

Theme 2 – Civic Life (GED0012) PLAR

General Education

The purpose of General Education (Gen Ed) courses in the Ontario college system is to develop educated citizens who are aware of the diversity, complexity and richness of human life and are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively and positively to the society in which they live and work.

Gen Ed courses provide opportunities for learners to explore questions related to the issues and values raised by the subject matter, along with their application to contemporary life, covering at least two of the following:

- ethics and values
- historical context
- theoretical origins

General Education Themes

Depending on their length, Algonquin College programs typically include one or two general education online electives. [General Education courses](#) cover areas of general interest and are divided into five themes:

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

Check your program of study to determine which of the above themes are available to you within your program. This will help you decide which Student Resource Guide to use as you apply for credit through the PLAR process.

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Rationale

For people to live responsibly and reach their potential as individuals and citizens in society, they must understand the human relationship patterns that underlie orderly conduct within that society's various structural units. Informed people must understand the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and be aware of international issues and their effects on Canada and its place in the international community.

Content

Courses in this area provide students with an understanding of the meaning of rights, freedoms, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between these various levels and their constituents.

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Objectives

Here are the learning outcomes associated with courses within the Civic Life Gen Ed theme.

One Human to Another

1. Discuss what it means for people to live responsibly and reach their potential as individuals and citizens in society.
2. Examine human relationship patterns that underlie the orderly interactions within society's various structural units.

The Group

3. Explain the meaning of rights, freedoms and participation in community and public life.
4. Summarize the function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context.
5. Analyze the historical underpinnings of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government and their constituents in Canada.

Wider Context

6. Compare civic life across diverse communities at the local, national and global level.
7. Discuss Canada's place in the international community.
8. Analyze international issues and their effects on Canada.

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Are You Eligible for PLAR Credit under Theme 2? Self-Assessment

Complete the following self-evaluation to determine which past experiences you have that might qualify you for a Civic Life Theme (GED0012) PLAR credit.

Before you devote your time and financial resources to this PLAR application, please answer **Yes** or **No** to the following four questions to determine if your application in Gen Ed Theme 2 is likely to succeed.

Have you ever...

1. been an avid enthusiast of municipal, provincial, national, and/or international politics?
2. studied Canadian history, political science, the justice system, or those of other cultures?
3. volunteered in a community organization (e.g., sports team, church, food bank or shelter) or for various events, fostered a child, or helped a neighbour on an ongoing basis?
4. contributed to a political, social justice, human rights, or environmental cause?

If you answered **No** to all of the above, please visit the [PLAR website](#) to choose a more appropriate General Education Theme to PLAR.

If you answered **Yes** to any of the above, ask yourself if your experience and prior learning is of suitable depth for a successful PLAR application. Your application will have a good chance of succeeding if you are confident that your civic life experience:

1. lasted for months or years rather than a few days or weeks (Duration)
2. helped you reflect on new ideas about yourself, your community and the world (Impact)
3. exposed you to new concepts, especially related to theory, history and ethics (Learning)
4. provided you with a depth of life experience beyond mere facts and skills (Experience)

Here are some life experience examples that would NOT result in a successful Gen Ed Theme 2 PLAR:

- ✗ *“I volunteered at my grandma’s bingo thing once when I was 8 or 9. Can I get a B9!”*
- ✗ *“I read the news from time to time. Politics, stuff like that. Probably a good idea to keep tabs on what the government is up to, you know?”*

On the other hand, the following experiences MAY result in a successful Gen Ed Theme 2 PLAR:

- ✓ *“I have been volunteering through my church since I was about 10 years old. We run a soup kitchen; do food, clothing, and toys-for-tots drives for underprivileged families around Christmas time; and participate in various other funding drives like for United Way.”*
- ✓ *“I’ve been a political junkie for years. Whether it’s city council’s decisions on garbage collection, provincial election all-candidates debates, the federal budget, or international summits—I can talk for hours about these things because there’s probably nothing more important to how we live our lives.”*

If you believe your experiences are of a suitable depth, please answer the four self-assessment questions again, this time using the [online self-assessment form](#). If you are able to

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provide evidence of learning for all four questions in any one section, you may be a good candidate to proceed with the PLAR process.

The next step is to [apply online for a PLAR](#), and attach your completed [self-assessment form](#).



The academic area will confirm whether you are a good candidate for this PLAR. It is recommended that you do not begin working on your Portfolio until your candidacy has been approved.

