(PLAR) Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition Resource Guide

Winter 2014
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Introduction

The purpose of this resource guide is to help you through the following 5 steps in the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process:

1. **Awareness** – Understand PLAR and how it relates to the GenEd Themes.
2. **Access** – Determine eligibility and assessment criteria.
3. **Advisory** – Meet with PLAR Administrator to discuss questions, application and fees.
4. **Assessment** – Submit portfolio for evaluation.
5. **Achievement** – Credit recognition granted if assessment is successful.

*Please Note: This Resource Guide is for Theme 4 – Personal Understanding (GED0014) PLAR only.*
PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) is designed for people who have acquired significant knowledge and skills in different learning settings and experiences outside of traditional accredited post-secondary institutions. If you have acquired such skills and knowledge then you have the opportunity to have your learning related to the Gen Ed theme assessed and possibly recognized in the form of academic credit.

Other than in formal classroom situations, learning can be gained through:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-formal learning</th>
<th>Non-formal learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Employment experience</td>
<td>✓ Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Military training or service</td>
<td>✓ Corporate Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Volunteer work or community service</td>
<td>✓ Personal and professional development (which has not led to a credit degree, certificate, or diploma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Life, culture, and heritage experience</td>
<td>✓ Independent study or non-college courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Travel and residency</td>
<td>✓ Skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Teaching in foreign countries</td>
<td>✓ Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC's)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Hobbies</td>
<td>✓ Workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Benefits of PLAR

- Accelerate program of study completion.
- Save time by taking fewer classes.
- Gain confidence and self-esteem from having your previous accomplishments recognized.
- Strengthen the links between your formal studies and your work and life experience.
- May decrease time to graduation.
- May reduce the cost of education.
- Offers a reflective learning experience for future success.

Depending on the length of your program, there are one or two general education online electives. General Education courses cover areas of general interest and are divided into five themes:

- Theme 1 – Arts in Society
- Theme 2 - Civic Life
- Theme 3 - Social and Cultural Understanding
- Theme 4 - Personal Understanding
- Theme 5 - Science and Technology

Check your program of study to ensure this theme is eligible for PLAR.
Step 2: Access

Is This Theme For You?

Theme 4: Personal Understanding (GED0014)

Rationale – Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content – Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

Theme Objectives

- Define life-long understanding and development of one’s self as an integrated physiological and psychological entity.
- Analyze the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally
- Explore the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose
- Consider institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way
- Compare the individual within a variety of contexts

In Step 1, you determined which Theme(s) were eligible for PLAR based on your program of study. Out of those eligible themes, you now need to determine which theme is the best match for your prior learning and experience. Using the following self-evaluation to determine what you have done in the past that might qualify you for a PLAR credit for Personal Understanding Theme (GED014).
Self-Evaluation

1. Have you:
   a. Assessed your own learning style?
   b. Undertaken a fitness or wellness program?
   c. Read books, articles, journals and more on topics related to human development theories?
   d. Integrated concepts such as well-being and mindfulness into your lifestyle?

If you answered NO to all of the above, then visit the PLAR website at http://www3.algonquincollege.com/plar/gened-access/ to find a more appropriate General Education Theme to challenge.

If you answered yes to any of the above, take a blank piece of paper write down specific prior learning that relates to any of the questions about. You should think of experiences or learning you have had outside of a formal learning environment – specifically, ones that:

✓ Lasted for more than a few days (ideally you were involved for months or even years).
✓ Allowed you to consider new ideas about yourself, your community, and the world.
✓ Exposed you to new concepts, particularly those related to theory, history, and ethics.
✓ Gave you the opportunity to acquire more than facts and skills.

| If your brief description looks like the example below, Theme 4 – Personal Understanding is not a good match for you. | If your brief description looks like the example below, Theme 4 – Personal Understanding is possibly a good match for you. |
| Example: “I read a book by Dr. Phil.” | Example: “For the past year, I have been taking steps to improve my lifestyle. I consulted a fitness trainer, and have followed a physical training program. In addition, I have met with a dietician, have been reading a great deal about healthful eating practices, and have changed my own eating habits dramatically. I can already see the positive effects these changes have made.” |
Step 3: Advisory

Meet with the PLAR Administrator

If, after you have completed the self-evaluation in step two, your experience and prior learning are similar to example B, then the next step is to go to the PLAR office (Room C-205 – Woodroffe Campus) to meet with the PLAR administrator. The PLAR administrator will provide details on completing the application, fees and the assessment process.

Step 4: Assessment

Portfolio Submission

Guidelines to determine eligibility:

1. Student’s program of study must permit theme GED0014 as an elective choice.
2. Student must submit a portfolio following general PLAR portfolio guidelines and including the components of the targeted Personal Understanding portfolio identified below.

What is a portfolio?

The portfolio is a binder of information, which describes your relevant experience, original created works and identifies and analyses your learning achievements and provides validation through a collection of documents.

There are three essential components in an Educational Portfolio for Theme 4.

1. The Introductory Letter

Your Introduction letter should have the following components:

   a) Introduction - introduce yourself and the purpose of the portfolio. (i.e. to obtain credit in GED0014: Personal Understanding).
   b) A brief statement on why you feel you have the applicable learning and prior experience to be able to PLAR this theme.
   c) Signed statement that’s verifies you are the rightful owner of all evidence included in your portfolio.
   d) not be more than one page
   e) be written in a narrative form

2. Résumé

The résumé is a general summary of your education, employment and arts experience background. It should be written to emphasize your strengths and abilities to highlight your accomplishments. The following areas of information should be included:

   a) education
   b) work experience
   c) activities and interests
   d) career aims or goals
   e) references
3. **Summary of Your Learning Related to Personal Understanding**

This section is the key element in the portfolio. It identifies and demonstrates the learning you have gained from relevant work and life experience, which matches the broad objectives for this goal area.

**Goal of Personal Understanding**

Gain greater self-awareness, intellectual growth, well-being, and understanding of others.

**Broad Objectives of Personal Understanding** (select a minimum of 3 objectives)

a) Identify two values that are important to you and explain how they impact your personal goals.

b) Select one theory of human development and describe your own personal life and relationships using terms from that theory.

c) Explain how you have integrated the concept of well-being into your lifestyle.

d) Looking at yourself as a learner, articulate your own learning style.

For each objective chosen, write a one-page summary in narrative form that:

a) describes your learning accomplishments that relate to the objectives.

b) shows how your learning achievements match the broad objectives.

Once you have compiled your portfolio, please submit it to the PLAR office for assessment (Room C-205 – Woodroffe Campus). An assessor will evaluate your portfolio to determine if you are eligible to receive credit for this theme. The PLAR administrator will contact you with your results once the assessment is complete.

**CR Step 5: Achievement**

**Credit Recognition**

An assessor will review your portfolio. Credit recognition will be granted for the Personal Understanding Theme (GED 0014) if all assessment criteria in step 4 are met.

**For More Information:**

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General Education Information:  
http://www3.algonquincollege.com/gened/  
http://www3.algonquincollege.com/directives/policy/general-education/

PLAR information:  
http://www3.algonquincollege.com/plar/  