

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

# INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSMENT



*module 3*



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This module provides an introduction to the basic principles and processes of assessment. Assessors (and potential assessors) will review their own understanding of the requirements of sound assessment practice and consider a range of flexible assessment options.

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe the basic principles of sound assessment
- Identify acceptable forms of diverse evidence (direct and indirect)
- Apply technical requirements
- Develop initial assessment plans for assessing candidates
- Identify frequent pitfalls in assessing candidates
- Develop a plan to continually improve their assessment skills and knowledge

! Participants should have an introductory knowledge of PLA as a concept.

### Recommended Reading

Barr, R.B. and J. Tagg. "From Teaching to Learning—A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*. November/December, 1995.

Simosko and Associates. *Assessing Learning: A CAEL Handbook for Faculty*. Columbia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 1988.

Simosko, S and C. Cook. *Applying APL Principles in Flexible Assessment: A Practical Guide*. London: Kogan Page, 1996.

Simosko, S. *Prior Learning Assessment & Educational Reform: A Vision for Now*. Victoria: Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development and British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer, 1995.

Whittaker, U. "Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles & Procedures," *Council for Adult and Experiential Learning*. Columbia: 1989.

## Facilitation Plan

9:00 am:	Warm-up
9:30 am:	Assessment
10:00 am:	Principles of Sound Assessment
11:00 am:	Break
11:15 am:	Forms of Evidence
12:00 pm:	Lunch
1:00 pm:	Tools for Assessing Prior Learning
1:35 pm:	Technical Requirements
2:35 pm:	Assessment Pitfalls
2:55 pm:	Break
3:10 pm:	Skills & Knowledge Development
3:45 pm:	Wrap-up

You can introduce the plan for the module based on your own ideas or patterned after the suggested plan of the day. The timing for each part of the module is included as a guide. It can, of course, be adjusted to fit your circumstances. A full day is ideal, but the module can be adapted, depending on the needs and range of knowledge of workshop participants. Review the plan of the module with the participants, confirming when breaks will be, the time the day will end, and any other “housekeeping” details that are necessary.

## Warm-up



To introduce the module to the participants, use transparencies **T1, T2**.

Comment on the reasons for the title of the workshop, noting that it is an introduction to assessment. Participants are likely to have identified “PLA” as what they want to learn about, not “assessment.” Explain that at its core, the innovation that we call PLA is really about becoming more flexible in the assessment processes we use and in the evidence we are willing to consider. It is not a separate, distinct assessment process.





#### Activity

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Now choose one or more of the following activities to ease into the session:

- Ask participants to introduce themselves, the area they work in and the institution they represent.
  - Ask participants to rate their PLA knowledge and skills on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is the highest).
  - Ask participants to raise their hands to indicate the rating they have given themselves: 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 10? Ask those who rated themselves between 7 and 10 where and how they have experienced PLA. Point out to the full group that these individuals will be excellent resources as they progress through the workshop.
  - Ask participants to each give you one expectation that they have of the session. Write the list of expectations on flip-chart paper, and refer to the list periodically and during the Wrap-up portion of this module.
- 

- ! *If participants have been involved with other PLA sessions, they are familiar with the Parking Lot. Review the concept of the “parking lot” sheet that is used for short-term storage of out-of-context or contentious ideas. At the conclusion of the day any items remaining in the Parking Lot should be analysed to determine how they should be addressed.*

Introduce this section of the module by asking the large group the question, “What are some of the basic differences between assessing learning gained in the classroom or structured lab/clinical/practicum and learning gained elsewhere?”

Ensure that the major, fundamental differences are identified:

- In assessing learning acquired experientially, the process must be flexible and responsive to the nature of evidence learners can generate.
- Assessment is not organised around learning activities structured for the classroom setting, so educators must be clear about what they expect candidates to know and do.
- We are accustomed to having almost complete control over both the teaching and assessment process. In PLA this does not exist, so the process must flexibly respond.



### Activity

Begin by asking participants to once again rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 10 according to their knowledge and skills as assessors when they have participated with the learner in the learning process.

Then ask the participants to rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 10 according to their knowledge and skills as assessors when they have been strictly assessing.

After this short exercise, ask the participants to discuss in pairs the results of their two ratings. Then invite the participants to share their key points with the large group.

Some questions to consider:

- Were there any differences in the ratings? Why?
- What were some of the variables that seemed to impact the assessment?
- Was there more comfort or clarity with one or the other of the situations?

Summarise the activity by drawing in the introductory comments from the Warm-up with this activity.



Review the basic principles of sound assessment using transparency **T3** and providing participants with handouts **H1** and **H2**. Discuss sound assessment as resulting from having clear learning outcomes, standards and/or expectations to assess to, combined with using a systematic process for ensuring that the technical requirements are met.

Point out that these principles are the same whether they are assessing an individual for whom they have structured the learning opportunities in the classroom or an individual who has acquired learning in other ways. Review and explain each of the technical requirements as they are outlined in **H1**, **H2** and **T3**, and give an illustration of each one. It is essential that participants understand these concepts as you continue with the day.



## Activity

The following exercise provides participants with an opportunity to explore the technical requirements for a sound assessment:

- Ask participants to divide into small groups of three or four members. Provide each group with handout H3, which explains the directions for the exercise. To ensure clarity read it out, explain, and answer questions as needed.
- Let the groups know that they will have 30 minutes to accomplish their task and ask them to select a recorder to report back to the whole group the results of their deliberations.
- Check in with groups as they begin to ensure they are on track and to provide assistance. At the close of the activity, ask each group to report on their recommendations.