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Portfolio Submission Guidelines

Once your candidacy for PLAR has been confirmed, you can begin working on your Portfolio.

There are three essential components of the Portfolio:

1. Cover Letter

Your one-page cover letter must:

- a) begin with a paragraph that states the purpose of the application (i.e., to obtain credit in GED0012: General Education Theme 2 – Civic Life) and introduces you by explaining what you are doing now and which goal a successful PLAR will help you achieve.
- b) in your main body paragraph, explain why you feel you qualify for this PLAR theme by summarizing how you have the related learning and prior experience to meet the Civic Life Theme Objectives on page 2 above. You may also want to provide more detailed answers to the four questions above (in the “Have You Ever?” section).
- c) conclude with a statement verifying that you own all the evidence included in the enclosed Portfolio.
- d) follow the detailed instructions in the “PLAR Portfolio Instructions and Rubric” section starting on the next page.
- e) be written in a narrative form (without bullet points) and proofread for spelling and grammar.
- f) not exceed one 8.5 by 11” page in length.

2. Civic Life Experience or Accomplishments Summary Report

This key Portfolio component showcases your art or art-related work and shows your ability to distinguish between workplace/life experience (the act of doing something) and the significant learning that results from it. To address Theme 2 Objectives (page 2 above), this section must include a title, introduction, and either:

- a) a photo essay with at least five items showcasing your event- and/or long-running-service-oriented volunteer experience, or work on a cause or campaign, each accompanied by a written summary of learning derived from the particular experience;

OR

- b) evidence of a strong interest in or study of politics, history, or justice in the form of five past or present written commentaries (e.g., on news items; provide a bibliography), blogs, analytical essays, critical reviews, correspondence (e.g., your part of an email exchange), or links to other media that you have produced, along with a written summary of learning derived from each.

3. Personal Reflection Essays

- a) Write a two-page essay explaining the role and impact of the type of civic engagement you showcase in your Civic Life Experience or Accomplishments Summary Report in culture and society, focusing especially on addressing Theme 2 Objectives 4-8 (see page 2 above).

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- b) Write a one-page reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have affected you over time. To focus on addressing Theme 2 Objectives 1-3, summarize:
1. what impression you think your civic engagement gives about your worldview
 2. the influence that your politics or ethos has had on your own self-awareness
 3. the influence that politics, history, or justice has had on your personal and professional development
 4. what role you play in society as an engaged citizen

The **PLAR Portfolio – Instructions and Rubric** on the following pages provide more detailed instructions.

Note on your submission: once you have completed your Portfolio, submit an electronic copy to the PLAR Office while keeping original documents for possible future use.

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PLAR Portfolio – Instructions and Rubric

Assessment of Your Portfolio

The instructions and rubrics below explain the assessment for each of the three parts of your Portfolio:

- Cover Letter
- Civic Life Experience or Accomplishments Summary Report Cover Letter
- Personal Reflection Essay

To ensure a successful PLAR Portfolio, please follow the description given under the “Excellent” heading for each of the three portfolio components of the rubric. Avoid the mistakes listed under the “Unsatisfactory” level of achievement.

The success of your Portfolio depends on achieving a minimum score as noted at the bottom of each of the three individual component rubrics. By doing so, you will meet or exceed the required **minimum total of 65 out of 130 possible points** for all three parts combined.

1. Cover Letter

Format

Please use the following formatting guidelines for your cover letter.

1. Your street address
2. Date line
3. Recipient address
4. Subject line
5. Recipient salutation
6. Body consisting of three blocked paragraphs
7. Closing goodwill statement
8. Your signature and full printed name
9. All on one 8.5” by 11” page with single-spaced lines, double between items 1-8, and a consistent font.

Excellent	All 9 format components are included in the required order.	5 points
Satisfactory	Some of the 9 format components are absent, presented in the wrong order or incomplete.	3-4 points
Improvable	Many of the 9 format components are absent, presented in the wrong order or incomplete.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	No cover letter provided, or none of the 9 format components followed.	0 points

Opening Paragraph

State:

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1. the purpose of the application (to obtain credit in GED0012: General Education Theme 2 – Civic Life);
2. introduce yourself by explaining what you are doing now; and
3. describe what ultimate goal this application will help you achieve.

