

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Policy

Policy Type: Academic

Policy Owner: Vice President, Academic

Approval Date: March 25, 2026

Replaces: Version 2021

Corresponding Procedure: [PLAR Student Guide](#)
[PLAR Self-Assessment](#)

Purpose

This policy outlines the criteria for demonstrating, evaluating, and recognizing prior student learning or experience that may be deemed equivalent to current Cambrian College (“the College”) course learning outcomes.

Scope

This policy applies to all current students and prospective Cambrian College students.

Definitions

Advanced standing: a procedure for granting credit to a student for previous educational courses completed at the College or another institution.

Candidate: refers to any PLAR applicant who is 19 years of age or older or have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent. If English is the candidate’s second language, they will have to meet language requirements at the level required for admission to the College. This may require a language competency test. Other eligibility requirements will depend on the course(s) for which you are seeking PLAR.

Life experience: experiences such as self-directed study, paid employment, volunteer work and other learning experiences.

Grade Point Average (GPA): an indication of a student's academic achievement at the College, calculated by dividing the total grade points by the total credits.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): refers to the identification, assessment and recognition of skills that results in the granting of course credit based on the formal demonstration of prior learning acquired through self-directed study, work, volunteer work or life experience. Numeric grades received for PLAR will be included in the calculation of a student's grade point average.

Subject Matter Expert (SME): staff with expertise in the subject who may conduct/provide PLAR assessment.

Transfer credit: is granted when a student has successfully completed a course or courses from an accredited and recognized post-secondary institution that is/are evaluated as equivalent to (a) Cambrian course(s).

Policy Statements

1. General

- 1.1 PLAR recognizes that college-level learning may be acquired through life experiences such as self-directed study, employment, and volunteer work.
- 1.2 For this learning to be credited, it must be demonstrated, evaluated by an SME, and deemed current and equivalent to course learning outcomes.
- 1.3 PLAR differs from transfer credit in that it assesses experiential learning rather than formal coursework.
- 1.4 If learning is deemed equivalent, the College awards credit and a grade consistent with the grade scheme of the course.

2. Candidate Eligibility

- 2.1 Candidates must be 19 years of age or older or have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent. If English is your second language, you will have to meet language requirements at the level required for admission to the College. This may require a language competency test. Other eligibility requirements will depend on the course(s) for which you are seeking PLAR.

2.2 Candidates may be current or prospective Cambrian College students.

3. Candidates Requirements

3.1 Candidates must complete all PLAR requirements within the semester of application.

3.2 Candidates who wish to earn a credential must complete the regular admission process to gain entrance into a college program as outlined in the [Admissions Policy](#).

4. PLAR Limitations

4.1 Candidates are subject to the College's residency requirement as outlined in the [Academic Standing and Promotion Policy](#).

4.2 A PLAR cannot be completed for:

- a. Courses where the candidate does not have the prerequisite or other requirements (unless approved by the Program Coordinator or Dean/Chair)
- b. Courses previously audited by the candidate.
- c. Courses previously attempted or completed, whether passed or failed, to achieve a better grade.

4.3 Wherever possible, PLAR shall be available to candidates.

5. PLAR Results

5.1 PLAR grades are made available to candidates at the end of the semester in which the assessment is completed.

5.2 PLAR grades are included in GPA calculations.

5.3 A failing "F" grade for a PLAR will not appear on a candidate's transcript but will appear on the grade report; a semester summary posted on myCambrian at the end of each session.

6. PLAR Fees

6.1 Fees are established under the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence, and Security (MCURES) tuition policy directives.

- 6.2 Fees are payable prior to assessment and are non-refundable and non-transferable regardless of outcome.
- 6.3 Applications and fees must be submitted before the course start date and no later than the last withdrawal date without academic penalty

Responsibilities and Accountability

Vice President, Academic is responsible for:

- Ensuring that this policy and associated procedures are reviewed, communicated and fully implemented.

Chairs are responsible for:

- Communicating and upholding policy requirements to their staff.
- Assigning a PLAR contact to liaise between the Enrolment Centre and faculty as necessary.
- Ensuring SMEs are available to determine appropriate assessment methods, grade assessments, and submission of results.
- Supporting SMEs in matters related to PLAR.

Office of the Registrar is responsible for:

- Recording and managing PLAR results and grades
- Coordinating and managing all PLAR related activities on behalf of the College.
- Supporting students and faculty with PLAR processes.
- Promoting, reviewing and monitoring PLAR procedures across the College.
- Maintaining PLAR data and reporting, including PLAR records.
- Coordinating the communication between the Enrolment Centre, staff, faculty and students regarding PLAR.

Students are responsible for:

- Adhering to the requirements of this policy.
- Initiating the PLAR process and submitting required documentation.
- Checking their enrolment status when applying for PLAR. Receiving PLAR credit may affect a student's course load, which in turn may affect fees and eligibility for financial support (OSAP), scholarships, bursaries and other sponsorships.

Procedures/Forms

- [PLAR Student Guide](#)
- [PLAR Self-Assessment](#)

Related Policies

- [Academic Standing and Promotion Policy](#)
- [Student Fees and Refunds Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Academic Evaluation Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Auditing a Credit Course Policy](#)
- [Official Student Records Policy](#)

References

- [Framework for Programs of Instruction Minister's Binding Policy Directive \(MCU\)](#)
- [Manual for Ontario Colleges, Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board \(MCU\)](#)
- [Tuition and Ancillary Fees Minister's Binding Policy Directive \(MCU\)](#)