

Title of Policy	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
Policy Number	2.5.5
Category (Policy Type)	2 - Student Affairs
Approval Body	Education Council
Policy Sponsor	Vice President Academic and Applied Research
Operational Lead	Registrar
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CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

College of the Rockies (the College) recognizes that learning can take place through a variety of experiences and environments. The College is committed to providing diverse and innovative opportunities in which learning can be assessed and credited. A flexible approach to assessment includes maintaining integrity and high standards in assessing learning and assigning credit.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a systematic and consistent process for recognizing a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities for academic credit. The process will be used to enhance an individual's access to education and training and accelerate their progress towards a desired credential or other goals. This policy also outlines assessment methods and recognition of credits available through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) at the College.

SCOPE

This policy applies to students who are admitted into a College of the Rockies program and who request a formal recognition for their prior learning. In cases where candidates have course credits from another institution or another College of the Rockies program, the Transfer Credit policy (2.5.6) normally applies.

DEFINITIONS

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): A structured method of assessing a student's prior learning or experience to award formal credit. It is a process that takes place outside of course delivery that identifies, assesses, and recognizes prior skills, competencies, and knowledge. These may have been acquired through formal, informal, non-formal, or experiential learning via work or life experience, training, independent study, or volunteer activities.

Types of Assessment:

Challenge Examination: Written, oral, and/or practical tests or assignments as determined appropriate by a department/program. Challenge exams are developed by the department/program in which credit is sought for courses which the department/program deems suitable for challenge. Individual course objectives/learning outcomes are assessed.

Portfolio-assisted Assessment: Assessment of documentation that systematically provides evidence of an individual's learning experiences and accomplishments in relation to course objectives/learning outcomes. This documentation may include a self-reflection. An interview may also be required as a component of this assessment.

Work-based Assessment: Assessment of a student's prior learning (knowledge, skills, abilities, and/or values) as demonstrated in a simulated or real setting. Learning is demonstrated in a comprehensive way, showing knowledge, understanding, and levels of competence in relation to the course objectives/learning outcomes.

Types of Recognition: Methods of awarding credits through PLAR, including:

Advanced Placement – When a student is awarded advanced standing in a program based on prior experience (ex. If a student is assessed to begin in the 2nd or 3rd year of a 4-year degree).

Course-specific – When a student is granted credit for specific course(s); measured against the learning outcomes of the specific course(s).

Waive Prerequisites – Prerequisites for a course or program are waived based on prior learning and experience.

Program-based (block-credit award) – When a student is awarded a block of credits towards a program; often based on the graduate competencies of the program.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- A. The College is committed to minimizing barriers to student mobility while maintaining the integrity, quality, and rigour of our programs and credentials.
- B. Recognition of prior learning and skills acquisition will be efficient, relevant, effective, and accessible for all learners.
- C. **ELIGIBILITY FOR PLAR**
 - C. 1 Faculty in each program will determine whether their courses are eligible for PLAR. Eligibility for PLAR is noted on course outlines. If not eligible, faculty are required to provide a rationale for their decision.
 - C. 2 The College will provide formal recognition of learning gained through prior experiences where such learning is determined to be equivalent to College courses.
 - C. 3 Only students who are admitted into a College of the Rockies program may request formal recognition for prior learning.
 - C. 4 Students who do not meet the admission requirements and/or course requisites can seek instructor permission to waive program and course requisites.
- D. **ASSESSMENT**
 - D. 1 The faculty will determine whether a **challenge examination, portfolio-assisted assessment, or workplace-based assessment**, or a combination of the above is most appropriate for assessment of the candidate's prior learning.

- D. 2 The assessment and evaluation of prior learning and the determination of competency and credit awarded will be done only by faculty who have the appropriate subject matter expertise.
- D. 3 Learning assessed for credit should be defined in terms of what was learned rather than the amount of time spent in the learning process. Credit will be granted on the basis of meeting the course/program learning outcomes as stated in the course/program outlines, and when candidates demonstrate that the breadth and depth of their learning is equivalent to learners who are enrolled in and who successfully complete the course or program.
- D. 4 Learning should be reasonably current and should be demonstrated at a level of achievement equivalent to students registered in equivalent College of the Rockies courses in that program/subject area.
- D. 5 The student has the primary responsibility for providing evidence that college-level learning has taken place.

E. GRADING/RECOGNITION OF CREDITS

- E. 1 Learning assessed through the PLAR process will normally be assigned a grade in accordance with the Student Evaluation (Grade) System policy (2.5.1) and consistent with the grading scale of the specified course. If not otherwise possible to assign a grade, the transcript will reflect a grade assigned as “PLA”.
- E. 2 The College will record credits awarded through the PLAR process on the transcript. Credits and grades earned under the PLAR process are included in the calculation of a student’s term and cumulative GPA.
- E. 3 Credits earned under the PLAR process contribute to residency requirements for a credential.
- E. 4 Candidates will have access to the Final Grade Appeal Process (Policy 2.5.3).

F. LIMITATIONS

- F. 1 A request for PLAR may be denied or delayed under the following situations:
 - a. The course is not eligible for PLAR as indicated on the course outline.
 - b. A qualified faculty assessor is not currently available to complete a PLAR assessment.
 - c. The student’s prior experience/learning is not deemed adequate to achieve a reasonable expectation of success in meeting the course learning objectives/outcomes.
- F. 2 If a request for PLAR is denied, the candidate will be provided with a rationale.

G. FEES

- G. 1 Fees for PLAR will be 100% of the regular course fee.

RELATED POLICIES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

[BC Prior Learning Action Network - Research \(bcplan.ca\)](http://bcplan.ca)

[Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment](http://www.capla.ca) - Quality Assurance manual (www.capla.ca)

[Policy 2.1.4 Course Audit](#)

[Policy 2.5.1 Student Evaluation \(Grade\) System](#)

[Policy 2.5.3 Student Appeal](#)