



PLAR Toolkit

Building Institutional Capacity for PLAR



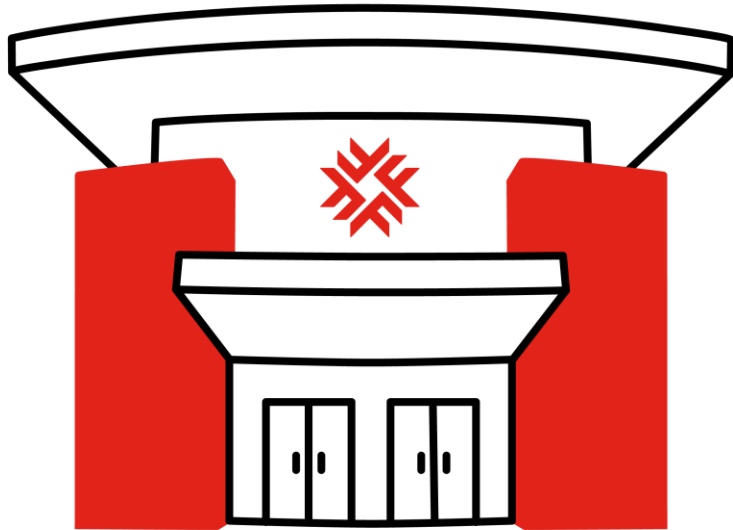
Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the lands on which we live, work, and gather across Ontario are the traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations.

As members of the educational community, we recognize that learning takes place on lands enriched by Indigenous knowledge, history, and resilience. We are committed to engaging with this history in meaningful ways, advancing reconciliation through education, and fostering respect, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our classrooms, workplaces, and communities.



Project Focus



Purpose
Outcomes

Purpose & Outcomes

This project aimed to:

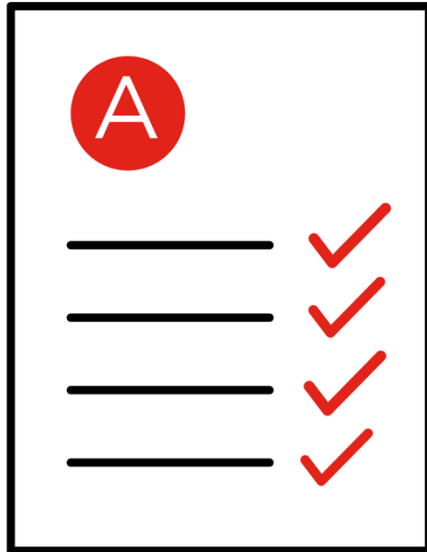
- Increase visibility and eliminate internal barriers
- Strengthen faculty support and engagement
- Equip faculty to better support students through the PLAR process

This project contributed to:

- Addressing institutional challenges
- Engaging faculty and staff
- Developing tools/resources to support student mobility



Research



Environmental Scan
Interviews
GAP Analysis
Framework

Environmental Scan

Review of current institutional processes and documents

Review of current provincial practices

Review of documents/resources to recommend updates to meet accessibility standards and to improve clarity and functionality



Interviews

Semi-structured interviews - 15

Participants selected to represent a range of roles/experiences with PLAR

Interviews were part of an initial institutional review to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement

Interviews transcribed and lightly cleaned for clarity

Interview Guide: PLAR Toolkit Environmental Scan

- 1. Can you describe your experience with PLAR at Fanshawe?**
 - a. What is your current role and how does it intersect with PLAR?
 - b. How frequently are you involved in PLAR-related activities?
 - c. What types of PLAR assessments or processes have you supported?
- 2. In your view, what aspects of the current PLAR process are working well?**
 - a. Are there particular tools, templates, or procedures that have been effective?
 - b. Have you observed any positive outcomes for students or faculty?
 - c. What feedback have you heard from others about what's working?
- 3. Where do you see opportunities for improvement in PLAR at the college?**
 - a. Are there specific steps or stages in the process that are challenging?
 - b. What barriers have you encountered, either personally or institutionally?
 - c. Are there equity or access issues that need to be addressed?
- 4. What kinds of resources, tools, or supports would make it easier for faculty to engage in PLAR?**
 - a. Would job aids, templates, or training be helpful?
 - b. How do you think digital tools could be used to improve the process?
 - c. Are there communication or support gaps you've noticed?
- 5. From your perspective, how can we better support student success through PLAR?**
 - a. Are there ways to make the process more transparent or accessible for students?
 - b. How might we support students in preparing for PLAR?
 - c. What role do you see PLAR playing in student mobility or progression?