Excellent	All three of the required points are stated clearly in the given order.	5 points
Satisfactory	Two or three of the three required points are stated clearly, but one or two are unclear, in the wrong order and/or mixed with some irrelevant, redundant or repeated detail.	3-4 points
Improvable	One or two of the three required points are stated clearly, but the others are absent, unclear, in the wrong order and/or mixed with some irrelevant, redundant or repeated detail.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	Cover letter omits an opening paragraph, or it covers none of the three required points.	0 points

Main Body Paragraph

Summarize how you have the applicable learning and prior experience to meet most of the eight Civic Life Theme Objectives (see page 2 above).

Excellent	Paragraph convincingly, clearly, concisely and coherently summarizes how your prior learning and experience meet most (7-10) of the Theme Objectives.	9-10 points
Satisfactory	Paragraph summarizes how your prior learning and experience meet some (4-6) of the Theme Objectives. There may also be minor problems with clarity, coherence and conciseness.	6-8 points
Improvable	Paragraph summarizes how your prior learning and experience meet 1-3 of the Theme Objectives. The paragraph may also be incoherent (e.g., sentences jump around and run off-topic), too short or too long, with off-topic details and a general lack of clarity.	3-5 points
Unsatisfactory	There is no discernible main body paragraph, or it barely summarizes how your prior learning and experience meet any of the Theme Objectives. Most of the sentences lack clarity and coherence, and/or are riddled with off-topic details.	0-2 points

Closing Sentences

Clear statement verifying that you are the rightful owner of all materials included in the enclosed portfolio, as well as a goodwill expression of thanks to the assessor for considering your application.

Excellent	Closing sentences clearly and concisely state that you are the rightful owner of all materials included in the enclosed	5 points
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	portfolio, as well as thank the assessor for considering your application.	
Satisfactory	Closing sentences state that you are the rightful owner of all materials included in the portfolio and thank the assessor, but there are minor problems with the clarity and conciseness of expression.	3-4 points
Improvable	Closing sentences state that you are the rightful owner of all materials included but don't thank the assessor or vice versa. There may also be problems with the clarity and conciseness of expression.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	Closing is either absent, or doesn't clearly and concisely state that you are the rightful owner of all materials included in the enclosed portfolio, nor does it express thanks to the assessor for considering the application.	0 points

Quality of Writing

Letter content is correct in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and mechanics, and is generally professional in style throughout.

Excellent	Well-written, with few or no spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical or stylistic errors.	5 points
Satisfactory	Generally well-written but with some spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	3-4 points
Improvable	Several spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	Too many errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanics (e.g., capitalization) and/or stylistic errors.	0 points

To gain a PLAR credit, the Cover Letter must score a minimum of 15 out of 30 points.

Points Total	/ 30
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2. Civic Life Experience or Accomplishments Summary Report

Format

All work is contained in a single document with a descriptive title, introduction, and pages that combine learning summary statements, along with photos or writing samples on each page, with a professional overall appearance, a document title and a consistent use of font type/size and headings throughout.

Excellent	The report is titled descriptively, has an introduction page, followed by pages that combine titled learning summary statements and photos or writing samples. The report appears professional, with a consistently-applied font type and size, heading styles and spacing throughout.	5 points
Satisfactory	The report has a title that is not descriptive, the introduction is not on a page of its own, and/or the report has some minor inconsistencies in the font type and size, heading styles, spacing, and/or organization of learning summary statements and photos or writing samples.	3-4 points
Improvable	The report's title is misleading or absent, the introduction is not on a page of its own, the report has many inconsistencies in the font type and size, heading styles and spacing, and lacks organization in its presentation of learning summary statements combined with photos or writing samples.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	The report lacks a title, has many inconsistencies in the font type and size, heading styles and spacing, and lacks organization in its learning summary statements combination with photos or writing samples.	0 points

Introduction

A brief (at least a paragraph but no more than one page) introduction that explains the purpose of the Civic Life or Accomplishments Summary Report and the occasion for its being written, and gives a brief overview of its contents.

Excellent	The report has an introductory page with a clear title ("Introduction") and at least one paragraph that clearly and concisely explains the purpose of the Report and the occasion for its being written, and gives a brief overview of its contents.	5 points
Satisfactory	The report's Introduction is not appropriately titled and does not clearly and concisely explain either the purpose of the Report, the occasion for its being written, or its contents.	3-4 points
Improvable	The report's Introduction is not titled, is not on a page of its own, and/or does not clearly and concisely explain the purpose of the Report, the occasion for its being written and its contents.	1-2 points

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Unsatisfactory	The report omits an Introduction, or includes one that meets none of the requirements.	0 points
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Learning Summary

A title and introductory paragraph summary above each photo or writing sample explains the context and learning that resulted from social and cultural experiences or accomplishments, in relation to the Theme Objectives stated on page 2 above.

