**AA06**  
**Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification:</th>
<th>Academic Affairs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Authority:</td>
<td>Dean, Academic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Sponsor:</td>
<td>Senior Vice President, Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Authority:</td>
<td>Algonquin College Executive Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date First Approved:</td>
<td>1998-01-30</td>
</tr>
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<td>2017-10-04</td>
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<td>2022-10-04</td>
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**PURPOSE**
To establish a process to award college credits earned by students through recognition of work and life experience

**SCOPE**
Students who, through work and life experience, have acquired learning that is equivalent to the learning outcomes of one or more College courses

**DEFINITIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Chair, Academic Manager, Course Chair, or Dean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block challenge</td>
<td>Request for credit at a program level, based on program level or vocational learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capstone course</td>
<td>Course critical to the program and may not be eligible for PLAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
<td>Knowledge and/or skills gained through life experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life experience</td>
<td>Such activities as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary work, professional development, travel and other learning experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAR</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>A collection of documents, objects and other evidence compiled by the PLAR candidate that demonstrates tangible proof of learning and reflection on the learning</td>
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**POLICY**

1. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is a process of evaluating the college level learning, knowledge and skills of adults acquired through life experience such as self-directed study, paid
employment, voluntary work, professional development, travel and other learning experiences. In order for this learning to be credited, it must be described or demonstrated; assessed as to its nature, extent, and depth; and deemed equivalent and current when compared to course or program learning outcomes.

2. PLAR is to be distinguished from the transfer of academic credit process, in that PLAR focuses on the evaluation of experiential learning rather than on the determination of equivalency of formal educational courses and/or programs. In PLAR, a letter grade or course credit (CR) is granted; whereas in the transfer of academic credit process an exemption (EX) is granted.

3. PLAR is available to persons interested in pursuing a College credential, who, through work and life experience, have acquired learning that is equivalent to the course learning outcomes of one or more College courses.

4. To be eligible for PLAR, candidates must be 19 years of age or older, or have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent.

5. Students who have failed a course previously or have been unsuccessful in a PLAR challenge within the past year (12 months) will not be permitted a PLAR challenge in the same course.

6. Following formal acceptance as a PLAR candidate, the candidate's prior learning is assessed by academic staff who have subject matter expertise in the area. If the prior learning is deemed equivalent to College course learning requirements, a letter grade or credit (CR) is granted (as applicable). Unsuccessful PLAR attempts are not recorded on the student's transcript.

7. PLAR candidates will be bound by the College's residency policy which states that, for any credential, a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the hours of the program of study must be taken and successfully completed at the College. Programs may require a residency immediately prior to graduation.

8. PLAR candidates in a bachelor’s degree may be awarded no more than fifty percent (50%) of the total number of hours of the program of study based on prior learning assessment and recognition.

9. Normally, College courses will be available for candidates to earn credit through PLAR. In some exceptional cases, such as capstone courses or courses that are subject to external standards, programs may designate a course as one that is not eligible for PLAR.

10. Students can only challenge a co-op or work placement course with their prior related work experience. Work experience acquired concurrently with the co-op or work placement semester can not be used to challenge the same.

11. An application and remittance of fees for PLAR credit consideration must normally be submitted prior to the course start date and no later than the last date for registrants to withdraw without academic penalty. The Academic Administrator may approve timeline modifications only under exceptional circumstances.
12. Students who wish to challenge a course should not be enrolled in the course. If they have already enrolled in the course, they may only challenge the course after withdrawing from that course. Students must confirm their PLAR eligibility with the PLAR Office before starting the withdrawal process.

13. Students who wish to challenge the General Education electives based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas. The Prior Learning Assessment Office and subject resource specialist will assess applications for credit and, where credit is recognized, assign it to the appropriate theme outlined below, and enter it on the student’s transcript:

- GED0011 Arts in Society
- GED0012 Civic Life
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
- GED0014 Personal Understanding
- GED0015 Science and Technology

14. Candidates who receive credit for courses through PLAR must go through the regular admission process, in order to gain entrance into a College program.

15. PLAR procedures and processes will respect current federal and provincial standards for PLAR.

16. The general requirements for successfully challenging a course through PLAR are established by each program and published in the course outlines. Course outlines are available to PLAR candidates.

17. Challenges are prepared by professors with subject matter expertise consistent with course learning requirements.

18. Challenge procedures may include written, oral, or performance assessment, the development of products, or combinations of any of these. The type of challenge assessment is determined by the nature of the learning being evaluated. Normally, challenge assessments are made available within four weeks after receipt of a PLAR application. Completed challenge assessments are retained by the College.

19. Assessments for block challenge of a program are based on the program level or vocational learning outcomes.

20. Candidates with extensive related experience may apply for block challenge of a program. Efforts will be made by the Academic Area to assess the prior learning against program level outcomes as opposed to specific courses learning requirements to enable candidates to earn credit for multiple courses. However, a block challenge may not be available in all programs. Students who block challenge a program are still required to meet the residency requirements of that program.