GAP Analysis

Purpose	Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify discrepancies between the current state of PLAR processes and the desired future state based on ONCAT project goals• Highlight key areas of improvement• Provide strategic direction for development and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualitative data collected from interviews• Interview transcripts thematically analyzed using deductive coding informed by ONCAT project goals• Recommendations extracted from each interview were grouped into themes and prioritized based on alignment with project deliverables and feasibility within current institutional context

GAP Analysis

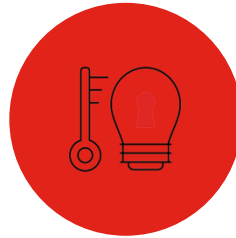
Category	Priority
Centralized PLAR Resources	High
Faculty Engagement & Training	High
Learner Guide Availability	High
Student-Facing Information & Access	High
Data & Process Tracking	Medium
Policy and Communication Clarity	Medium
Program Level Coordination	Medium
Integration into Curriculum & Planning	Low-Medium
Visibility and Promotion	Low-Medium
Alignment with Provincial Frameworks	Low

Framework

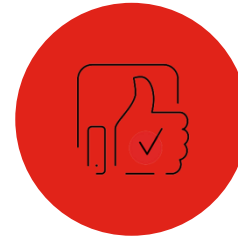
A PLAR Framework was created to:



Identify and document the tools, resources and training required for the PLAR Toolkit

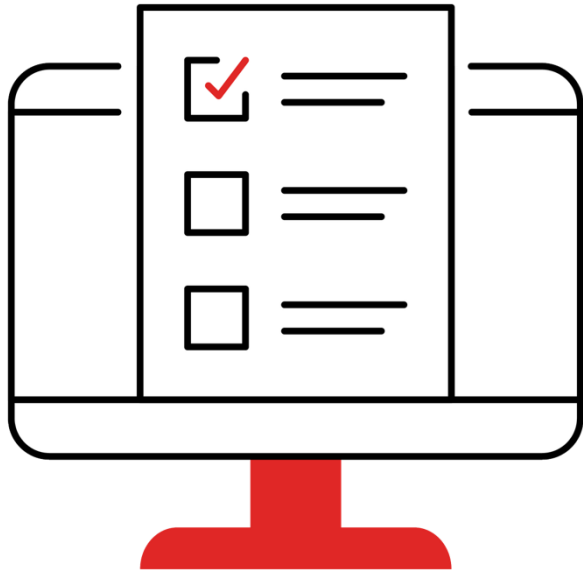


Highlight strategies to effectively promote, engage and complete assessments and evaluations



Support the knowledge mobilization and communications plan

PLAR Toolkit



Learning Modules
Process & Timelines
Creating Learner Guides
Assessing PLAR Submissions
Dashboard

PLAR Toolkit

Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR)

[CTI Home](#) > [Quality Partnerships](#) > PLAR

PLAR is the assessment of prior learning for college credit. Faculty play a central role in this process by assessing the knowledge and skills that learners have gained through work, training, or life experience. Using established academic standards and course learning outcomes, faculty evaluate evidence submitted by learners such as portfolios, demonstrations, or challenge exams to determine whether credit can be granted.

The PLAR process grants credit based on evidence of learning and the student's ability to reflect on and demonstrate what they have learned. Credit is not awarded for the completion of certificates, diplomas, awards, or years of work alone, but rather for the learning that can be shown to meet course outcomes. Faculty ensure the integrity of PLAR by applying their subject matter expertise and professional judgment throughout the assessment process. The [PLAR Learner Guide](#) is where those standards are clearly defined for both applicants and assessors.

PLAR Toolkit

 [PLAR Toolkit - Learning Modules](#)

Learn about PLAR via self-paced online learning modules.

