What is PLAR/RPL?

“Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a systematic process which uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on identify, articulate and demonstrate learning for the purpose of gaining recognition by educational institutions, workplaces, credentialing organizations, regulatory bodies and others.” (Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment - CAPLA, http://recognitionforlearning.ca/practitioner/aboutPLAR.php).

“The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process - also referred to as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition or PLAR - is designed for people who have acquired significant knowledge and skills outside formal university classrooms. RPL or PLAR or PLA (Prior Learning Assessment) is a "process of identifying, assessing and recognizing what a person knows and can do for the purpose of awarding academic credit". (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1999). In some cases skills training and personal and professional development, which has not led to a degree, certificate or diploma, can be recognized through RPL.” (www.uregina.ca/rpl)

“Learning does not always take place in the classroom: it also happens on the job, at home, and in the community. The recognition of prior learning is a reliable process that takes into consideration ALL learning by examining what a person knows and can do. This learning includes:

- **Formal Learning** – structured, intentional, and achieved through credit-based programs/courses;
- **Non-Formal Learning** – intentional and gained through participation in non-credit courses; workplace-based training, or workshops.
- **Informal Learning** – incidental and gained through life experience, workplace-based tasks, volunteer activities, self study, hobbies, family responsibilities, etc;
- **Experiential Learning** - either intentional or incidental and encompasses the concepts of non-formal and informal learning.” (http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/rpl)
**The Faculty of Social Work RPL Policy & Process**

In the Winter 2011 term, the Faculty of Social Work introduced a new Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy. In consultation with appropriate members of Departments/Programs, the Faculty of Social Work may evaluate and grant credit for qualifying informal learning up to a **maximum of 15 credit hours**. Credit may be granted on a case by case basis and according to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment process. **Credit will only be awarded for demonstrated learning which includes knowledge, skills and abilities. It will not be awarded for experience alone.**

SW 448, Practicum II, is not considered for RPL credit due to the number of practicum hours required under CASWE accreditation standards. All other courses are eligible to be challenged for RPL credit.

**Eligibility Criteria**

As of January 1, 2014, students applying for credit for SW 348, Practicum I, must:

- have a minimum of 2 years of full-time waged or unwaged human service experience (approximately 4000 hours), which has been completed in the past 10 years;
- have successfully completed the prerequisites for the course (currently SW 390, SW 346, and SW 100, 6 additional SW credit hours, plus a minimum grade point average of 70% in the Social Work portion of their BSW) **prior to credit being granted**;
- contact the appropriate Practicum Placement Coordinator **prior to the relevant practicum application deadline** to discuss their intent to apply for PLAR credit and, if needed, participate in the placement planning process (for contact information, visit [http://www.uregina.ca/socialwork/programs/bsw/practicum](http://www.uregina.ca/socialwork/programs/bsw/practicum); and
- clearly demonstrate in their PLAR application how they have met the objectives and competencies for SW 348.

The Faculty of Social Work recognizes that human service work occurs in a variety of settings including organizations, institutions, collectives, communities and coalitions. A diversity of experience is highly valued in this process.

Students who have completed practica in a diploma or certificate program may draw from their learning from these practice experiences in their portfolios.

Portions of this document adapted from the University of Victoria School of Social Work **Prior Learning Assessment Workbook** (2012).
Assessment Process

The PLAR process is facilitated by the RPL Program Coordinator, who is housed in the Recognition of Prior Learning Centre. The provision of support for PLAR applicants as provided by the RPL Centre is three-fold:

1. Preparing, conducting, and providing feedback on assessments of prior learning
2. Facilitating portfolio development
3. Providing support to students throughout the PLAR process

An individual interested in seeking credit for prior learning is strongly encouraged to contact the Recognition of Prior Learning Centre (see www.uregina.ca/rpl for contact information) or a Faculty of Social Work academic advisor. The RPL Centre will assist students with the process to facilitate a focused application. The approval of credit is at the discretion of the Associate Dean or designate.

