

● ENSURING QUALITY & COST EFFECTIVENESS



module 9

P R I O R L E A R N I N G A S S E S S M E N T I N B R I T I S H C O L U M B I A

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Marketing Department
Open Learning Agency
4355 Mathissi Place
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Canada V5G 4S8
Telephone: 604-431-3210
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Email: catalogue@ola.bc.ca
Order number: PLA001

For further information regarding
Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia contact:
Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology
Sixth Floor, 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada V8W 3K4
Website: <http://www.ctt.bc.ca>

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The purpose of this module is to assist participants in:

- Determining what is meant by quality when associated with PLA
- Determining how to maximise quality
- Establishing mechanisms to monitor the quality of PLA activities

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

- Identify the requirements for a sound PLA quality-assurance mechanism
- Identify a quality-assurance mechanism that is appropriate in the participants' institution
- Identify tools and strategies for collecting data on the appropriateness of credits awarded and denied through PLA
- Develop a monitoring, evaluation, and improvement plan

Facilitation Plan

9:00 am:	Warm-up
9:30 am:	Quality Points
9:55 am:	Quality Points in PLA
10:30 am:	Break
10:45 am:	Quality Assurance
11:25 am:	Data Collection & Evaluation
12:05 pm:	Wrap-up

You can introduce the schedule for the module based on your own ideas or patterned after the suggested plan. The timing for each part of the module is included as a guide. It can, of course, be adjusted to fit your circumstances. Review the plan of the module with the participants.

Warm-up

It is important to begin the day by having participants meet, introduce one another (this includes you, the facilitator), and have some interaction.



Activity

Have participants pair up, introduce each other, and briefly discuss for five minutes their interest or motivation in attending this module.

Have each participant introduce his or her partner and motivation for attending the module, to the large group.



Discuss and clarify the contents and purpose of this module (**T1** and **T2**).

In the large group, ask each participant to speak to one expectation, issue or concern he or she may have about the 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.*

This is an opportunity to ensure that the participants have a working knowledge of PLA. You can check this by doing a quick review of the other modules. As you review the previous modules, quickly ask participants what they learned. Be prepared to prompt them if necessary. Typical contributions should include:

- Identify the key characteristics and benefits of a sound model of PLA
- Present a range of different strategies for working with candidates
- Design and carry out assessments using diverse evidence
- Develop strategies for generating support for PLA within their organisation and attracting candidates to the services provided
- Identify strategies for providing new learning opportunities for PLA candidates
- Identify institutional policies, systems and structures that need to be modified or created
- Identify and develop support materials for candidates, faculty and administrators

Introduce the term Quality Points. This term is used throughout the module to refer to factors that determine the level of quality that individuals associate with an event, a process, or a product.

It will be easier for the participants to focus on quality if you use the metaphor of a consumer product that is familiar to everyone.

Begin by asking the group:

“Who has purchased a new car within the last three years?”

Ask participants to think about the factors associated with this purchase that helped them to determine the level of quality associated with the entire experience:

- Initial determination of needs and desires
- Gathering of information about potential automobiles to satisfy these needs and desires
- Product acquisition
- Provision of after-market service

Since they have been through the experience, would they be able to provide suggestions to the dealership as to how the quality of service could be improved? Was there any type of feedback mechanism provided by the dealership or the manufacturer? Ask someone to describe that feedback mechanism.

Automobile manufacturers are focusing on quality improvement these days. Ask participants what they should look for to make their next car-buying experience more satisfying (less painful).

! *Remember: We are now trying to determine what advice we could give to the manufacturer.*

Have the group prompt you as you make a list of all of the activities that form the various steps in the purchase. To help with organisation of the feedback, work through the entire activity in chronological order. Keep the points concise since you will return to this list later in the workshop.

- ! *Note: It is very easy to lose control of the workshop at this point. The participants may try to wander off on tangents and to recount “war stories” that involve their personal experiences with auto purchases. A good technique to bring them back on course is to reword their comments in concise point form to keep them on topic.*

For now, record only the key points. The relevance of these key Quality Points to PLA will be determined in the next session by the participants.

Key Quality Points associated with the auto purchase are:

- Product information
- Product reputation
- Customer satisfaction (overall)
- Sales activity
- Cost
- Trade-in
- Product satisfaction
- After-market service and follow-up



Activity



The objective of this session is to identify the Quality Points of PLA.

Divide the participants into enough groups so that there is one quality point from the list for each group. Distribute the handout PLA Quality Points (H1) to the groups. Have participants fill in the key Quality Points from the list established during the previous activity.

The task is to establish what aspects of PLA should be assessed to determine its quality. The participants are to identify PLA-related points that are comparable to their counterparts in the auto purchase.