 [PLAR Toolkit - The PLAR Process & Timelines \(.doc\)](#)

Document detailing process and timelines.

 [PLAR Toolkit - Creating PLAR Learner Guides](#)

Fillable Learner Guide template with a sample and COMMS upload how-to.

 [PLAR Toolkit - Assessing PLAR Submissions \(.doc\)](#)

Evidence standards & sample assessment. Used with Appendix B of the related PLAR Learner Guide.

 [PLAR Dashboard](#)

Self-serve data on PLAR activity and outcomes. Refreshed annually.

Funding for the PLAR Toolkit project was provided by ONCAT

People Who Can Help



Macklin, Tyson
Pathways Coordinator

Pathways, PLAR, Agreements




Spicer, Christine
Manager

Academic Quality & Partnership
Development

Related Links

 [Policy AT24 - Recognition of Prior Learning](#)

 [PLAR External Website \(Students\)](#)

 [PLAR Guide for Students](#)

Learning Modules

The screenshot shows the 'PLAR Resources for Faculty' web application. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a search icon, a grid icon, an envelope icon, a speech bubble icon, a bell icon, and a user profile icon for 'Christine Spicer'. Below the navigation bar is a menu with 'Content', 'Communications', 'Evaluations', 'Resources', 'Course Admin', 'Media Tools', and 'Help'. A search box is located on the left side of the main content area. The main content area is titled 'Table of Contents' and features a sidebar on the left with a list of modules: 'Module 1: Foundations of PLAR at Fanshawe' (4 items), 'Module 2: Creating and Assessing the PLAR Learner Guide' (8 items), 'Module 3: Coaching and Supporting PLAR Applicants' (4 items), and 'PLAR Documents and Resources' (8 items). The main content area displays the 'Table of Contents' for 'Module 1: Foundations of PLAR at Fanshawe'. It includes a 'Learning Objectives' section with a list of objectives and a 'Web Page' icon. Below the objectives are buttons for 'Upload / Create' and 'Existing Activities'. The table of contents lists four items: '1.1: What is PLAR?' (Web Page), '1.2: Types of PLAR: Challenge Evaluation and Portfolio' (Web Page), '1.3: Faculty Process and Timeline' (Web Page), and '1.4: Roles and Responsibilities' (Web Page). Each item has a checkmark to its right.

PLAR Resources for Faculty

Content Communications Evaluations Resources Course Admin Media Tools Help

Search Topics

Course Plan

Bookmarks

Course Dates

Table of Contents 24

Module 1: Foundations of PLAR at Fanshawe 4

Module 2: Creating and Assessing the PLAR Learner Guide 8

Module 3: Coaching and Supporting PLAR Applicants 4

PLAR Documents and Resources 8

Add a module...

Table of Contents

Import Course Bulk Edit Related Tools Expand All Collapse All

Module 1: Foundations of PLAR at Fanshawe

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Define what PLAR means and explain its purpose and potential benefits.
- Describe the principles of adult learning that underpin PLAR.
- Identify the types of PLAR assessments used at Fanshawe.
- Outline the institutional PLAR process at Fanshawe and their role in it.
- Apply the PLAR policy consistently using case examples.

Upload / Create Existing Activities

- 1.1: What is PLAR? Web Page ✓
- 1.2: Types of PLAR: Challenge Evaluation and Portfolio Web Page ✓
- 1.3: Faculty Process and Timeline Web Page ✓
- 1.4: Roles and Responsibilities Web Page ✓

Each module builds on the next and includes interactive activities, practical templates, and real-world scenarios:

Module 1: Foundations of PLAR at Fanshawe

Learn what PLAR is, why it matters, how it's different from other credit pathways, and what your role is in the institutional process.

Module 2: Creating and Assessing the PLAR Learner Guide

Explore how to translate course outcomes, support learner understanding, and assess submissions consistently using rubrics and evidence-based tools.

Module 3: Coaching and Supporting PLAR Applicants

Discover strategies to guide students through reflective writing, align their experience with learning outcomes, and promote equitable access to PLAR.

Process & Timelines

PLAR Process, Steps & Timeline



The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process allows learners to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained through work, training, or life experience for potential course credit.