Faculty members from relevant disciplines/practice backgrounds will be asked by the Associate Dean (Undergraduate) or designate to evaluate a portfolio supplied by a student who is seeking credit. In the case of SW 348, portfolios are typically assessed by the Field Education Coordinator(s) and/or faculty members who have taught SW 348. Assessors will use the form titled Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Academic Credit - SW 348 (see Appendix B).

Preparing Your Portfolio

Portfolios submitted for RPL credit for SW 348 will follow the format identified by the Recognition of Prior Learning Centre. Detailed information on portfolio format and content is available on the RPL Centre website at http://www.uregina.ca/cce/assets/docs/pdf/flexible-credit/plar/plar-portfolio-guide-2012-13.pdf. Preparing your portfolio takes a significant amount of time, thought, and reflection. Be sure to allow sufficient time to collect the required artifacts, develop the written sections, and have a colleague or friend review your portfolio prior to submission. Based on the experiences of previous students who have prepared RPL portfolios for SW 348, you can expect to take up to 3 months to compile your portfolio.

In preparing the content outlined in the document above, students applying for credit for SW 348 are expected to provide evidence of knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding the objectives of the course (see Appendix A) and the competencies identified in the SW 348 field placement evaluation form (see Appendix C).

You are encouraged to include pieces of information which would provide insight into your learning about self, anti-oppressive practice, and social justice. This may include previously collected evaluation forms from participants in groups/workshops you have facilitated, letters from previous 'clients' which attest to your anti-oppressive practice, editorials, notes/entries which capture how you have engaged with the complexities of practice etc. Due to the power differential inherent in the 'client' - social worker relationship you are asked not to solicit a reference or evaluation from service users.
Please also delete any identifying information when submitting materials respecting people with whom you have worked.

Following are some questions that may be used to guide your reflection. Please note: You are not expected to relate your full personal life history, just those events/experiences which have particularly shaped your views:

- What life experiences have shaped your views on social work and social justice?
- How has your understanding of your social, political and historical location and identities both facilitated and constrained your ability to practice anti-oppressively?
- What theoretical frameworks/paradigms have informed your understanding of social work and social justice?
- How have you and how has your human service practice changed over time to become more critical, self-referential and radical/anti-oppressive?
- How have you benefited from/been complicit in the marginalization of others (for instance Indigenous peoples, GLBT, differently-abled persons etc.)?
- Reflect on a time, in your human service practice, when you responded in an oppressive manner. What was your learning about “social work” as a result of this incident? What was your learning about “self”? How did you ultimately address this? Explain how this learning has directed your current practice. You may want to reflect here on how you were socialized to regard individuals who are seen as “other” in our society as different.
- Provide an example from your practice of when you successfully challenged an existing service, policy, practice or decision which you found oppressive. How did you come to recognize this service or policy etc. as problematic? What form did the challenge take? What, in your mind, made the challenge successful? What was your primary learning from this experience? In hindsight is there anything you would do differently? Your critical inquiry should rely heavily on anti-oppressive theory as well as practice.
- How is social work currently and historically implicated in maintaining structural inequalities related to First Nations, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability and other markers of identity? Who benefits, and how, from our current approaches to social services? As part of your response consider the current political, provincial and federal climate; consider as well how power is used to keep large groups of people marginalized.
- In what traditional First Nations territory is your community located? If your work has primarily been within a non-First Nations group/organization/institution, describe and critique the protocols which have been developed when working with First Nations in your area. If no protocols have been established, examine why this is so, and what you see as possibilities for change here.
- What does the term social justice mean to you? How have you demonstrated your commitment to social justice in your social work practice? How have you
been challenged in participating in social justice activities? E.g. What constrains you from being a “radical” worker? How are you engaged with these constraints? Please draw on actual examples from your practice when responding to these questions.

- What are your beliefs about the social worker/client relationship? How have you acted on your beliefs within your social work practice? An exploration of your ability to practice across difference is essential here.

