



Policy Number: SS-3100-2008
Policy Title: Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)
Policy Owner: Registrar
Effective Date: February, 2014

1. Purpose

This policy articulates the College's commitment to, and standardization of, processes and procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning acquired through self-directed study, work and life experiences that are not recognized by formal transfer of credit mechanisms.

2. Application and Scope

The policy applies to students who have acquired learning that is equivalent to the learning outcomes of one or more College course(s), through self-directed study, work and other life experiences that are not recognized through a formal transfer of credit mechanisms. This policy articulates a variety of tools to help learners reflect on, identify, articulate and demonstrate past learning as per the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Tuition and Ancillary Fees Policy.

3. Definitions

"Candidate" refers to any PLAR applicant who is 19 years of age or older or whom has obtained an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent.

"Challenge Process" is 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.

"Life Experience" includes such activities as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary and community work, training programs and other learning experiences.

"Mohawk College Community" refers to students, staff and visitors on Mohawk College campuses and/or carrying out college activities.

"Nominal Assessment Fee" must be paid by PLAR applicants in order for their prior learning to be evaluated by a subject expert through a challenge process or portfolio assessment. Fees will be established and subject to increases as prescribed in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Tuition and Ancillary Fees Policy.

“Portfolio Assessment” is 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 in a college courses or programs.

“Portfolio Development Course” is a course in which students develop a portfolio for subsequent assessment for prior learning assessment and recognition purposes.

“Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)” is a process that uses a variety of tools to help learners identify, articulate and demonstrate past learning acquired through independent study, work and life experiences that are not recognized by formal transfer of credit mechanisms.

“25% Residency” is the minimum percentage of credits a student must earn as a registered student in a program at the College to qualify for the credential associated with the program.

4. Principles

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition focuses on the evaluation of experiential learning rather than on the determination of equivalency of formal educational courses and/or programs used in the academic transfer credit process. PLAR evaluates acquired equivalent knowledge and skills that match the learning outcomes of a College course. Learning is assessed on an individual basis and credit is granted when compared to course or program learning outcomes.

5. Accountability and Compliance

5.1 Accountability Framework

This policy has been approved by the Senior Management Team.

5.2 Compliance

The Registrar is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy, and the procedures outlined on the College website, according to an established schedule or more frequently in response to feedback from the Mohawk College Community.

6. Rules

6.1 Mohawk College is committed to establishing equivalency, maintaining educational quality and consistency and adapting existing registration and grading procedures to the accreditation process consistent with the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities’ Tuition and Ancillary Fees Policy.

6.2 Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provisions for appeal, will be fully disclosed and prominently available. All PLAR candidates will be provided with a PLAR orientation through written materials or information sessions.

6.3 Candidates who seek education credit(s) through prior learning assessment must comply with established admission procedures. Prior program enrolment is not a prerequisite for assessment of prior learning; however, individuals should have an

academic plan and must go through the regular admission process to gain entrance to a College program.

6.4 Recognizing that students derive significant benefits from direct participation in College programming/services, each candidate must complete a minimum of 25% of their Program of Studies at the College. Candidates will be allowed to secure up to a maximum of 75% of required credits through PLAR or combined from another form of credit exemption. The 25% residency minimum is required for students to receive a College credential. Additional residency requirements will be determined in consultation with the appropriate Associate Dean.

6.5 The maximum fee charged for assessment of learning within ministry approved programs is determined by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Tuition and Ancillary Fees Policy. The assessment fee will not exceed the course fee, but may be equal to the course fee. Fees charged for assessment will reflect services performed in the process (e.g. preliminary counseling, portfolio development, portfolio assessment or challenge assessment) regardless of whether the credit is awarded. All students seeking PLAR credit for a course, at the same time, through the same prior learning assessment and recognition activity will pay the same fee. PLAR fees are not reimbursed in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR challenge.

6.6 The assessment process is determined by subject matter experts in the academic area using defined learning requirements for individual course outcomes. Academic areas may designate courses as not eligible for PLAR. Apprenticeship students need to contact the Ontario Apprenticeship Branch to determine if PLAR is available to them. Consultation with the academic area could be required prior to formal acceptance as a PLAR candidate. If learning is deemed equivalent to the College course learning requirements, the grade system established for the course is used. Unsuccessful PLAR attempts are not recorded on the student's transcript.

6.7 Students who have failed credit courses, or been unsuccessful in a previous challenge, do not qualify for PLAR assessment unless one year has lapsed and evidence is provided demonstrating additional learning acquired after failing the course. The Dean/Associate Dean has the discretion to deny a PLAR request for a failed course.

6.8 All personnel involved in the assessment of learning will receive adequate training in prior learning assessment processes including the challenge process, the portfolio assessment and the portfolio development course. Provision will be made for their continued professional development.

6.9 Prior learning assessment and recognition processes will be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served and in assessment approaches.

7. Policy Revision Date

7.1 Revision Date

This policy will be reviewed February 2017 or more frequently in response to feedback from the Mohawk College Community.

7.2 Responsibility

The Registrar will be responsible for reviewing this policy every three years.

8. Attachments

9. Specific Links

AC709 Academic Appeals Policy

AS-2000-2013 Program Quality Policy

Application Guidelines:

<http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/Assets/PLAR/Application+Guidelines.pdf>

Registration Form:

<http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/Assets/PLAR/PLAR+Registration+Form+2013.pdf>

Guidelines for Preparing a Portfolio for Course Credit:

<http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/Assets/PLAR/Portfolio+Guidelines.pdf>