Results from groups should be recorded on flip charts. Ask groups to report on their recommendations, one technical requirement at a time (in other words, receive all reports on “validity” before proceeding to “reliability” and so on). As groups report, focus your comments on any common themes emerging, points to reinforce, and issues that could be discussed further.

Point out that during the years, assessors gain experience in assessing learning. This takes place in a structured environment, which gives them confidence in the quality of their assessments in that setting; and that similarly, an experience base is needed in the assessment of prior learning to gain that same confidence.



**Break**

**15 minutes**

The goal of assessment is to determine whether an individual's knowledge and skills meet an identified standard or learning outcome. Assessment is not just about reviewing evidence. It is about using evidence to help us make decisions about whether someone meets our expectations, since we can never directly observe an individual performing in every possible situation. Evidence, whether in the classroom, another structured learning environment, or in prior learning assessment, helps us make inferences about an individual's performance in other settings or in different circumstances.



Review, using **T4**, the concepts of direct evidence (anything produced directly by the candidate) and indirect evidence (information about the candidate from another source). A useful observation is that direct evidence is the kind of evidence that assessors are most likely to have experience and comfort with as it predominates in the classroom setting (tests, written reports, demonstration, etc.). An example of indirect evidence we routinely accept is that of student evaluations from practicum supervisors.

One of the challenges of becoming a more flexible assessor is to become comfortable reviewing and assessing both indirect and direct evidence. Explain that today's goal is to be able to identify acceptable forms of diverse evidence, both direct and indirect, and to begin applying the technical requirements to the evidence.

To ensure that workshop participants are familiar with some basic forms of direct and indirect evidence, ask the group as a whole for examples of direct and indirect evidence that they could provide of their competence as teachers or managers. Record the examples on flip charts labelled "Direct Evidence—Produced by the Candidate" and "Indirect Evidence—Information about the Candidate." Ensure that the evidence is in the right category. Leave the flip charts up so that the workshop participants can see them as they engage in the next activity.



### Activity



Ask participants to form groups of four or five persons. If you are working with participants who will be assessing in the same discipline or program, it would be especially useful for the groups to be formed along those lines. Give each of the groups one of the candidate profiles labelled **H4**. (You may wish to change the candidate profiles to fit the programs/disciplines represented in your particular workshop.)

Each group should be given a different candidate profile to review. For each candidate profile ask the groups to brainstorm the kinds of direct and indirect evidence that the candidate might have available to him or her or might be able to generate. Ask each group to select a reporter for the full group feedback session.

At the end of the brainstorming have each group summarise the list they have generated for each kind of evidence, direct and indirect.

Review the lists to point out issues to the group, such as the much wider diversity of evidence possible when the evidence comes from “real life.” You may wish to discuss whether different disciplines or programs naturally lend themselves to certain “kinds” of evidence.

An important point to make is that it will be very beneficial for faculty assessors and advisors to identify likely forms, types, and sources of evidence from their own disciplines. Suggest that this task should be completed prior to a program or discipline implementing PLA. Faculty assessors need to think about and write down the forms of evidence candidates are likely to have or be able to generate in their own work (waged or unwaged), volunteer activities, hobbies, etc. Remind participants that if candidates have this information ahead of time, they can set out to collect and/or generate this evidence systematically and more easily.



**Lunch**

**60 minutes**



Introduce this session with the observation that there are many assessment methods that participants are already familiar with, for example (T5):

- Exams (instructor-developed or standardised)
- Oral assessment or exam
- Skill demonstration
- Oral presentation
- Review of work samples
- Letters of validation/testimonials

The portfolio is another method most commonly associated with PLA. The portfolio is the innovation that PLA introduced to the post-secondary system in the US, Great Britain, and now in Canada and other parts of the world. Review some basic information about portfolios, but point out that it is simply a tool available to them and that their assessment does not need to be limited to this one method.

Review the purpose and structure of the portfolio. Introduce the concept of the personal profile, which may be useful for initiating primarily assessor-driven assessments (oral questioning, written exam, demonstration and observation) or where the PLA candidate has little evidence to provide. The personal profile then becomes a tool introducing the candidate to the assessor and providing background information to assist with the identification of appropriate evidence and assessment tools. (You may find it helpful to refer to Module 4 for more background on personal profiles.)

Respond to any questions or comments that participants may have regarding portfolios but keep this discussion brief and focused. There could be a tendency for the participants to want to discuss portfolios in-depth, and that is not the focus of the module. The main point to stress is that the portfolio is a flexible tool, one that generally combines direct and indirect evidence that can be adapted to meet the needs of specific programs, candidates, and institutions. It is often supplemented with other assessment methods, in particular oral assessments and demonstrations.

This next activity will be focused on application—applying the technical requirements to a candidate's evidence and planning out a systematic approach to the assessment.



Review the assessment process, pointing out the decisions an assessor must make and the various assessment options available using **H5**.



### Activity

Ask participants to once again form their same small groups.

Distribute the handout **H6** that matches their candidate from the previous activity.



Explain that these handouts outline the direct and indirect evidence that these candidates actually submitted for the assessment.

