What is PLAR?

“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/about-PLAR).

“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.aeei.gov.sk.ca/rpl)

The PLAR Policy & Process

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 Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR) 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 (495 field hours), cannot be considered for PLAR credit due to CASWE accreditation standards. CASWE standards require students to complete a minimum of 700 field hours at the BSW level, and prior learning credit may be granted for a maximum of fifty percent of the required field hours. Standard SB 6.8 states:

Where academic credit is given for previous work and/or life experience in lieu of the practicum, clear criteria and procedures shall be specified and used to assess skills and
knowledge normally obtained through the practicum. Academic credit for previous work and/or life experience may be provided for a maximum of one half of the required hours of practicum specified in the programme (e.g., 350 hours of 700 required hours). (CASWE, 2008, p. 9)

Therefore, PLAR credit cannot be granted for SW 448 (495 field hours). All other undergraduate social work courses are eligible to be challenged for PLAR credit.

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; and
- clearly demonstrate in their PLAR application how they have met the objectives and competencies for SW 348 (see PLAR Information Package for Students for details).

The University of Regina processes used for evaluating prior learning include:

a) assessment of educational documents
b) assessment of portfolios that identify and verify prior learning augmented by interviews and assignments as required

The U of R subscribes to the "credit-exchange model" (Trowler, 1996), that is, the University recognizes that experiential learning holds post-secondary value in the form of credits which can be measured and awarded through assessment methods. The primary means of providing evidence of prior learning is by portfolio; however, assessors may require additional evidence to be provided in an interview, assignment, and/or exam. The U of R emphasizes the developmental model which emphasizes that subjective elements are involved in the PLAR process (Trowler, 1996). In this regard, the U of R promotes the professional and intellectual development of adult learners within the PLAR process as an educational tool.

Granting credit under the assessment of educational documents is addressed in the University Calendar (see sections 2.4.2 and 10.3.1).

The procedure for assessment of portfolios is outlined below. Credit may be granted as elective credit, as credit specific to courses that are approved for prior learning assessment, or as a combination of both (i.e., level credit in a particular discipline) up to the maximum of 15 credit hours.

The PLAR process is facilitated by the RPL Program Coordinator, who is housed in the Centre for Continuing Education. 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 (see: www.uregina.ca/rpl).

PLAR practice at the U of R is facilitated through the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE). The provision of support for PLAR applicants as provided by CCE 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

In the case of Social Work, PLAR credit will be awarded on an elective or course-specific basis. To apply for PLAR course-specific credit, the RPL Program Coordinator will consult with one or more content specialists to evaluate a portfolio supplied by a student seeking credit for that course. Credit will be awarded for demonstrated learning equivalent to the standards of the specific course(s) as required by the Faculty of Social Work.

An individual interested in seeking credit for prior learning is strongly encouraged to contact the RPL Mentor in the Centre for Continuing Education (see: http://www.uregina.ca/rpl) or an academic advisor. The RPL Mentor or Academic Advisor 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.

REFERENCES