Each group is to write the quality point in the appropriate section of the form, and then to list all of the PLA-related activities that are associated with this quality point.

For Example:

Automotive Example

Product information

PLA Quality Points

Availability of PLA

Description of procedures to be followed

Advising services available

Cost information

When the group reconvenes, have a spokesperson from each group describe the Quality Points that have been identified. After each group has reported, ask if there is anything to add. Have the group members make any additions necessary. Collect and save the handouts for recording and distribution.

Tell participants they have now established the points or factors that will determine the perceived quality of their PLA activity.

Ask the group to now consider the identification of quality targets for each point or factor. Facilitate the discussion of the large group by asking the following questions:

- How will we know that our product (PLA) is provided in a high-quality manner?
- Is it feasible to establish quality targets for PLA?
- What targets should be set for the points or factors just identified?

For example, considering the following points or factors, some of the targets could be:

- *Availability of PLA:* What percentage of courses/programs across the institution offer PLA? Can this be phased in to increase year by year?
- *Description of procedures:* Can the candidates understand these procedures? Are the processes available? Do staff members have difficulty with the procedures?
- *Advisement availability:* What is the number of clients per advisor and amount of time required per client? What questions are raised by Advisors?
- *Cost information:* Is it consistent from client to client? Is it consistent from program to program and course to course? Is the basis for charges clear and understandable? How does it compare with other institutions?



Break

15 minutes

The purpose of this session is to give participants an opportunity to think through how they will actually ensure the Quality Points they listed on their worksheets. Remind them that quality only happens because people work together and learn from their mistakes and successes.



Activity

Ask participants to form into groups of four or five. Using their worksheets, ask them to select the three most critical areas in which they would like to ensure quality. For each of these, ask them to develop success criteria by which they would know that quality was present.

In doing this exercise remind them that many different people may be in a position to evaluate their services—learners, advisors, assessors, employers, Ministry personnel, etc. Suggest the participants think inclusively as they develop their success criteria.

For each of the three areas they have identified, ask them to put their success criteria on a flip chart. Post all material around the room and ask the group, as a whole, to review the full spectrum of responses.

As the facilitator, point out areas of comparability or difference.

Remind participants that all of this material will be typed up and distributed after the session so that they will have a good resource to use in their own institutions or departments.



Suggest to participants that they can have the clearest success criteria in the world. But if they do not have a plan to collect data or information on a regular basis, they will never really know whether they have achieved the criteria or not. In this session participants will have an opportunity to think about how they can collect the necessary information.

Preface the next activity by suggesting that there are many different levels of institutional monitoring and evaluation, from simple to quite complex. Depending on their institutional needs and the available resources, they will want to plan out what will work best for them.



Activity

Ask the participants to work through each of the three areas they identified in the previous exercise. For each one ask them to identify:

- Who could provide the information they need?
- In what form could it be collected?
- When/how often will they need it?
- What will they do with it once they have it?
- Who will oversee this process and disseminate the outcomes?

You may want to give an example, such as the one provided below:

<i>Quality area:</i>	Advising meets the needs of all PLA candidates
<i>Success criteria:</i>	There are no complaints for one year 95% of the candidates receive the credit they requested

Here is an example of monitoring and evaluation data-collection methods:

- *Who could provide the information they need?*
PLA candidates and assessors
- *In what form could it be collected?*
Written questionnaire
- *When/how often will they need it?*
At the completion of each assessment
- *What will they do with it once they have it?*
Summarise data and provide feedback to advisor and assessor team
- *Who will oversee this process and disseminate the outcomes?*
PLA Coordinator

Once all the groups have completed this activity, ask each group to present one example of their work. Ask participants to consider these points:

- Will it provide a true picture of the Quality Point being looked at?
- Is it cost-effective?
- Will it provide for a continuous-improvement loop?

Collect all of the handouts and inform participants that these will be typed up and redistributed for review and modification.

Review the purpose of the module.

Refer to the questions and concerns in the Parking Lot. Review the items that have been addressed through the course of the day. For those items not addressed, ask participants to suggest possible means of follow-up.

Remember to distribute and collect the evaluation questionnaire, emphasising its importance to the improvement and effectiveness of education/training sessions involving Prior Learning Assessment.

Thank participants for their active interest and involvement in this PLA session.

PLA Quality Points

Automotive Example	PLA Points



Purpose

This module will assist participants to:

- Determine quality in PLA
- Determine how to maximise quality
- Establish mechanisms to monitor the quality of PLA activities

T1



13

Ensuring Quality & Cost Effectiveness

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

- Identify an appropriate quality-assurance mechanism for PLA
- Identify data collection tools
- Develop a monitoring, evaluation and improvement plan

T2



15