Their first task is to apply the technical requirements:

- Does this evidence meet the standards of validity and sufficiency?
- Has the standard of authenticity been met?
- What about the standard of currency?
- Is there reliability in your group on these questions?

Explain that this first part of the exercise is comparable to the first decision point on **H5**, where the assessor needs to determine whether the evidence provided is sufficient to make a decision or whether more evidence is required.

Their second task is to plan the remainder of the assessment, unless they have determined that there is sufficient evidence to make a decision:

- In any areas where you determine that the standard has not been met, how can you get the evidence you require?
- Will you use the method of demonstration, workplace assessment, project and/or assignment, oral questioning or written questioning or some combination thereof?



Explain that each group will then report back on:

- The results of their application of the technical standards to the evidence and,
  - What their initial assessment plan would encompass (if they decided that a decision could not be made on the basis of the evidence submitted).
- 

At the end of the allotted time ask groups to report on their findings. Record and receive the reports from each group, beginning with the first task—the application of the technical requirements to the evidence. Focus at this time on the understanding of the technical requirements and their appropriate application. Also question groups regarding how consensus was gained in the group. If it was difficult, what were the main issues?

Record and receive the reports on the second task, the development of an initial assessment plan. Focus your comments on the need for a systematic approach, one that is cost-effective and meets standards of good practice. Provide feedback if you notice one or two methods being favoured over others. Are these methods more familiar and comfortable?



Introduce the group to the idea of recording the assessment plan and results on a form. A form can provide a concrete way for ensuring that the assessment is conducted in a systematic manner, that all assessment criteria or learning outcomes are addressed, and that there is a written record of the process (H7).



**Break**

**15 minutes**



Review with the group handouts **H8a** and **H8b** and transparency **T6**.



Comment that a common pitfall of new assessors of prior learning (one not on the list) is that of over-assessing. In compensation for inexperience and possible concerns that these more flexible forms of assessment lack “academic rigour,” many new assessors will set a higher standard for PLA candidates than is set for students in the classroom. Reinforce the good practice of using the same standard, to assessing learning gained in the classroom or structured learning environment and to assess learning gained in other contexts. Remind participants that if they are using clear learning outcomes and have identified likely types and sources of evidence, they are less likely to over-assess.



Summarise the key points to quality assessment practice discussed in this session (**H9**).

Ask participants if these key points raise any issues for them, or if there is clarity with all of these points.



**Break**

**15 minutes**

This module has been an introduction to the whole area of assessing prior learning using flexible assessment processes. Point out that participants have covered a lot of territory today and may be feeling that although they have a better picture of what assessment is all about, they also have a greater appreciation of the professional challenges ahead. To better prepare participants to meet these challenges, the final activity for the day provides an opportunity to identify ways they can continue to enhance their skills and knowledge in this area.



### Activity



In the first part of this activity, participants will work individually on developing their own plan, using handouts **H10a**, **H10b**, **H10c**. Explain that they will have 15 minutes to complete this individual work.

In the second part, participants share their Personal Development Plan with one other person. If a number of participants are from the same department or program and normally work together, they could be asked to form a small group to share the highlights of their plan. Time allotted to the second part should be about 20 minutes.

When the pair or small-group work is complete, ask participants to share with the full group selected elements of their individual plans and vision.

On a flip chart, record sample steps from each group or pair, identifying and commenting on any common threads that may emerge, regarding environmental forces, barriers, supports, and follow-up. You can encourage more or less interaction depending on how the timing for the day has proceeded.

End the module on a positive note. Make closing remarks and thank everyone for their hard work and convey that you hope:

- The module has been useful
- The purpose has been achieved
- The work they accomplished today will serve to move them and their departments ahead in the flexible assessment of learning

Review the Parking Lot of issues and concerns. If possible, address these issues or bring them forward for another time.

If there is time, a very effective closure can be to do a quick survey of the room asking participants to use one word or a quick phrase to reflect on their experience of the day and what they are leaving with.

End the module by asking participants to complete the evaluation form.

# Principles of Sound Assessment

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## Essential Ingredients

### 1. Clear learning outcomes/expectations

Having in place clearly articulated learning outcomes or expectations that outline your requirements, using verifiable and measurable criteria, is an essential for “good” results in assessment. Many faculty assessors find that their experience with PLA leads them to redefine their curriculum and learning expectations.

### 2. Technical requirements

Validity	Does the evidence relate to the learning outcome?
Sufficiency	Is this enough evidence to provide conclusive proof?
Authenticity	Did the candidate produce this work?
Currency	Are knowledge and skills up to date?
Reliability	How consistent is the assessment outcome?

### 3. Systematic process

It is essential to have in place a systematic process for reviewing evidence and for ensuring that the technical requirements are met. This systematic process should include recording the results of the evidence review, planning the assessment options to be used, and communicating effectively with the candidate regarding the process and the results.





# Technical Requirements

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## Validity

This requirement refers to how well the method of assessment or the evidence provided relates to what is being assessed. Is there a good fit between the evidence and the learning outcome? For example, is writing a description of how to complete a medical procedure valid evidence that the individual can physically do the procedure?

## Sufficiency

This requirement refers to how much evidence is needed to determine whether an individual has the requisite knowledge and skill. What combination of valid assessment tools would be enough without making the assessment too cumbersome and inefficient? For example, is a questionnaire on competency skills completed by an employer sufficient; is direct observation by the assessor for a three-week period necessary?

