Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Resource Document for Discretionary Use

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Preamble

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) offers learners the opportunity to earn credit for college courses based on formal demonstration of prior learning usually acquired through study, work, and other life experiences that is not recognized through formal credit transfer mechanisms.

PLAR is an efficient and cost-effective way of examining learners' knowledge. To this end, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities provides the suggested best practices to assist colleges in meeting the requirement for PLAR established in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Framework for Programs of Instruction. Funding for PLAR processes is provided through the general purpose operating grant and is detailed in the operating procedure Enrolment and Graduate Reporting. Fees for PLAR are outlined in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Tuition and Ancillary Fees and the related operating procedure.

For further information regarding this resource document, click on the Contact link to consult with the appropriate ministry contact, listed in the Contacts section on the web site.

Glossary

Credit courses: courses in programs of instruction eligible for funding through the general purpose operating grant for which students, upon successful completion, receive a credit on their transcript.

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR): a process that uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on, identify, articulate, and demonstrate past learning. Prior learning can be acquired through study, work, and other life experiences that are not recognized through formal transfer of credit mechanisms.

- **Challenge process:** a method of assessment, other than portfolio assessment, developed and evaluated by subject-expert faculty to measure an individual's learning achievement against course learning outcomes. The process measures demonstrated learning through a variety of written and non-written evaluation methods for the purpose of awarding credit without requiring enrolment in a course.

- **Portfolio assessment:** a method of assessment that involves the evaluation of an organized collection of materials developed by a learner that records learning achievements and relates them to personal, educational, or occupational goals, in this case, achievement of stated learning outcomes of college courses or programs.

Residency requirement: the minimum number of credits (or length of time) that must be taken through courses under the direct supervision of faculty of the credential issuing college.

Suggested or Best Practices

To assist learners in deciding whether to proceed with PLAR, course outlines should include relevant information such as:

- learning outcomes;

- broad areas of content;

- criteria for success; and

- identification of a range of assessment processes, tools, and support.

PLAR assessments should be conducted within a reasonable period of time following a request.

Candidates for PLAR

- should meet the college general admission requirement, and

- do not need to be enrolled in a college program of instruction.

Each college should establish institutional residency requirements. It has been the practice that educational institutions establish a 25 per cent residency requirement.

Learners should be advised, in advance, of the assessments and methods of evaluation and the code used to transcribe credits obtained through PLAR. Also, learners should be advised that a reduction of course load as a result of earning credits through PLAR may affect their eligibility for financial assistance through the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP).

Credits awarded through PLAR should be transcribed in the same way in which credits are normally transcribed in each course, without any indication that credits have been acquired through prior learning assessment.

Transcripts should not record unsuccessful PLAR attempts as "failures".