Excellent	Above each of the 5 photos or writing samples is a title and 1-2 paragraph summary explaining the context (time, place, people involved, occasion, importance, etc.) and learning that resulted from the civic life experience or accomplishment, and the learning described relates to at least 4-5 of the Theme Objectives.	16-20 points
Satisfactory	The summary paragraphs introducing each photo or writing sample are titled and good but there are only 3-4 of them, or there are 5 of them but they lack clarity and focus when describing the context and learning that resulted, and they relate to only 1-2 of the Theme Objectives.	11-15 points
Improvable	The summary paragraphs introducing each photo or writing sample are good but are untitled, there are only 1-2 of them, or there are more but they don't clearly describe the context and learning that resulted, they do only one of these, and/or they relate to only one or so of the Theme Objectives.	6-10 points
Unsatisfactory	There are no summary paragraphs introducing each photo or writing sample, or they are untitled and so thin that they describe neither the context nor the learning that resulted, nor do they relate in any way to the Theme Objectives.	0-5 points

Photo Essay or Writing Samples

A *photo essay* chronicling your event- and/or long-running service-oriented volunteer experience, or work for a cause or campaign, each featuring you (one photo per page); OR

Writing samples showcasing your interest in or study of politics, history, or justice in the form of five past or present written commentaries on other people's work, blogs, analytical essays, critical reviews, correspondence or links to other media that you have produced.

Excellent	<p>A photo essay with at least 5 photos chronicling your event- and/or long-running-service-oriented volunteer experience, or work for a cause or campaign, each featuring you (one photo per page); OR</p> <p>At least 5 writing samples showcasing your past interest in or study of politics, history, or justice issues (e.g., analytical essays, critical reviews, commentaries, blog postings, or links to other media).</p>	20-25 points
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Satisfactory	<p>You may only have 3-4 photo essay photos chronicling volunteer or campaign/cause work, or you have 5 but they don't all show you performing the said work (perhaps they are promotional materials instead).</p> <p>You may only have 3-4 writing samples or you have five but they don't all convincingly demonstrate a strong interest in the study of politics, history or justice.</p>	13-19 points
Improvable	<p>You may only have 1-2 photo essay photos chronicling volunteer or campaign/cause work, or you have 3-4 but they don't all show you performing the said work (perhaps they are promotional materials instead) or clearly illustrate what you describe in your accompanying Learning Summary Statements.</p> <p>You may only have 1-2 writing samples or you have 3-4 but it isn't entirely clear how they relate to the study of politics, history or justice.</p>	6-12 points
Unsatisfactory	<p>There is no representative selection of evidence of civic life experience, accomplishment, or interest; or evidence is minimal and presented in a manner that defies evaluation and thus the Theme Objectives.</p>	0-5 points

Quality of Writing

The Summary Report is correct in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and mechanics, and is generally professional in style throughout.

Excellent	Well-written, with few or no spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical or stylistic errors.	5 points
Satisfactory	Generally well-written but with some spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	3-4 points
Improvable	Several spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	Too many errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanics (e.g., capitalization) and/or stylistic errors.	0 points

To gain a PLAR credit, the Summary Report must score a minimum of 30 out of 60 points.

Points Total	/ 60
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3. Personal Reflection Essays

Format

The essays fill three single-spaced pages, have a descriptive title and a subheading for each of the two sections named below.

Excellent	The essays fill three single-spaced pages with the title given above and a subheading for each of the two sections named below; the font type and size, heading styles and spacing are consistent throughout.	5 points
Satisfactory	The essays deviate slightly from the format requirement (for example, the title is not the same as that given above), or has minor inconsistencies in the font type and size, heading styles or spacing.	3-4 points
Improvable	The essays are not single-spaced and are inconsistent in font type and size, heading styles and spacing.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	One or more of the essays is absent or disorganized, with too many format errors, such as no title or section headings, multiple line spacing or inconsistencies in font type or size, heading styles or character spacing.	0 points

Section A: Cultural Role and Impact

A two-page original essay on (1) the role that the type of civic engagement you showcase in your Civic Life Summary Report generally plays in culture at large, and (2) its impact on society historically and today, addressing Theme 2 Objectives 4-8.