## Authenticity

This requirement refers to the genuineness of the evidence provided. Was the direct evidence produced by the candidate? Was it produced alone or in collaboration with others? Do the various forms of evidence (products, oral interview, letters of verification) verify each other adequately?

## Currency

This requirement refers to how recent the evidence is and whether the candidate has the requisite knowledge and skill at the time of assessment. Assessors should provide guidelines on the “age” of evidence that will be acceptable to them.

## Reliability

Reliability refers to whether different assessors would make comparable judgments and to whether the same assessor would make the same judgment over time. Is there consistency of judgment? This requirement does not refer directly to the evidence, but more to the assessor’s ability to make determinations based on the evidence.







# Examining Technical Requirements

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## Directions to the Group

In this group activity imagine you are on a faculty subcommittee that has agreed to explore the prior learning assessment process and to make recommendations regarding implementation to your department. For this first meeting you want to explore the technical requirements for sound assessment to ensure the standards of good practice are met.

You have decided to examine each of the technical requirements in turn to determine whether there are any recommendations that could be made to the faculty as a whole regarding best practices in meeting this requirement.

The questions provided are meant to stimulate discussion, not to limit it!

## Technical Requirements

### **Validity:**

How do we know if an assessment methodology is valid? What are some examples of valid assessments? Invalid assessments? In the classroom setting? In a prior learning assessment?

### **Reliability:**

How do we know if we are conducting reliable assessments? What are the indicators? In the classroom setting? In a prior learning assessment?

### **Sufficiency:**

How do we know when we have enough evidence to make a sound decision? What are the elements we need to attend to? In the classroom setting? In a prior learning assessment?

### **Authenticity:**

How do we verify authenticity of evidence submitted in the classroom setting? How can we meet this standard in a prior learning assessment?

### **Currency:**

Is currency ever an issue in the classroom setting? How can we ensure currency in a prior learning assessment? How "current" does it need to be? What should the standard be?





### Profile 1—Sam

Sam has 10 years' experience working with youth and their families in a number of settings:

- Two years in a residential group home where he was responsible for supervising and supporting five children, between the ages of 8–16, who had been assessed as having needs beyond what could be provided through foster home placement
- Five years on contract with a community agency providing individual child care worker services to children “at risk” and their families.\* This involved working intensively with up to three families at a time towards goals identified by the case social worker. Typical goals for contracts included improved parenting skills, enhancing success in school for the child, improving the child’s social life, and coping skills
- Three years working in a parent-enhancement program with families “at risk” where he organized an intensive counseling program offered to over 50 families who had a history of child abuse or neglect

During this time Sam has enrolled in many non-credit workshops related to his work. He has gained information and expertise from consulting and working with child psychologists. He has avidly read articles and books recommended to him by others working in the field.

Sam wants to apply for credit for most of the Child & Youth Care courses in the diploma program.

**What kinds of evidence can you envision Sam providing?**

\* “At risk” refers to families and children with serious problems identified by Social Services, the school system or through the courts.



## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 2—Blythe

Blythe completed her training as an LPN over 15 years ago and has been working in her field ever since. She has been employed for the last five years in an acute care setting, where she assisted the RNs with all aspects of patient care. This is one of the most challenging areas of work for an LPN.

She has continually updated her skills through employer-sponsored courses and workshops, and she volunteers five hours per week as a counselor at a Planned Parenthood clinic. In order to volunteer at Planned Parenthood, she completed a 30-hour training program in communication and basic counseling skills. In addition, she has completed many non-credit self-development courses focused on awareness of self, life issues and interpersonal relationships.

Due to a crisis in her relationship with her 16-year-old daughter, she engaged over a four-month period in personal counseling for herself. This provided her not only with personal resolution to her concerns but also with a greater knowledge and appreciation for the helping/counseling process.

Her local community college does not have an access program for LPNs into the RN program. Blythe wants credit for her skills and knowledge, which she gained through her LPN training and expanded and strengthened by her many years of experience and professional development.

**What kind of evidence can you envision Blythe providing to support her claim for credit?**





## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 3—Dana

Dana's career working for a major Canadian retailer spans 20 years. She began working for this firm right after high school, selling merchandise on the floor, working her way up to department manager and then store manager. The next step in her career was to become a buyer for five years, where she eventually became responsible for selecting all product lines for Western Canada.

She now is vice-president for Western Canada, where she supervises 15 store managers spread throughout western Canada, and has full responsibility for all operational decisions. A recession necessitated the closing of 10 stores (in addition to the 15 remaining) in her first year as VP, requiring her to layoff over 50 staff, and to oversee the complex process of closing business in 10 communities.

She is one of only three senior executives to survive a management change when new owners recently assumed control. As the new owners are foreign, she has been walking the fine line for the last five years of interpreting Canadian ways to the new owners and responding to the different set of demands and expectations that they bring.

After 20 years she is ready for a change. She would like to set up her own business-consulting service as she believes she has developed approaches that work in the competitive retail market. She wonders, however, if her credibility would be enhanced by the completion of an educational credential. She decides to pursue a Masters Degree in Business. Her first task then is to gain a bachelor's degree (unless she finds a university who will grant access directly to the advanced degree!). At her local university-college, which luckily has a degree in Business, she learns about PLA and decides to proceed with her gathering of evidence.