- Provide an example of your written work that demonstrates your ability to write clearly and critically. This might include a report or assessment that you have conducted in your work; a letter to the editor; a submission to a newsletter; a proposal; a letter on behalf of a “client” etc. Please delete all identifying information to protect confidentiality. If no such writing is available to you discuss with your assessor what evidence you might submit here to demonstrate this competency. For instance, you might want to write a simulated letter or short article for a newspaper outlining your concern regarding a social justice issue in your community that you are aware of.

- Provide an example from your practice of where your personal and political ethics were challenged or in conflict with the Social Work Code of Ethics. Discuss the nature of the conflict, what you did and what you would do differently if given the opportunity. What learning did you extract from this experience and how has this learning directed your current practice? Think here in particular about ethical issues around difference that challenged the status quo.

Since we acknowledge a diversity of ways of learning, we also want to honour the many ways students may be able to demonstrate their learning. If you want to demonstrate your understanding of a competency in a creative, artistic, non-linear, or oral manner, please consult the RPL Coordinator around the options available for this.

**Assessment Criteria**

Students applying for RPL credit for SW 348 are required to submit a portfolio that demonstrates learning, including knowledge, skills, and abilities. SW 348 is a made up of two components: the field placement and the integrative seminars. Therefore, in addition to human service experience, students seeking prior learning credit for SW 348 must demonstrate that the ability to critically reflect on this experience and integrate theory and practice, as articulated in the objectives for the course (see Appendix A). The individual assessing the application for credit may request additional information from the applicant; this may be provided in writing or through an interview.

In order to be eligible for prior learning credit for SW 348, students must also be familiar with various anti-oppressive social work frameworks such as anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, feminist, anti-colonialist, anti-ableist, and other approaches, and be able to demonstrate how they have integrated these frameworks within their practice. As
such, for each of the competencies identified on assessment form, assessors will consider how well your portfolio incorporates the following elements:

- Critical self reflection, i.e. an understanding of how one’s own social, political and historical location impacts practice especially with those who have been relegated to the margins (in regards to class, gender, sexuality, race, physical and mental ability etc.).
- Ability to critique and make visible one’s anti-oppressive practice through the use of actual examples from one’s work, especially as they relate to your work with those who have historically been oppressed, such as people living in poverty, Aboriginal peoples, trans people, etc.
- Knowledge, integration, and critical analysis of anti-oppressive frameworks and theories. Demonstrate clearly how theory and practice come together for you, and how anti-oppressive theory informs your work.
- Ability to generalize previous learning to current practice. Showcase what you have learned to date about working across difference, and how this has informed your practice.
- Engagement with the complexities and contradictions of practice. Examining contradictions, both personally and politically, is crucial within an anti-oppressive analysis. You are encouraged to critically interrogate both your own contradictions as you see them in your practice as well as “mainstream” social work practices and assumptions, which are evident in the workplace. This means thinking deeply about how your own past experiences of learning, socialization and mainstream social work practice might be at odds with anti-oppressive practice.
- Clear, concise, and organized writing, including proper APA referencing of outside materials. References to learnings and readings from previous courses, especially those focusing on Anti-oppressive practice and other practice theories and approaches are essential here.
APPENDIX A

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

SW348 – Social Work Practicum I

Calendar Description: Practicum is designed to meet specifically identified individual learning needs of each student. SW348 is 195 hours or the equivalent of two days per week. SW348 is designed to be taken with other classes over the course of the 13 week semester. Graded on a pass/fail basis. No mid-term break.

Goal: to acquaint the student with social work practice via direct involvement in a human service organization.

Objectives: this practicum is intended to assist students in:

- broadening their human service experience by engaging with and assisting social workers in direct practice
- demonstrating an understanding of the effective use of self
- examining personal value biases, emotional reactions and the impact they have on others
- applying reflective and critical thinking to:
  - self and the practicum experience within the context of the placement, client population and emerging practice issues
  - social policies and their influence on the agency, clients and community
  - theories of social work practice
  - diversity and forms of oppression
APPENDIX B

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT – SW 348 (Social Work Practicum I)
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT –
SW 348 (Social Work Practicum I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ID:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty: Social Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program: Bachelor of Social Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original Certificates or Transcripts Checked?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Assessed?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more years of human service experience in the last 10 years?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Conducted?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If additional information needed, indicate the requirement:
1. Interview: ______
2. Assignment/Exam: ______

