

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

AC-009

Version	Version Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Review Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Description of Changes
01	04/08/2021	04/08/2022	Initial release

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Policy Holder	Print Name	Date (04/08/2021)

Academic Council	
Advising Body	Date Consulted (04/08/2021)

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Purpose

Georgian College recognizes that post-secondary equivalent learning can be gained through life, work, or learning experiences outside of a formal post-secondary environment, and that individuals who can demonstrate this learning in alignment with course learning outcomes should be granted formal credit where possible. The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements for the development and administration of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) at Georgian College in adherence with requirements set out by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Minister's Binding Policy Directive: Framework for Programs of Instruction.

Scope

This policy applies to courses and co-op work terms in Board Approved Certificate, Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, Ontario College Graduate Certificate, and Degree courses at Georgian College.

Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
<i>Challenge evaluation</i>	<i>A method of assessment, not including a portfolio, developed and evaluated by subject-expert faculty to measure a PLAR candidate's learning achievement against course learning outcomes. Challenge methods at Georgian include exams, performance observation, skills demonstration, presentation, and interview. (adapted from the Ministry definition)</i>
<i>Course Learning Outcomes</i>	<i>Clear statements that define and clarify the level and quality of performance required by students in a specific course. They appear on the official course outline and identify the knowledge and skills that students are able to demonstrate by the end of a course.</i>
<i>Portfolio evaluation</i>	<i>A method of assessment by which faculty subject matter experts evaluate an organized collection of materials developed by the PLAR candidate that represents their learning achievement, and which is measured against the course learning outcomes. (adapted from the Ministry definition)</i>
<i>PLAR Candidates</i>	<i>Current or prospective students who decide to undertake the PLAR process in order to gain credit for learning acquired through work or life experience.</i>
<i>Residency Requirement</i>	<i>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. (Ministry definition)</i>

Responsibility

- The **Vice President, Academic** is responsible for ensuring students are provided the opportunity to earn credit for college courses through the PLAR challenge process, where relevant.
- The **Credit Transfer Officer** is responsible for
 - providing an explanation of the PLAR process to candidates;
 - referring candidates to the academic area or Co-operative Education and Career Success consultant for preliminary consultation regarding PLAR;
 - referring candidates to the academic area or Co-operative Education and Career Success for official evaluation of the PLAR application form prior to payment; and

- processing the final results of the PLAR and ensuring entry into the Student Information System.
- The **Dean/Associate Dean** of the academic area is responsible for
 - managing the development of PLAR assessments for all relevant courses (including field placements) in their area, and ensuring that they are based on the course learning outcomes; and
 - assigning a faculty subject matter expert (SME) to conduct the PLAR upon recommendation from the Coordinator.
- The **Coordinator** (or designate) of the academic area is responsible for
 - providing academic counselling to candidates regarding PLAR eligibility and preparation;
 - reviewing the self-assessment phase of the PLAR application processes;
 - signing off on the PLAR application prior to submission and payment;
 - recommending to the Dean an appropriate faculty subject matter expert (SME) to conduct the PLAR;
 - signing and forwarding the final PLAR results to Credit Transfer; and
 - communicating the results of the PLAR to the candidate.
- The **Faculty Subject Matter Expert** (SME) is responsible for
 - creating the PLAR challenge or portfolio evaluation based on the learning outcomes of the course being challenged;
 - working with the applicant to prepare for and schedule the process;
 - grading the PLAR and signing off on the final results;
 - forwarding the graded PLAR to the program Coordinator or designate.
- The **Director, Cooperative Education and Career Success** is responsible for
 - administering the PLAR process for a Co-op Work Term or Co-op Internship;
 - and ensuring that PLAR assessments are based on co-op credit learning outcomes.
- The **Co-op Consultant** is responsible for
 - advising students about the PLAR process for a Co-op Work Term
 - reviewing the self-assessment phase of the PLAR application process;
 - signing off on the PLAR application prior to submission and payment;
 - creating the PLAR challenge or portfolio evaluation based on the learning outcomes of the Co-op Work Term being challenged
 - working with the applicant to prepare for and schedule the PLAR process;
 - grading the PLAR and signing off on the final results for certificate and diploma co-op work terms;
 - working with the coordinator or SME regarding PLARs for degree co-op work terms;
 - signing and forwarding the final PLAR results to Credit Transfer; and
 - communicating the results of the PLAR to the candidate.
- The **International Experience Consultant** is responsible for administering the PLAR process for a coop work term for student's whose work experience is completed outside of Canada, in alignment with the process for the Co-op Consultant outlined above.
- The **Office of the Registrar** is responsible for processing fees related to PLAR.