**What kind of evidence could she provide?**







## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 4—Manuel

Manuel has been in Canada for two years and is having difficulty getting established. In his former country he was a fully credentialed electrician. Employers in Canada do not appear to recognize his credentials and question whether he has the background needed to be a competent electrician in Canada. He has been able to secure a labourer position with a construction company but would rather work as an electrician.

He is renting a home that had very inadequate wiring when he first moved in. He convinced his landlord to fund the rewiring of the house. He contributed his labour and expertise for a reduction in rent. At the landlord's insistence he familiarized himself with Canadian codes and regulations. His 10-year-old son, who has already learned an amazing amount of English, helped him with interpreting the manuals when his language skills were inadequate. He is quite proud that he was able to rewire the entire house, and that his work passed Canadian inspection.

He is frustrated in his attempt to gain even an entry-level position in his field and decides that gaining a Canadian credential is his best option. He doesn't want to start at square one so he decides to apply for an assessment of his prior learning.

**What kind of evidence could he provide?**

**H4d**





## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 5—Sheila

Sheila has always had a passion for art, which she has pursued avidly in her spare time through workshops and through mentoring by a local professional artist. She has always made her living working as an office clerk.

As computer technology has entered her workplace, she has updated her skills at regular intervals, becoming comfortable with a wide range of software. Her artistic flair has been recognized in her workplace and when a flyer or brochure is required, she is given the responsibility for design and production. She helped organize a local art show, for which a few of her paintings had been accepted, and was given responsibility for designing and producing all of the print promotional material. She designed an integrated package of posters, brochures, tickets, and letterhead that appeared to be very well received. Recently she has also completed some non-credit courses in desktop publishing and in the development of promotional material. She is finding that she really enjoys this kind of work but does not get enough of it in her current employment situation.

She would like to shift her career into graphic design. While she knows that there is still a lot for her to learn, she also believes that she already has a lot of knowledge and skills that are relevant to this field. She would like to receive credit for her knowledge and skills and enter the program at an advanced level.

**What kind of evidence could she provide?**





## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 6—Henrietta

Henrietta assisted her husband in the management of their home-based business for 15 years. Since her recent separation from her husband she is looking for work. She finds that she is unsuccessful in gaining employment, especially since she has no employment record outside of her own business and no letters of recommendation.

She is frustrated as she has 15 years' experience managing a small business, including book-keeping (their accountant reviewed her work every six months or so), office procedures and word-processing, customer relations, purchasing and inventory control, crisis management (when her alcoholic spouse didn't follow through on commitments to customers) and all of the myriad of details that go with keeping a small business afloat!

She decides to gain a formal credential to assist her to secure employment. She decides her best option at this time is to gain a certificate in Office Administration, with a bookkeeping specialty. She would like to gain this credential as quickly as possible and decides to request an assessment of her prior learning.

**What kind of evidence might she bring?**





## Candidate Profiles

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### Profile 7—Edward

Edward decides to finally go for it and enter post-secondary studies. As he is already in his mid-thirties, he is anxious to complete his academic work as quickly as possible to gain entry to law school. He has worked for the last 15 years in a pulp mill and assumes he will have to start at square one.

As he reviews the courses available to him in first year he is surprised to find a course covering an area in which he is very knowledgeable. The Introduction to Philosophy covers exactly the kinds of discussions he had been having with his maternal grandfather since he was a young child. His grandfather, an immigrant from Eastern Europe, had been a university professor. He made his livelihood in Canada as a gardener, but his passion was philosophy and European literature. Edward, under his grandfather's tutelage, has read, discussed and argued over the ideas presented by the major philosophers of western thought throughout his life.

Looking ahead at the courses available to him at the second-and third-year level he noted another couple of courses in areas where he has knowledge and skills. The first was a second-year English course on public speaking. During his 15 years in the pulp mill he was actively involved in the union and on the safety committee. Through those involvements he made many different kinds of speeches; some to the membership, trying to persuade members to his point of view, others to management, providing information and education regarding worker views on safety issues. He was also asked to be the keynote speaker at an area-wide conference, speaking on "Impacting Safety Awareness of Workers and Management."

The third course was a third-year course (he was amazed that he might have knowledge at that level)! It was a literature course studying German literature in translation. That same maternal grandfather had an in-depth background in German literature and had set out to pass on his passion to his grandson. He had not only insisted that his grandson learn to read German (the language his family spoke at home) but had also introduced him to many of the great works of German literature. They had spent many intensive hours closeted together in reading and discussion while his parents were at work. It was a passion they had shared until his grandfather's death, 5 years previously. And then it hit him...he was also very proficient in the German language! Does this college offer German?

He knew that this institution recognized prior learning, as a friend of his had been successful in acquiring credits in an applied field. Might they also do this in an academic area? When he found out that it was a possibility he decided to proceed with a request for an assessment of his prior learning.