The following steps outline how a PLAR request moves through the College from initial inquiry to final result.

In this process:

- **Learner or Applicant** refers to a current or prospective student seeking credit for prior learning.
- **Academic School** refers to the School, Program Coordinator, or their designate responsible for the course.
- **Advising Centre** staff provide guidance and coordinate PLAR documentation and payments.

Step 1: Initial Inquiry

- The learner contacts either their Academic School or the Advising Centre to ask about PLAR.
- They receive general information about how PLAR works and help deciding whether it is the right option for them. When available, the Learner Guide and course outline are shared to help the learner decide if they want to continue.
- If a Learner Guide does not exist for the course, the College recommends that the program create one.

Step 2: Discussion and Decision

The learner meets with both their Academic School and the Advising Centre to:

- Discuss whether PLAR is suitable for the course,
- Discuss the method of evaluation (for example, challenge exam or portfolio), and
- Review the PLAR process and fee.
- The College strongly encourages learners to speak with both areas before deciding.
- If the learner decides to move forward, they must contact the Advising Centre to start the process.

Step 3: Payment and Eligibility

- The Advisor adds the PLAR fee to the learner's account and explains how to pay online or by phone.
- Once the fee has been paid, the learner contacts the Advising Centre to confirm.
- The Advisor then verifies the payment before the assessment begins.

Step 4: Assessment Process

Depending on the type of assessment, one of two paths is followed:

A. Challenge Exam

- The Advisor notifies the Academic School that the learner is eligible to continue.
- The Academic School and learner schedule the exam (time and location).
- The Academic School grades the exam and informs both the learner and Advising Centre of the result.
- If the learner was already enrolled in the course, the Academic School withdraws them from that course.

B. Portfolio

- The Advisor provides the learner with the *Parts of a Portfolio* handout and explains how to submit their materials.
- The learner prepares their portfolio and sends it to the Advising Centre by email.
- The Advising Centre forwards the portfolio to the Academic School for evaluation.
- The Academic School reviews the portfolio and notifies both the learner and Advising Centre of the result.
- If the learner was already enrolled in the course, the Academic School withdraws them from that course.

Step 5: Recording Results and Follow-Up

- The Advising Centre records the final grade on the learner's academic record.
- The Academic School follows up with the learner to discuss the outcome and next steps.

Policy A124: Recognition of Prior Learning outlines PLAR timelines

Creating Learner Guides



PLAR Learner Guides

[CTL Home](#) > [Quality Partnerships](#) > [PLAR](#) > PLAR Learner Guides

The PLAR Learner Guide is a resource to help candidates and students decide whether to attempt to PLAR a specific course. PLAR Learner Guides are developed by faculty using the template below and include generic PLAR information, a student self-assessment and a standardized PLAR assessment appropriate to the course learning outcomes. They are stored as an attachment with the Course Outline on [COMMS](#).

Learner guides should be made available for as many credit courses as possible. These resources are available to assist with Learner Guide Development.

 [PLAR Learner Guide Fillable Template \(.docx\)](#)

 [PLAR Learner Guide Template - Sample \(.docx\)](#)

 [PLAR Learner Guide - COMMS Upload \(.docx\)](#)

Assessing PLAR Applications

A guide to help faculty use a structured, fair, and academically rigorous approach through:

- The step-by-step assessment process
- The evaluation of the credit request
- The application of evidence of standards
- The final decision

Rubrics have been developed to help faculty consistently assess student submissions

Sample assessments and rubrics have been provided as best practices

Standard	Definition	Example
Validity	Evidence clearly links to the course learning outcomes.	A marketing plan submitted for a business communications course includes a target analysis.
Sufficiency	Enough evidence is presented to make a confident decision.	More than one example from different projects shows sustained application of skills.
Authenticity	Evidence must be the student's own work.	Signed statements or project files clearly created by the student are included. Letters of reference verify the work that has been done by the student.
Currency	Knowledge/skills are recent or have been used recently.	A portfolio should normally include relevant examples from the past 12 months.
Directness	Firsthand evidence is preferred over indirect (e.g., letters of reference alone are not enough).	A report written by the student is stronger than a colleague's testimonial. Students should provide evidence of what they learned and how they have applied their learning.
Breadth	The portfolio shows learning that covers a range of skills/knowledge.	Examples show not just technical knowledge but also problem-solving and collaboration in line with the course learning outcomes.
Quality	The materials are well-developed, professional, and relevant.	The documentation is clearly written, well-organized, and tailored to the credit request.