Policy

- 1.1 In adherence to the Minister's Binding Policy directive, the College will ensure that PLAR is made available for as many credit courses as possible. If a credit course is not considered PLAR eligible, a rationale should be clearly documented within the Curriculum Information Management system, and communicated to the PLAR candidate when requested. All course outlines will clearly identify whether or not a course is eligible for PLAR.
- 1.2 PLAR is to be used to give credit for college-level learning acquired through study, work, and other life experiences that are not recognized through formal transfer of credit mechanisms (refer to Academic Regulation 3.2). It is not to be used by students to clear academic deficiencies or to improve grades.
- 1.3 Individuals may challenge a Georgian College course or Co-op Work Term course using PLAR if they have acquired the equivalent knowledge and skills that match at least 80 per cent of the learning outcomes. PLAR candidates do not need to be enrolled in a program; however, they must meet admission requirements to gain entrance into college programs.
- 1.4 Ideally, requests for PLAR should be made prior to day one of the first semester of the program. This ensures that a candidate's prior learning is considered in relation to the program as a whole, and that the appropriate academic advising can occur. Retroactive requests after this date may be considered in certain situations, such as when a student is granted late admission to a program.
- 1.5 Once enrolled in a program, students must meet College residency requirements. Therefore, no more than 75% of courses for a diploma or certificate program, and no more than 50% courses for an Honours Bachelor's Degree program may be allowed based on PLAR (refer to Academic Regulation 5.1 for further detail regarding residency requirements).
- 1.6 PLAR may be given for Co-op work terms. However, a minimum of one Co-op work term must be completed by students as part of residency requirements for a Co-op program in order to allow the Co-operative Education and Career Success department to assess work term performance and justify the award of the Co-op endorsed credential.
- 1.7 Candidates must receive advising from the academic area or Co-op Consultant in order to determine eligibility for PLAR **prior** to the submission of the PLAR application form. The academic area or Co-op Consultant will provide detail regarding the assessments and methods of evaluation used as part of the formal PLAR challenge process, and work with the candidate to determine the likelihood of their success. The academic advising around PLAR eligibility should be based on the program as a whole, so that all potential courses are considered prior to commencement of the formal challenge process.
- 1.8 The type of assessment is determined by the academic area or Co-op, according to the nature of the learning being evaluated, and is based on the Course Learning Outcomes on the official course outline. The method of the assessment will measure actual learning, not the experience itself. Please refer to [Policy AC 007: Course Outline](#).
- 1.9 The minimum passing grade for a successful PLAR attempt is the same as the minimum passing grade of the course being challenged. Grades are used in the cumulative Grade Point Average

(GPA) calculation as appropriate, without indication that they have been obtained through PLAR. Unsuccessful PLAR evaluations are not recorded on the official transcript.

- 1.10 Candidates must be made aware that the code used to transcribe credits obtained through PLAR may have an impact upon transferability to other institutions. Additionally, they must be advised that a reduction of course load as a result of earning credits through PLAR may affect eligibility for study work permits or for financial assistance through the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP).
- 1.11 Because PLAR is based on previous learning through life or work experience, candidates who fail a PLAR may only apply to retake it after one academic year has passed, and provided they have legitimately acquired new learning and have reasonable evidence of that learning.

Procedures

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

2.0 Initiation of the PLAR application

- 2.1 Prior to the beginning of semester one of a program, candidates contact the academic area or Co-operative Education and Career Success department (Co-op) to begin the PLAR process. Should candidates contact Credit Transfer first, Credit Transfer refers them to the academic area or Co-op.
- 2.2 In consultation with the program Coordinator or designate or Co-op Consultant, candidates identify courses that may be suitable for PLAR.
- 2.3 Once the courses are determined, candidates complete a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition application form, including a self-assessment explaining how their prior learning aligns with 80% or more of the course learning outcomes, and how it is sufficient in preparing them to successfully challenge a course (refer to the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition application form for details).
- 2.4 The form and supporting documents are reviewed by the academic area or Co-op for evaluation.

3.0 Academic Advising during the PLAR application

- 3.1 The program Coordinator/Co-op Consultant reviews the application form and supporting documents and arranges a time to meet with the candidate.
- 3.2 The candidate and the Coordinator/Co-op Consultant discuss the application, self-evaluation, and the details of the PLAR challenge process.
- 3.3 Should, through the self-evaluation and advising processes, a candidate be considered in good position to successfully challenge a course or courses, the Coordinator/Co-op Consultant signs the PLAR application form, and the candidate pays the fee for the PLAR in the Office of the Registrar.

4.0 PLAR challenge process and completion

- 4.1 For program courses (including field placements)
 - 4.1.1 Once the candidate pays the PLAR application fee, the Coordinator recommends a faculty SME to the Dean who approves them to formally conduct the PLAR challenge process for each course.

- 4.1.2 The SME arranges to meet with the PLAR candidate to discuss the specifics of the challenge process (challenge or portfolio evaluation).
- 4.1.3 The PLAR is scheduled and the candidate undergoes the evaluation.
 - 4.1.3.1 The faculty evaluates the PLAR, signs off on the grade, and submits it to the program Coordinator.
- 4.1.4 The program Coordinator/Co-op Consultant signs off on the completed PLAR and sends it to the Credit Transfer Officer for processing.
- 4.1.5 The Credit Transfer Officer inputs the results of the PLAR into the Student Information System.
- 4.1.6 The academic area/Co-op notifies the PLAR candidate of the results.
- 4.2 For Co-op Work terms
 - 4.2.1 Once the candidate pays the PLAR application fee, the Co-op consultant acts as the SME, and arranges the challenge process. If the PLAR application is for a degree program work term, the Co-op consultant contacts the Program Coordinator to discuss whether an additional faculty SME is required.
 - 4.2.2 The PLAR is scheduled and the candidate undergoes the evaluation.
 - 4.2.2.1 For diploma and certificate work terms, the Co-op Consultant evaluates the PLAR.
 - 4.2.2.2 For Degree work terms, the coordinator or faculty SME evaluates the PLAR.
 - 4.2.3 The program Coordinator/Co-op Consultant signs off on the completed PLAR and the Co-op Consultant sends it to the Credit Transfer Officer for processing.
 - 4.2.4 The Credit Transfer Officer inputs the results of the PLAR into the Student Information System.
 - 4.2.5 Co-op notifies the PLAR candidate of the results.

Related Materials

**Minister's Binding Policy Directive: Framework for Programs of Instruction
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition: Resource Document (MCU)**

[Georgian College Academic Regulations](#)

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Application form

[Policy AC 007: Course Outline](#)