**What kinds of evidence might he bring?**

**H4g**

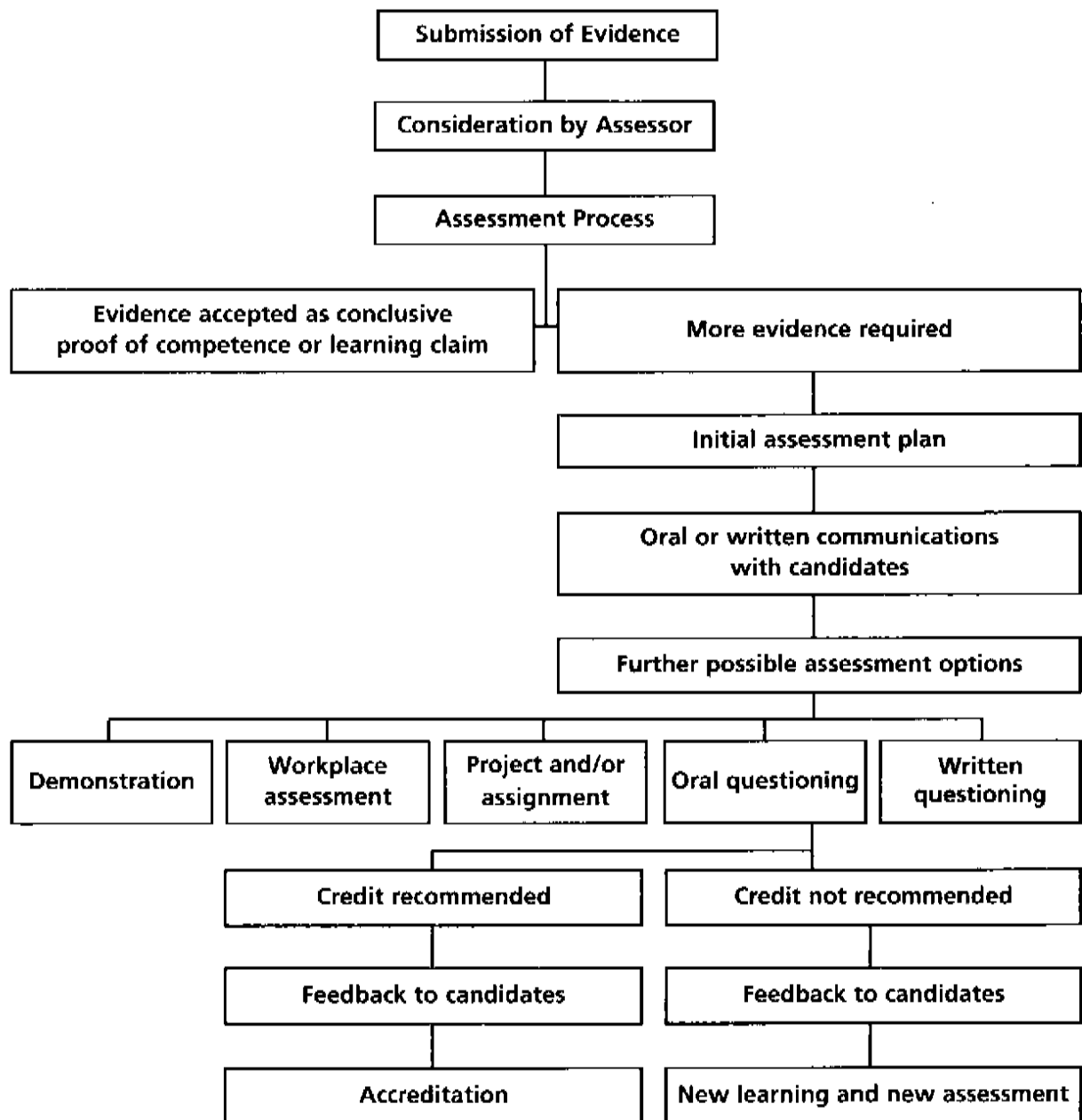






# The Assessment Process

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# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 1—Sam

This activity is focused on applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Credit Request

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| • Introduction to Child & Youth Care      | 3 credits |
| • Counseling                              | 6 credits |
| • Theory & Practice in Child & Youth Care | 6 credits |

## Overview of Evidence

- An expanded resume which describes in-depth each of his related employment experiences.
- A short description of his personal philosophy and approach to working with youth.
- A code of ethics that he developed in consultation with three other team members.
- An outline of the program proposal he developed to acquire funding for the parent enhancement program, which outlines the philosophy of the program and the theoretical perspectives and approaches, which will be used.
- Job descriptions for each position he has held in the field.
- A copy of a recent work evaluation that evaluates his skills in counseling and intervening with parents identified as “at risk” of child abuse or neglect.
- A list of the non-credit workshops and conferences that he has attended in the last five years.
- A letter from a child psychologist in the community that verifies that Sam has excellent assessment and intervention skills.

**H6a**





# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 2—Blythe

This activity is focused on applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Credit Request

Blythe is requesting credit for the first year of the Nursing Baccalaureate program. As the fit between the curriculum of the LPN program and the degree program is not very good, she needs to provide evidence for her entire credit request (no transfer credit is granted). The following evidence is in support of her request for credit for two first-year courses:

- Self and Others I: Self Awareness 3 credits
- Self and Others II: Interpersonal Relationships 3 credits

## Overview of Evidence

- An expanded resume providing an in-depth description of her related work and volunteer experience.
- A narrative account of what she has learned about herself through her work, her volunteer work and training, and through her personal experience of receiving counseling.
- An outline, on the letterhead of Planned Parenthood, of the topics covered in the 30-hour training program.
- A letter from the graduate nurse who provides the training for Planned Parenthood verifying Blythe's attendance at the training, her level of involvement in the training, and an overview of her skills at the end of the training.
- A letter from the RN who runs the Planned Parenthood Clinic describing Blythe's responsibilities as a volunteer and speaking generally about her competence in filling that role.
- A letter from the Nurse in charge of the ward where Blythe works which details very explicitly her responsibilities in the ward and that describes Blythe as having "good" interpersonal skills.