Explain additional requirement:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Portions of this document adapted from the University of Victoria School of Social Work Prior Learning Assessment Workbook (2012).
## Assessment Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Marginal or inconsistent</td>
<td>Reliable and usually consistent</td>
<td>Reliable and consistent</td>
<td>Exceptional, showing innovation and adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory/Fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory/Pass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the assessment criteria above, please provide a numerical evaluation of the student’s competency in the following areas as demonstrated in their portfolio, interview, and/or assignment:

1. Understanding of service delivery systems and the ability to work within them.

   ![Assessment Scale](image)

2. Understanding of and the ability to use a range of formal and informal resources.

   ![Assessment Scale](image)

3. Positive use of social work principles, values, ethics and knowledge in professional interactions.

   ![Assessment Scale](image)

4. Ability to develop helping relationships, solve problems and communicate effectively in professional interactions.

   ![Assessment Scale](image)
5. Ability to make effective use of supervision including the ability to integrate feedback.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Ability to effectively manage the assigned workload and employs effective written communication skills.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Open approach to learning, self-awareness and professional development.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
ASSESSOR(S)

Faculty/Department: ____________
Title(s): __________________________
Name of Assessor(s): __________________
Signature of Assessor(s): __________________________
Date: __________________________

CREDIT HOURS TO BE AWARDED

Course(s): __________________________
Credit Hours: ___________________________________________
Elective Hours: ___________________________________________
Total Credit Hours Awarded: ____________

APPROVAL

Name of Dean or designate approving assessment: __________________________
Approval Signature: __________________________
Date: __________________________

Note: Please return a copy of the approved assessment form to the RPL office.

For RPL Office Use Only:

Sent to faculty  □
Received date __________________________
Student notified of results  □
Sent to R/O  □
PLAR records updated  □
Assessor payment(s) processed  □
APPENDIX C

SW 348 EVALUATION FORM
The purpose of Practicum I is to provide students with an initial exposure to the field of social work. The expectations are to provide students with an opportunity to learn about working in an organization, to develop skills in working with clients and to examine their personal values.

Student ______________________________ Semester ____________________

FIELD INSTRUCTOR ________________________________

AGENCY ________________________________

Evaluation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory Performance</td>
<td>Marginal or inconsistent performance</td>
<td>Reliable and usually consistent performance</td>
<td>Reliable and consistent performance</td>
<td>Exceptional performance showing innovation and adaptability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation Instructions:
Based on the evaluation criteria above, please provide a numerical evaluation and comment on the student’s performance in the following areas:
1) The student demonstrates an understanding of the field placement’s service delivery system and the ability to work within it. Areas such as understanding the agency’s mandate/goals and ability to work cooperatively with others can be commented on.

2) The student demonstrates an understanding of, and the ability to use, a range of formal and informal resources.

3) The student demonstrates positive use of social work principles, values, ethics and knowledge in professional interactions.
4) The student demonstrates an ability to develop helping relationships, solve problems and communicate effectively in professional interactions.

   1   2   3   4   5

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

5) The student demonstrates an ability to make effective use of supervision including the ability to integrate feedback. Also comment on the student’s ability to work effectively with agency colleagues.

   1   2   3   4   5

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

6) The student demonstrates an ability to effectively manage the assigned workload and employs effective written communication skills.

   1   2   3   4   5

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

Portions of this document adapted from the University of Victoria School of Social Work Prior Learning Assessment Workbook (2012).
7) The student demonstrates an open approach to learning, self-awareness and professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments:

|                                           |                                           |
|                                           |                                           |
|                                           |                                           |
All parties are asked to review this evaluation and indicate that they have done so by signing and dating below.

__________________________________________  ________________________________________
Agency Field Instructor                      Student

__________________________________________  ________________________________________
Date                                           Date

__________________________________________
Field Coordinator

__________________________________________
Date

Revised April 2012
REFERENCES


