

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

Student Guide

If a student is pursuing postsecondary education after being away from formal education for many years, they may have acquired a great deal of relevant knowledge through:

- Work
- Volunteer activities
- Military service
- Independent study
- Training programs

The PLAR process will provide a student with a realistic understanding of their level of competence and personal strengths as related to their Cambrian program of study. Through PLAR, a student may be able to obtain a credential in less time and at a reduced cost.

PLAR DIFFERS FROM AN ACADEMIC CREDIT TRANSFER IN THESE WAYS:

- PLAR evaluates learning you have gained from life and work experience not recognized through credit transfer
- Credit transfer recognizes previously acquired courses you have completed at Cambrian College approved institutions

WHEN DOES PLAR APPLY?

PLAR is strictly about awarding credit based on demonstrated learning related to a college course. The student is required to demonstrate that their prior learning meets the course's learning outcomes through methods such as a portfolio, presentation, exam, or practical demonstration.

WHEN DOES PLAR NOT APPLY?

- If the student is a current Cambrian student, PLAR is not available to improve marks in previously passed courses
- If a student has previously attempted and failed a course, it cannot be challenged using PLAR



WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP IN THE PLAR PROCESS?

Students should contact the Pathways Office to discuss their education plans. The Pathways Officer will help them identify the course(s) they may be eligible to PLAR and provide a detailed course outline for review.

Students should then review the course outline and each learning outcome within. Students must keep in mind that their life and work experience should directly relate to the field of study and meet the standard of the course learning outcomes.

Note: In some cases, clinical and placement courses that are subject to external standards may not be eligible for PLAR.

HOW TO APPLY?

Students will be required to pay the required non-refundable assessment fee, which the Pathways Officer will provide details on. PLAR officially begins when a student pays the assessment fee.

WHAT TO DO?

1. Meet with the PLAR Assessor

Once registration is complete, the Pathways Officer will connect the student with the assessor. This will allow for the opportunity to discuss their prior learning experience in further detail.

2. Complete a PLAR assessment

A PLAR assessor will provide the details on the method of assessment and a student's PLAR course.

The assessor will provide:

- 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

A student will be required to demonstrate their learning through one or more of the following challenge methods:

- Presentation of a portfolio
- Demonstration of a specific skill or skills
- Competency test(s)
- Submission of assignment(s)
- Challenge exam(s)
- Structured interview(s)

These various methods may be used alone, or in combination to assess learning.

Note: 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 best allow the student to demonstrate their prior learning in the most effective way possible.

PLAR ASSESSMENT COMPLETION

- PLAR assessments are awarded the grade that best reflects the demonstrated learning
- The Pathways Officer will notify the student once the grade has been submitted
- A student can expect to view the grade on their academic record within two weeks of the completion of the PLAR course
- If a PLAR attempt has been unsuccessful, the student will be required to complete the course via regular delivery

HOW MANY CREDITS COULD A STUDENT RECEIVE?

A student could potentially complete up to 75% of the credits required for a certificate or diploma program through prior learning. The remaining 25% of the program must be completed by enrolling in courses with Cambrian College.

CURRENT STUDENTS PLEASE NOTE:

- Registration (including fee payment) for PLAR must be completed by Day 10 of the semester
- If you are applying for PLAR assessment for a course that you are currently enrolled in, you will be withdrawn from that course
- Full-time students who are unsuccessful in a PLAR attempt will be required to complete the course via regular delivery
- Receiving course credits through the PLAR process may adversely affect course load and eligibility for OSAP and other sponsorships



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Pathways Office
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