**H6b**





# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 3—Dana

This activity is focused on applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current. You are faculty assessors with expertise in Human Resource Management.

## Credit Request

While Dana is requesting a total of 120 credits from your institution her specific credit request in your area of expertise is for:

- Introductory and Intermediate Human Resource Management 12 credits

## Overview of Evidence

- A chronological record of her career with National Merchandising Company.
- An in-depth description of her responsibilities in each position she has held where she had responsibility for employees: Department Manager, Store Manager, and Vice-President for Western Canada.
- An in-depth description of what she has learned in these positions that relates to the courses for which she is requesting credit. These descriptions demonstrate familiarity with the basic principles and practices of human resource management.
- A letter from the Company President that verifies her employment record, outlines specific knowledge, and skills which she has in human resource management, organizational behaviour and decision making, marketing and merchandising. He also compares her level of skills and knowledge favourably with others on his staff who have formal business credentials. He describes her as one of his most skilled executives with excellent leadership and operational management skills. The Company President does not appear, from the letter, to have formal business credentials.
- A letter from the Company Human Resource Director that verifies that Dana has a firm grasp of principles in human resource management, effectively managed her work-force, and displayed excellent judgment, sensitivity and planning in the biggest human resource undertaking in the company's history, the closing of 10 stores. He indicates that he has an MBA.
- A Company document written by Dana that outlines the plan she developed for the closing of the 10 stores and the layoff of over 50 employees. Dana addresses how employees will be informed of the layoffs, the benefit package she intends to offer long-term employees, the schedule effecting the layoffs and closures, and other necessary details.
- A copy of an employee evaluation she conducted within the last year (used with the permission of the employee).







# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 4—Manuel

This activity is focused on applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Credit Request

He is requesting placement as a final year apprentice (those of you who are vocational instructors know that this will usually be a decision made by the Apprenticeship Branch, not an instructor. Imagine that this assessment has been subcontracted to the institutions).

## Overview of Evidence

- An expanded resume which outlines his employment history as an electrician prior to coming to Canada from Central America.
- A copy of a credential gained at a post-secondary institution in Central America.
- A letter from his landlord verifying that he did all of the work of rewiring the rental home.
- A copy of the results of the inspection confirming that the work was completed to code standards.

**H6d**





# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 5—Sheila

This activity is focused on the applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Credit Request

She is requesting credit for Computer Imaging I & II      6 credits

## Overview of Evidence

- An expanded resume outlining her relevant work and volunteer experience.
- A description of the computer software and hardware she is familiar with and the applications she has utilized.
- A copy of the promotional material she developed for the Art Show—brochure, poster, entry ticket and letterhead.
- Sample brochures she has produced at work.
- A description of the non-credit desktop publishing course she completed.





# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 6—Henrietta

This activity is focused on applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Credit Request

Henrietta is requesting credit for all of the introductory courses in Office Administration (Business English, filing and office procedures, keyboarding, record keeping, business math & calculators, customer relations skills, machine transcription, office microcomputers) as well as beginning bookkeeping.

## Overview of Evidence

- A detailed account of her responsibilities in the management of the home-based business.
- Samples of correspondence with customers and suppliers that she composed and prepared.
- An order book that she had organized and prepared that listed and described all of their stock, outlined list prices, and included a pull out order form.
- A description of the office system she established for filing, record keeping and office procedures.
- A letter from the accountant verifying that she was competent in general bookkeeping, and had a thorough understanding of the process.
- A letter from a former customer (written on his business letterhead) verifying that he found Henrietta to be an excellent businesswoman with good customer relations.

**H6f**





# Candidate Evidence

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## Profile 7—Edward

This activity is focused on the applying the technical requirements to evidence and on planning an assessment to rectify any deficits in evidence. We are not trying to ascertain whether the evidence meets the standard for receiving credit as we are not necessarily content experts in this field nor do we have actual evidence to consider. The questions to consider are whether these pieces of evidence, as described, are valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

As the faculty experts in English you will be considering his credit request for English 203 and English 356.

## Credit Request

- Philosophy 100      Introduction to Philosophy
- English 203        Introduction to Public Speaking
- English 356        German Literature 1700–1850

## Overview of Evidence

- A narrative account of his experience as it relates to the two courses—first his union activities, secondly, his relationship with his grandfather and the books they read and discussed together.
- A copy of the prepared speech he gave at the conference on “Impacting Safety Awareness of Workers and Management.”
- A letter from the union president verifying that Edward was an effective public speaker, often speaking very persuasively at union meetings on many different topics.
- A letter from a company manager verifying that Edward had on three occasions effectively addressed the mill management on worker safety.
- A one-page description for each of eight works of German literature that outlined the plot and major themes in the work (four that were specifically on the course syllabus and four that were not).







## Assessment Plan

Name of Course or Program Learning Outcome: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Criteria or Expected Learning Outcomes: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence Provided	Comments	Additional Evidence Required	Comments	Result



H7



# Common Pitfalls in Assessment

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## **The halo effect**

This is a common type of error in which the assessor makes the assumption that if one piece of evidence is good or bad, all the candidate's evidence will be equally good or bad.

