

**AA06**

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

Classification:	Academic Affairs
Responsible Authority:	Dean, Academic Development
Executive Sponsor:	Senior Vice President, Academic
Approval Authority:	Algonquin College Executive Team
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**PURPOSE**

To establish a process to award college credits earned by current students through recognition of work and life experience

**SCOPE**

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

**DEFINITIONS**

<b>Word/Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Academic Administrator	Chair, Academic Manager, Course Chair, or Dean
Block challenge	Request for credit for two or more courses often with closely related learning outcomes
Capstone course	A final, cumulative course or courses in a program, through which learners integrate knowledge and experiences gained throughout the program of study to demonstrate their achievement of the program learning outcomes
Life experience	Activities such as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary work, professional development, travel and other learning experiences
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

PLAR Assessment	An exam, portfolio, interview, performance or other assessment method(s) that provides the student with an opportunity to have their prior learning assessed against the course learning outcomes
Student	A Student is any person who is currently enrolled in a course or program at Algonquin College, but who may not yet have registered; who has applied for admission to the College; or who was enrolled in a course or program at the College
Subject Matter Expert	A Subject Matter Expert, also known as an SME, provides the knowledge and expertise in a specific subject, business area, or technical area for a project/program

## 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. In order for this learning to be credited, it must be thoroughly 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 previous life experience 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 procedures and processes respect current federal and Ministry of Colleges and Universities standards and/or best practices for PLAR.

### Eligibility

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 or passed the course 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. In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of an academic administrator, this condition may be waived.
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. Normally, if the prior learning is deemed equivalent to College course learning requirements, PLAR results will be transcribed using the same grading scheme and pass point as the course. In the case of General Education Electives, Degree Breadth courses, and block challenges, results will be transcribed as a credit (CR). Letter grades received through PLAR are included in GPAs and on transcripts with the exception of unsuccessful PLAR attempts which are not recorded on the student's transcript or included in their GPA.
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. All College courses should allow candidates to earn credit through PLAR. In exceptional cases, such as capstone courses or courses that are subject to external standards, the course outline will indicate as to why the course cannot be challenged.
10. Students can only challenge a co-op or work placement course with work experience acquired prior to the term in which the work experience is scheduled in the program of study. Work experience acquired concurrently with the co-op or work placement semester can not be used to challenge the same.

### **Admission and Fees**

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 end of the fourth week of the term. The Academic Administrator may approve timeline modifications only under exceptional circumstances.
12. Candidates who receive credit for courses through PLAR must go through the regular admission process, in order to gain entrance into a College program.
13. The fee schedule for PLAR services is established by Algonquin College as per the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and is published on the PLAR website. The fees cover:
  - delivery of assessment(s)
  - evaluation of assessment(s)
  - support for an independent learning contract, as required
14. PLAR fees are in addition to tuition. PLAR fees are not reimbursed in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR challenge.

### **Challenge Assessments**

15. Students who wish to challenge the General Education courses 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
16. Students who wish to use PLAR to challenge the degree breadth courses based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas and levelling criteria. The PLAR Office and subject resource specialist will

assess applications for credit and, where credit is recognized, assign it to the appropriate level outlined below, and enter it on the student's transcript.

- GED1000
- GED2000
- GED4000

17. 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.
18. Challenges are prepared by academic employees or subject-matter experts with expertise consistent with course learning requirements.
19. 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 for three (3) years.
20. In exceptional circumstances, 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 receiving their PLAR assessment.

### **Appeals**

22. Candidates have the right to challenge the grade of their PLAR assessment through Policy AA37 Review of Final Grade.

## PROCEDURE

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
<b>1. Orientation, Advising and Acceptance to PLAR</b>	
1.1 When seeking prior learning assessment, apply online through the PLAR website: <a href="http://www.algonquincollege.com/PLAR">www.algonquincollege.com/PLAR</a> .	Candidate
1.2 Assess the preliminary eligibility of the candidate based on the completed self-assessment template to challenge a course(s) using PLAR.	PLAR Office
1.3 Assess the final eligibility of the candidate, based on the completed self assessment template (and additional documentation if required), to challenge a course(s) using PLAR and recommend to proceed with PLAR challenge.	Program Coordinator/Subject Matter Expert
1.4 If the candidate is eligible to use PLAR to challenge a course(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a orient the candidate to PLAR policies and procedures</li> <li>b assist with relevant application/registration procedure(s)</li> <li>c contact the appropriate academic department to arrange specific assessment process</li> </ul>	PLAR Office
1.5 Pay fee for a PLAR assessment to the Registrar's Office so that assessment can proceed. Fee should be remitted once the student's eligibility has been confirmed.	Candidate
1.6 If the candidate is approved to complete a Block PLAR challenge using program level outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. meet with candidate to assess life experiences against desired credential</li> <li>b. develop an educational plan and advise candidate regarding PLAR challenge and recommended pathway to achieve credential</li> </ul>	Program Coordinator or Course Professor
<b>2. Demonstration and Documentation of Prior Learning</b>	
2.1 If necessary, assign subject matter expert to develop PLAR assessment or review an existing assessment for currency.	Academic Administrator
2.2 Develop assessment or make required revisions to existing assessment and provide to the PLAR Office within four (4) weeks of having been notified of a PLAR application. Where students are challenging multiple courses, the timeline for assessment development may be extended.	Subject Matter Experts

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|--|------------------------------------|
| 2.3 Administer the challenge assessment.   | PLAR Office                        |
| 2.4 If a portfolio is used for PLAR, address the requirements identified in the Portfolio Guidelines, available from the PLAR Office.  | Candidate                          |
| <b>3. Assessment and Evaluation of Prior Learning</b>  |                                    |
| 3.1 Appoint a professor or Subject Matter Expert, who is supported by the PLAR Office, as assessor to conduct the PLAR assessment.   | Academic Administrator             |
| 3.2 Complete the initial PLAR assessment within two (2) weeks of receiving the completed test, portfolio or other evidence of learning.  | Assessor                           |
| 3.3 Transcribe the successful PLAR credits with either a letter grade or a "CR" (credit) designation.  | Assessor                           |
| 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:  | Assessor                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GED0011 Arts in Society</li> <li>• GED0012 Civic Life</li> <li>• GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding</li> <li>• GED0014 Personal Understanding</li> <li>• GED0015 Science and Technology</li> </ul> |                                    |
| 3.5 Assess PLAR applications for Degree Breadth course credit and assign a grade of CR next to the course being matched  | Assessor                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GED1000</li> <li>• GED2000</li> <li>• GED4000</li> </ul>  |                                    |
| 3.6 Notify the applicant and the Registrar's Office of the PLAR results.   | PLAR Office                        |
| 3.6 Keep a copy of the assessment and the results for three (3) years. These are made available to the candidate upon request.   | PLAR Office,<br>Registrar's Office |
| 3.7 If a PLAR candidate is not successful, at their discretion, ask the candidate to complete additional assessments to meet the learning requirements.  | Assessor                           |
| <b>4. Appeal Process</b>   |                                    |
| 4.1 Request a review of the PLAR grade using the procedure outlined in Policy AA37: Review of Final Grade.   | Candidate                          |

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

None

## RELATED POLICIES

- AA04 Admissions
- AA05 Advanced Standing
- AA08 Course Load
- AA10 Transfer of Academic Credit (External)
- AA11 Registration
- AA14 Grading System
- AA19 Academic Appeal
- AA27 General Education Courses
- AA35 Confidentiality of Student Records
- AA37 Review of Final Grade

## RELATED MATERIALS

Algonquin College PLAR website

<http://www.algonquincollege.com/plar>

Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-colleges-universities>