared to course or program learning outcomes for which credit is being sought. Typical formats include written examinations, oral examinations, interviews, portfolio review and psychomotor skills assessment.
Grant MacEwan	Recognition of other Learning Experiences	Credit transfer and PLAR
Humber	PLAR	PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) is a "process of identifying, assessing and recognizing what a person knows and can do for the purpose of awarding academic credit". (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1999).
Justice Institute of BC	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is assessment by some valid and reliable means, and by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned outside of the course or program that is the subject of the PLAR request.
Lambton College	PLAR	Prior learning assessment & recognition (P.L.A.R.) is a process that evaluates past learning acquired through formal and informal study, work, and other life experiences that can be converted into College credit.
Langara College, BC	PLA	Prior learning assessment (PLA) is assessment by some valid and reliable means, by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned through non-formal education/training or experience, that [may be] worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit (B.C. Council of Admissions and Transfer, 1994).
Langara College	Prior Learning, Flexible Assessment and Recognition	Langara College values students and the learning they have acquired through non-formal education, work and life experiences. Prior Learning, Flexible Assessment and Recognition (PLFAR) is a way that such learning may be assessed for college credit
Loyalist College		

Institution	Term	Definition
McMaster U	Challenge for Credit	If you have acquired knowledge at a different type of institution or in a manner that makes assessment of your qualifications difficult, you may be permitted to seek degree credit through special assessment (Challenge for Credit). Challenge for credit is not intended to give credit for skills or knowledge gained through high school, college or previous university instruction
Medicine Hat College, AB	Recognition for previous learning	Recognition for previous learning is given through advanced credit and prior learning assessment (PLA). Advance credit recognizes learning obtained through formal coursework. PLA recognizes learning acquired through noncredit coursework, workshops, and work or other experiences.
New Brunswick Community College (all campuses)	Prior Learning	Prior learning is a process that allows you to obtain formal recognition from the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) for a program of studies, a course, or units of a course through formal assessment of the knowledge and skills that you have acquired through other educational programs, work, or life-experience.
North Island College, BC	Assessment of Prior Learning	Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is assessment by some valid and reliable means, by qualified specialists, of what has been learned through formal and non-formal education/training or experience, that is worthy of advanced standing or credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit. (Based on British Columbia Council of Admissions and Transfer definition)
Nova Scotia Community College	RPL	The Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assists you to seek recognition for what you know and can do. - is a way of obtaining credit for college-level knowledge and/or skills gained outside the classroom and through other educational/training programs? - compares prior learning gained from education, training, work, life experiences and personal study to the learning achieved in college courses.
Okanagan College, BC	PLA	Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is assessment carried out by a qualified specialist, using some valid and reliable means, to determine what has been learned through non-formal education, training, or experience. The purpose of the assessment is to determine what prior learning is worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the accrediting institution.

Institution	Term	Definition
Red River College	PLAR	Prior learning is any learning that an individual has acquired from formal education, work and /or volunteer experience, personal study and any other life activities (i.e. hobbies, travel, training programs, community life, etc.) that resulted in knowledge and skills. Learners may have acquired college level learning through these significant work and life experiences. They have learning which may be equivalent to the knowledge, skills and abilities expected from college courses/programs
SIAST	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR) is an evaluation through a valid and reliable process, by qualified specialist(s), of the knowledge and skills that have been learned through non-formal education, training or experience to determine the equivalency for credit to a SIAST course.
SIAST	PLAR	Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is a process of evaluating the skills and knowledge gained through experiential and/or non-formal learning for the purpose of obtaining credit in a SIAST course.
St Lawrence College	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning acquired through a variety formal and informal ways such as: work, life experiences, training, independent study, volunteering, travel, and so on. The recognition of such prior learning, if equivalent to college-level learning, can be used towards the requirements of program at St. Lawrence College.
UCFV	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is defined as a process of assessment by valid and reliable means, by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned that is worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit. PLA is used to evaluate learning which may have been achieved through work experience, independent reading, hobbies, volunteer work, informal and formal learning, travel, artistic pursuits or other activities. PLAR may be used to relate that prior learning to an educational goal.

Institution	Term	Definition
UBC - Nursing	Relevant Experiential Learning (for PLAR)	<p>For the purpose of PLAR this can be thought of as learning that has occurred from environmental experiences and from action and doing. It is constructivist learning and involves observing, doing, reflecting, receiving corrective input and practice (more doing). Experiential learners may also increase their knowledge and skill through teaching others, and in nursing this experiential learning has usually occurred in a professional context.</p> <p>It can be considered within 3 components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge - concepts, facts, information, and prior experience 2. Activity - knowledge applied to current, ongoing events 3. Reflection - thoughtful analysis and assessment of one's own activity and its contribution to personal growth <p>These three elements combine to structure and make it a concrete learning experience with clearly identifiable outcomes. Formal and informal reflection is an ongoing part of the experiential learning process.</p>
Justice Institute of BC	Credit equivalency	Credit equivalency is recognition of equivalent education earned at another post-secondary institution or learning organization (for transfer of credit)
UNB	PLA	Prior Learning Assessment refers to the systematic evaluation of learning which an individual has achieved through work, life and educational experiences, and the relating of that learning to the expected learning outcomes of courses and programs in which the individual is enrolled at UNB for the purpose of granting credit where appropriate.
UNB	Challenge for Credit	Learning acquired, by work experience and/or forms of study other than attendance at university, a high level of competence in certain areas closely related to courses offered at this University. The Challenge for Credit scheme makes it possible for the University to give recognition to such attainment.
U of W	PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is an educational initiative that provides learners with welcome opportunities to identify, demonstrate and gain recognition for what they already know and can do. It allows learners to obtain credit for university-level knowledge and skills gained outside the classroom and/or through other educational programs. PLAR uses valid, rigorous assessment methods which follow university policies and procedures to ensure that learning worthy of credit has taken place.