## **First impressions**

In this situation, the assessor uses the assessment process to confirm that his or her initial impressions were correct.

## **Contrast effect**

This arises when the outcomes of an assessment are determined by comparing a particular candidate with a preceding one, whether good or bad.

## **Stereotyping**

This refers to judgments made about a candidate based on presupposed characteristics of the individual and/or the evidence presented.

## **Similar to me**

This occurs when a candidate or the evidence is judged favourably because the assessor perceives a strong similarity between the candidate and him or herself.

## **Giving more weight to positives than to negatives**

This may occur when a candidate's evidence or performance is contrary to what the assessor expects. This sometimes results in the assessor imposing unrealistic expectations on the candidate for the remainder of the assessment.

## **Experimenter effect**

This occurs when the candidate performs or acts differently than would be expected because of the presence of the assessor. This effect is bound to be present to some degree in most assessment situations; it does not mean that the candidate's performance will be unacceptable.

## **Assessing progress rather than achievement**

This occurs when the assessor pays too much attention to the effort or progress of a particular candidate, rather than to his or her attainments against the standards or learning outcomes. To the best of the assessor's ability, the candidate, and his or her evidence, should always be judged against the standards.

## **Lack of direction**

In this instance assessors are not clear what it is they are assessing. It is important for assessors to be familiar with the standards or learning outcomes and know in advance the nature of the evidence or performance they are seeking.

## **Assessors answering their own questions**

This occurs most often during oral assessments, particularly when assessors are not used to administering oral questions, and are not familiar with the standards, or are uncomfortable in working with adults.

## **Illusion of validity**

This occurs when the assessor feels good about his or her decision, and therefore assumes it must be correct. However, this may mean that the assessor has found the evidence particularly interesting or the candidate particularly likable rather than able.



## Key Points to Quality Assessment Practice

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- Learners need to be actively involved in the assessment of their own learning achievements
- Educators have primary responsibility for establishing learning and assessment criteria (there is no difference) and for ensuring that validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity of the evidence
- Assessment processes should relate to course, program or institutional goals. These goals need to be clear, concise and understandable to all who need to use them—learners, advisors, assessors, other institutions (e.g., universities and perhaps employers)
- Assessment involves expert judgment based on explicit performance criteria.
- Assessment should reflect multiple experiences and the use of diverse evidence to maximize the learner's likelihood of success. Diverse evidence includes personal reports, self-assessment, and products of the learner's achievement such as demonstrations, artifacts and tests, and affirmations of others (letters of validation/testimonials).
- Sound assessment needs to include structured and constructive feedback to the learner, on areas of success and those needing improvement.
- Self-assessment is essential to good assessment whatever the context. PLA cultivates this as a natural part of the process.





# Personal Development Plan

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## The Current Reality

1. In reviewing your experience in assessment to-date and the material covered today what are your strengths? Where do you need to improve?

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2. What conditions, situations or forces in your environment promote quality assessment?

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3. What conditions, situations, or forces in your environment constitute barriers to quality assessment?

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**H10a**







## The Vision

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1. Describe your vision of an assessment process in your program or discipline that would be flexible and responsive to the diverse evidence generated outside of the classroom context, and meets the technical requirements of quality assessment.

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2. To move toward this vision

a) What knowledge do you need to acquire?

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b) What skills do you need to acquire?

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c) What tools need to be developed by you and by others?

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d) What resources do you need?

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e) Other?

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**H10b**





## The Next Few Steps

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What is one step you can take that would move you toward your vision?

1. Within the next week?

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2. Within the next month?

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3. Within the next six months?

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4. Over the next year?

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H10c





# Purpose

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- ✓ **Provide an introduction to the basic principles and processes of assessment**
- ✓ **Enable assessors to review requirements of sound assessment practice and consider a range of flexible assessment options**





# **Introduction to Assessment**

**At the end of this module, participants will be able to:**

- ✓ Describe basic principles of sound assessment and acceptable forms of diverse evidence
- ✓ Apply technical requirements
- ✓ Develop initial assessment plans
- ✓ Identify frequent assessment pitfalls
- ✓ Develop a personal development plan

T2



65





# Principles of Sound Assessment

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## Essential Ingredients:

- ✓ Clear Learning Outcomes/Expectations
- ✓ Technical Requirements
- ✓ Systematic Process





# Evidence

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## Direct Evidence

- ✓ What the candidate says
- ✓ Products or artifacts that the candidate has produced

## Indirect Evidence

- ✓ What others say or observe about the candidate

T4



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# PLA Methods

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- ✓ **Portfolio**
- ✓ **Personal Profile**
- ✓ **Oral Assessment**
- ✓ **Products**
- ✓ **Exams**
  - Instructor-developed
  - Standardized
- ✓ **Demonstration**
  - Lab
  - Role-play
  - Simulation
  - Worksite
  - Video or audio tape

T5





- ✓ **Halo effect**
- ✓ **First impressions**
- ✓ **Contrast effect**
- ✓ **Stereotyping**
- ✓ **Similar to me**
- ✓ **Giving more weight to positives than negatives**
- ✓ **Experimenter effect**
- ✓ **Assessing progress rather than achievement**
- ✓ **Lack of direction**
- ✓ **Assessors answering their own questions**
- ✓ **Illusion of validity**









