
Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy

Policy Sponsor:	Director, Centre for Learning Accreditation
Policy Number:	N/A
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Review Date:	This policy will be reviewed annually
Procedures:	Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Procedures

Purpose

The Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy is premised on the belief that prior learning assessment and recognition provides a viable process for learners to bring forward and display the prior experiential and non-formal learning that they hold. At Athabasca University (AU), such learning is assessed by content experts who determine the relevance of the learning to the credential that the learner seeks.

Definitions

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)	PLAR is a systematic process to evaluate and give credit, where appropriate, to learning that has been gained through work experience, informal training, and life experience.
Program-Based Portfolio Assessment	Learner-centred PLAR assessment using program-based outcomes as criteria.
Course-Based Portfolio Assessment	Learner-centred PLAR assessment using course-based outcomes as criteria.



Policy

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; maintaining appropriate records and systems of record keeping; observing confidentiality and professionalism in the handling of student files and materials. Each AU academic program council will make known the number of credits that may be gained from the prior learning assessment and recognition process and, with assistance from the CLA as/if required, will develop appropriate learning criteria for learners using the PLAR process.

Active students who are enrolled in a program of study at AU may submit a course-based or program-based portfolio for assessment. The type of portfolio submitted is dependent upon the program in which the student is enrolled.

PLAR credits will be allocated towards the AU credential in which a student is enrolled. If a student changes programs, any AU-awarded existing PLAR credits are subject to review to determine their applicability to the new program. If necessary and possible under the new program regulations, students may submit a new PLAR application.

Portfolio assessed credits awarded in a completed certificate or other credential laddering into an AU degree will be carried forward into that degree. Students who have submitted a portfolio for a certificate, diploma or degree program may not submit the same material, either from a previous institution or from within AU, for PLAR assessment towards a second credential.

The CLA will have an Advisory Committee composed of representatives from within the university and external stakeholders representing private (employers, unions, and equity-seeking groups) and public (post-secondary and government) sectors knowledgeable in prior learning assessment and recognition. The committee shall meet at least twice annually at the call of the CLA Director for the purpose of reviewing and informing the implementation of PLAR at AU.

The CLA will have an internal PLAR Council composed of representatives from each AU program area and a representative from the Office of the Registrar. The PLAR Council will meet quarterly or as needed. Program representatives will be knowledgeable about PLAR and engaged in the PLAR process, serving as assessors or program contacts for PLAR. This council will advise on and disseminate information about the implementation of PLAR at AU.

Applicable Legislation/Regulation

[*Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*](#)

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

[Undergraduate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition \(PLAR\) Procedures](#)



History

Approved by Athabasca University Academic Council, June 7, 2000, Motion No. 157-9

Further Information

Appendix A Athabasca University's PLAR process adheres to and endorses the Standards for Quality Assurance in PLAR adopted by the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT). Those standards are listed below.

CAEL's Standards for Quality Assurance in PLAR

1. Credit should be awarded only for learning and not for experience.
2. College credit should be awarded only for university-level* learning.
3. Credit should be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
4. The determination of competence levels and credit awards must be made by academic experts in the appropriate subject matter.
5. Credit should be appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted.
6. Credit awards and their transcript entries should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should receive adequate training for the functions they perform, and there should be provision for their continued professional development.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised as needed to reflect changes in needs being served and in the state of assessment arts.

* CAEL, as an American organization, uses "college" to mean universities and colleges in their system of post-secondary education. Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT) Principles and Standards for Recognition of Prior Learning:



I. Academic Standards

1. Recognition of prior learning should be based on demonstrated learning.
2. Recognition should be appropriate to the course or program in which it is accepted.
3. Recognition of prior learning should be consistent with the achievement levels required by the post-secondary program in which it is accepted.
4. Recognition of prior learning should be for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
5. Assessment of prior learning by post-secondary institutions should be made by content specialists, with external advice as necessary.

II. Administrative Standards

1. Official notation of the recognition of prior learning on post-secondary institution transcripts and student records should be consistent with the institution's policies and procedures relating to maintenance of student records.
2. Institutional policies and procedures applied to assessment should be fully disclosed.
3. All personnel involved in the assessment of prior learning should receive training for the functions they perform, and there should be provision for their continued professional development in areas related to recognition of prior learning.
4. Institutional recognition of prior learning policies and practices should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised as needed. In keeping with its terms of reference, Council (ACAT) shall monitor the effectiveness of recognition of prior learning policies and practices within the Alberta post-secondary system.