Excellent	The Personal Reflection Essays document begins with a full, two-page original essay with the subheading “The Role and Impact of [Your Chosen Type of Civic Engagement — e.g., Volunteering] in Society” and explanation of (1) the role that the type of civic engagement you showcase plays in culture at large and (2) its impact on society historically and today; the essay addresses Theme 2 Objectives 4-8 (see page 2 above).	16-20 points
Satisfactory	The Cultural Role and Impact essay is closer to 1.5 pages in length, may not identify your chosen type of civic engagement in the subheading, covers topic (1) in more depth than (2) or vice versa, covers contemporary but not historical aspects for topics (1) or (2) or vice versa, runs slightly off-topic, and/or addresses only 3-4 of Theme 2 Objectives 4-8 given on page 2 above.	11-15 points
Improvable	The Cultural Role and Impact essay is slightly more or less than a page in length, discusses civic life in general rather than the specific type you focus on in your Civic Life Summary Report, fails to follow the required subheading name, covers topic (1) but not (or barely) topic (2) or vice versa, fails to clearly address historical or contemporary	6-10 points

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	aspects for either topic, runs off-topic, and/or addresses only 1-2 of Theme 2 Objectives 4-8 given on page 2 above.	
Unsatisfactory	The Personal Reflection Essays document omits the Cultural Role and Impact essay or it is less than a page in length, vaguely discusses civic life in general rather than the type you focus on in your Civic Life Summary Report, omits a subheading, vaguely addresses only topic (1) or (2), fails to discuss the historical and contemporary aspects of either, largely ignores Theme 2 Objectives 4-8, runs off topic, and/or is plagiarized in whole or in part.	0-5 points

Section B: Personal Meaning

A one-page personal reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have affected you over time, addressing Theme 2 Objectives 1-3 by summarizing (1) what impression you think your work gives about your worldview, (2) the influence that your politics or ethos has had on your own self-awareness, (3) the influence of politics, history, or justice on your personal and professional development, and (4) what role you play in society as an engaged citizen.

Excellent	The Personal Meaning essay fills one full page with a reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have affected you over time, addressing Theme 2 Objectives 1-3 by summarizing (1) what impression you think your work gives about your worldview, (2) the influence that your politics or ethos has had on your own self-awareness, (3) the influence of politics, history, or justice on your personal and professional development, and (4) what role you play in society as an engaged citizen.	9-10 points
Satisfactory	The Personal Meaning essay fills less than a page with a reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have impacted your life and addresses 2 of the 3 required Theme 2 Objectives (1-3) by clearly and coherently summarizing three of the four topics suggested in the guidelines on page 4 above, though the fourth topic and third Theme Objectives may be unclear or crowded by off-topic digressions.	6-8 points
Improvable	The Personal Meaning essay fills around half a page with a reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have impacted your life and addresses only 1 of the 3 required Theme 2 Objectives (1-3) by clearly and coherently summarizing at least half of the four topics suggested in the guidelines on page 4 above, though some of the topics and other Theme Objectives may be unclear or crowded out by off-topic digressions.	3-5 points
Unsatisfactory	The Personal Reflection Essays document omits the Personal Meaning reflection on how your civic interests and/or acts have impacted your life or it falls short of half a page in length, barely addresses any of the 3 required Theme 2 Objectives (1-3) or four topics suggested in the guidelines on p. 10 above, adds off-topic digressions that	0-2 points

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	may even bring the essay to the required length or more, and/or is plagiarized in whole or in part.	
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Quality of Writing

The Personal Reflection Essays are correct in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and mechanics, and are generally professional in style throughout.

Excellent	Well-written, with few or no spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical or stylistic errors.	5 points
Satisfactory	Generally well-written but with some spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	3-4 points
Improvable	Several spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanical and/or stylistic errors.	1-2 points
Unsatisfactory	Too many errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, mechanics (e.g., capitalization) and/or stylistic errors.	0 points

To gain a PLAR credit, the Personal Reflection Essays must score a minimum of 20 out of 40 points.

Points Total		/ 40
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To gain a PLAR credit, your complete PLAR Portfolio must score a minimum of 65 out of 130 points.

Portfolio Points Total		/ 130
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