21. PLAR candidates must fulfill assessment requirements within three (3) months of PLAR application.

22. Candidates have the right to appeal the PLAR assessment.

23. The fee schedule for PLAR services is established by Algonquin College as per the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and is published on the PLAR website. The fees cover:
- delivery of assessment
- evaluation of assessment(s)
- evaluation of a portfolio and oral interview, if required
- support for an independent learning contract, as required

24. PLAR fees are in addition to tuition. PLAR fees are not reimbursed in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR challenge.

### PROCEDURE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Orientation, Advising and Acceptance to PLAR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 When seeking prior learning assessment, contact the PLAR Office via email: <a href="mailto:plar@algonquincollege.com">plar@algonquincollege.com</a></td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Assess the preliminary eligibility of the candidate based on resume and introduction letter to challenge a course(s) using PLAR.</td>
<td>PLAR Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Assess the final eligibility of the candidate, based on resume and introduction letter (and additional documentation if required), to challenge a course(s) using PLAR and recommend to proceed with PLAR challenge.</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Direct candidate to self-serve course outline retrieval to allow candidate to gain access to current course outline(s) for review.</td>
<td>PLAR Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://algonquin.ecoursemap.com/CourseOutlineViewer/CreateSession.aspx">https://algonquin.ecoursemap.com/CourseOutlineViewer/CreateSession.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 If the candidate is eligible to use PLAR to challenge a course(s):</td>
<td>PLAR Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. orient the candidate to PLAR policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. assist with relevant application/registration procedure(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. contact the appropriate academic department to arrange specific assessment process</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6 Pay fee for a PLAR assessment to the Registrar’s Office so that assessment can proceed. Fee should be remitted prior to the course start date and by no later than the date to withdraw without academic penalty, unless an exception to this timeline has been approved by the Academic Administrator.</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 If the candidate is using PLAR to challenge program level outcomes:</td>
<td>Program Coordinator or Course Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. meet with candidate to assess life experiences against desired credential</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. develop an educational plan and advise candidate regarding PLAR challenge and recommended pathway to achieve credential</td>
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1.8 If requesting credits for a program level, present extensive relevant experience and learning, which normally includes a combination of:
   - a portfolio
   - an interview with a panel of subject matter experts
   - performance assessment(s)

2. Demonstration and Documentation of Prior Learning

2.1 Provide challenge assessment(s) to the PLAR Office within four (4) weeks after having been notified of a PLAR application.

2.2 Administer challenge assessment(s) at the candidate’s convenience, but no later than six (6) weeks after having received the PLAR application.

2.3 If a portfolio is used for PLAR, address the requirements identified in the Portfolio Guidelines, available from the PLAR Office.

3. Assessment and Evaluation of Prior Learning

3.1 Appoint a professor, who is supported by the PLAR Office, as assessor to conduct the PLAR assessment.

3.2 Complete the initial PLAR assessment within two (2) weeks of receiving the completed test, portfolio or other evidence of learning.

3.3 Transcribe the successful PLAR credits with either a letter grade or a “CR” (credit) designation.

3.4 Assess PLAR applications for General Education course credit and assign a grade of CR next to the General Education theme number being matched:
   - GED0011 Arts in Society
   - GED0012 Civic Life
   - GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
   - GED0014 Personal Understanding
   - GED0015 Science and Technology

3.5 Notify the applicant and the Registrar’s Office of the PLAR results.

3.6 Keep a formal record of the assessment process and the results for five (5) years. These are made available to the candidate upon request.

3.7 If a PLAR candidate is not successful, at his/her discretion, ask the candidate to complete additional assessments to meet the learning requirements.

4. Appeal Process
4.1 Request an appeal of the PLAR assessment results in writing to the PLAR Office within ten (10) working days of the mailing of the assessment results. The candidate will outline the reasons why an appeal is warranted. A PLAR Appeal fee will be applied, which will be refunded, if the decision is changed in the applicant’s favour.  

4.2 Upon receiving a written request for an appeal, within five (5) working days, convene an PLAR Appeal Committee, consisting of:
- an Academic Administrator
- a professor who has not been the applicant’s advisor or assessor and who is knowledgeable of the relevant program/course
- a person with knowledge of PLAR processes
- a student representative

4.3 Schedule a PLAR Appeal Committee meeting within ten (10) working days of receiving the request of an appeal and notify the applicant and the assessor(s).

4.4 Invite the applicant and the assessor(s) to attend the Appeal Committee meeting and present their views in turn. The deliberations of the Committee will take place in-camera.

4.5 Render decisions in writing to the applicant within ten (10) working days of the Appeal Committee meeting. The results of the Appeal are final and binding on all parties and will be noted in the student’s file.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
None

RELATED POLICIES
AA04 Admissions
AA05 Advanced Standing
AA14 Grading System
AA35 Confidentiality of Student Records
AA08 Course Load
AA10 Transfer of Academic Credit (External)
AA11 Registration
AA27 General Education Courses

RELATED MATERIALS
Algonquin College PLAR website
http://www.algonquincollege.com/plar

Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-advanced-education-and-skills-development