Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

Student Guide
An Introduction to PLAR

What is PLAR?
Increasingly, individuals are looking to further their education, learn new skills, and train for new jobs. Those interested in assessment of their prior learning have frequently been away from formal education for years; yet in that time may have acquired a great deal of relevant knowledge through work, informal education, and personal experiences.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) assessment involves the identification, documentation, assessment, and recognition of learning acquired through methods such as work, training, independent study, volunteering, travel, military service, and other life experiences.

PLAR is different from transferring academic credit transfer (exemptions).
- PLAR evaluates learning students have gained from life and work experience not recognized through credit transfer.
- Credit transfer recognizes previously acquired courses completed at Canadore College approved institutions.

When Does PLAR Apply
- PLAR is available to students who are interested in pursuing a college credential, who, through work and life experience, have acquired learning that is equivalent to a Canadore College course.
- PLAR is strictly about awarding credit based on demonstrated learning related to a college course. Students are required to demonstrate through methods such as a portfolio, presentation, exam or practical demonstration, that their prior learning meets the course’s learning outcomes.

When Does PLAR Not Apply
- PLAR is not available for current Canadore College students looking to improve marks for Canadore College courses previously completed with a passing grade.
- Students who have previously attempted and failed a course may not seek equivalency for that course through the PLAR process within one academic year following the course failure.

Why Should I Consider PLAR?
- The PLAR process will provide you with a realistic understanding of your level of competence and personal strengths.
- PLAR often promotes self-esteem and increases motivation to complete a program of study.
- Through PLAR you may be able to obtain a credential in less time and with less cost.
PLAR Steps

1. Meet with the Pathways Officer:
   The Pathways Officer will discuss the PLAR process with you and provide you with the resources necessary to initiate PLAR:
   1. The PLAR Student Guide
   2. The PLAR Application Form
   3. The course outline
   4. The Self-Assessment tool

2. Review the course outline and complete the self-assessment
   If you confident that you have met the learning outcomes for the course based on your review of the course outline, complete the self-assessment using as much detail as possible. The self-assessment requires that you identify a level of competence and relevant experience related to each course learning outcome.

   When completing the self-assessment keep in mind that:
   • Your life and work experience should directly relate to the field of study.
   • Your experience should meet the standards of the course learning outcomes.

   NOTE: In some cases, such as clinical, placement courses and courses that are subject to external standards may not be eligible for PLAR. This is reflected in the ‘PLAR INFORMATION’ section of each course outline.

   Once completed, return the self-assessment to the Pathways Officer.

3. Meet with the PLAR Assessor:
   Upon receipt of the completed self-assessment, The Pathways Officer will introduce you to the assessor so that you may set up a meeting. There you will have an opportunity to discuss your prior learning and experience in further detail. If the assessor is confident that you are a candidate for PLAR, they will complete the PLAR application form with you.

4. Register for PLAR:
   PLAR officially begins when you:
   • Return the signed application form to the Admissions Office and
   • Pay the PLAR assessment fee.

5. PLAR Assessment:
   Your PLAR assessor will provide you with details on the method of assessment and your PLAR course. Upon approval of PLAR for the course, the assessor will provide you with:
   • PLAR assessment criteria and rubrics
   • PLAR course timelines (start and end dates)
   • Guidance on how to prepare for the assessment(s)
   • Direction on assembling a strong portfolio (if applicable)
PLAR Assessment Methods

The PLAR process may recognize learning that has occurred through many avenues including:

- On-the-job training and experience
- Non-credit courses
- Military training and service
- Seminars, workshops and other training
- Volunteer and involvement in community activities
- Traditional indigenous teaching and knowledge
- Self-interest / Independent study
- Travel or teaching in foreign countries

Various methods are used alone, or in combination, to assess learning including challenge exams, portfolios, interviews, assignments and essays, presentations and performance assessments.

It is important to note that the PLAR assessment process for a given course may include a combination of challenge examinations and skill demonstration methods. Faculty determine, develop and administer the challenge method(s) that will allow you to demonstrate their prior learning in the most effective way possible.

Upon PLAR Completion

- PLAR assessments are awarded the grade which best reflects your demonstrated learning.
- The Pathways Officer will notify you once the grade has been submitted.
- You can expect to be able to view their grade in the system within two weeks of PLAR course completion.
PLAR F.A.Q.

Are some courses not possible to PLAR?
Wherever possible, PLAR shall be available to students. Where PLAR is not possible in a particular course, it shall be clearly documented on the course outline.

Where do I begin if I want to get credit for my prior learning?
Assistance is available through the Pathways Officer in the Admissions Office. The Pathways Officer will discuss the PLAR process with you and provide you with the resources necessary to initiate PLAR.

Do I have to be registered in a Canadore College program to be eligible for PLAR?
No, you may have your prior learning assessed before entering a College program.

How many courses can I get credit for through PLAR?
To be awarded a Canadore College credential you must have completed at least 25% of the program credits through Canadore College. The remainder may be awarded through Credit Transfer, PLAR and Advanced Standing.

How long do I have to complete my course PLAR?
PLAR for a course must be completed in the same length of time as the course itself.

How much does PLAR cost?
Current PLAR fees are posted on the Canadore College website at:
http://canadorecollege.ca/admissions/fees

NOTE:
- PLAR fees are in addition to tuition.
- PLAR fees are not refunded in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR attempt.
- Fees are set by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities and are subject to change.

If I pay the fee, what guarantee do I have of obtaining PLAR credits?
There are no guarantees that you will obtain credit through PLAR, just as there are no guarantees that you will obtain credit through taking a college course.

If I am successful in my PLAR will I receive a tuition refund when I drop the course?
You will not receive any refund of your tuition if the course being challenged is a part of your full-time study. You are encouraged to request a challenge assessment early so that, if you are successful, you can drop the course from your full-time schedule prior to the add-drop deadline for the semester.

What happens if I am unsuccessful in my PLAR attempt?
Full-time student who are unsuccessful in a PLAR attempt will still be required to take the course in order to complete their credential by:
- Paying the full course fee and take the course or
- Continuing in the course if you are currently registered in it.

**When Should I challenge a course through PLAR?**

You can apply for PLAR at any time. It is recommended to apply well prior to the beginning of a semester to maximize the full benefits in the event of a successful PLAR attempt.

You should aim to have your PLAR assessment completed well in advance of the Add/Drop date listed in the [Important Dates and Deadlines](#).

**How is PLAR graded?**

PLAR is graded according to the grading scheme for the standard course.

**Will my PLAR grade be included in my G.P.A.?**

Yes. PLAR grades are applied to the overall program GPA.

**Can international students request a PLAR assessment?**

Yes, however international PLAR candidates for whom English is a second language must demonstrate proficiency in both spoken and written English.

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**PLAR Resources**

The following resources are made available, and are used in the administration of PLAR:

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy**
  - Available on the website under Admissions / Policies and Procedures.
- **PLAR Policy**
  - Available on the website under Admissions / Policies and Procedures.
- **PLAR Information on Course Outlines**
  - The course outline will indicate if the course is eligible or not eligible for PLAR.
- **PLAR Student Guide**
  - Available on the Transfer Guide webpage
- **PLAR Faculty Guide**
  - To be available on the iCan employee portal
- **PLAR Application Form**
  - In Development
- **PLAR Self-Assessment Tool**
  - Available on the Transfer Guide webpage