PLAR Dashboard



PLAR Dashboard

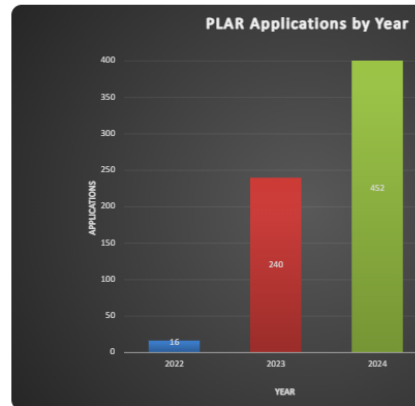
Filters	
Academic Year	All
Lead School	All
Course Code	All
Student Program Code	All
Evaluation Type	All
Domestic/International	All
Result	All
Bulk PLAR	All
Military Connected	All

Total PLAR Applications	Successful PLARs	PLAR Success Rate (%)	Pending PLARs
942	820	87%	0

PLAR Volume by Year (respects filters except Year)	
Year	Applications
2022	16
2023	240
2024	452
2025	234

Top 10 Courses by PLAR Volume (respects all filters)			
Course Code	Course Name	Applications	Successful Applications
FLDP-3023	Field Practicum 3-6 Years	133	124
FLDP-1022	Field Practicum 0-3 Years	104	91
FLDP-3024	Field Practicum 0-12 Years	95	83
NUTR-1015	FNM Field Placment	32	27
WRKE-0001	FSW Field Placement	25	22
MATH-1219	Math Fundamentals	18	18
FLDP-3048	Comm & Advocacy Practicum	16	15
WRKE-5001	Medical Work Placement	14	12
FLDP-3011	Curriculum Design Practicum	13	13

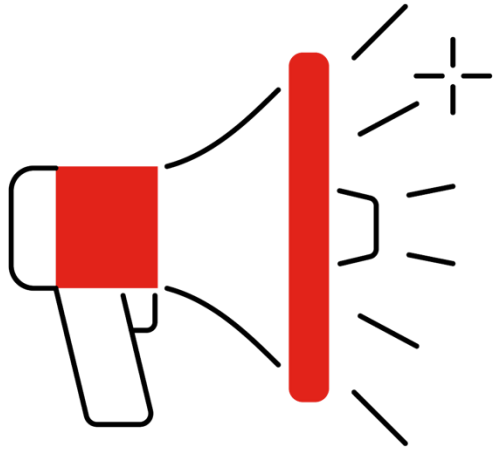
Domestic vs International (respects all filters)	
Category	Applications
Domestic	853
International	87



The PLAR dashboard is a self-service tool that displays PLAR applications and outcomes by academic year. It allows users to extract and analyze data through a range of filters, supporting comparisons of individual results as well as year-over-year aggregate trends.



Capacity Building



Faculty Engagement
College Communication
Knowledge Mobilization
Scalability

Faculty Engagement

Faculty messaging highlights that:

- PLAR recognizes and demonstrates prior learning
- A clear and supported process is in place
- Resources are available for learning and self-service

Faculty next steps include:

- Completing the FOL Learning Modules
- Accessing the PLAR Toolkit on the Quality Partnerships SharePoint
- Connecting with supports @ pathways@fanshawec.ca
- Inviting Quality Partnerships to a program team meeting

College Communication



Clearer processes, updated resources and improved self-service tools to support academic quality and student mobility!

Quality Partnerships, part of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), is pleased to announce the launch of our newly redesigned SharePoint site, now available through [Academic Resources > Centre for Teaching and Learning > Quality Partnerships](#).

The new site has been designed to provide clear process guidance, updated documentation and improved self-service access to resources. It highlights the full range of services offered by Quality Partnerships in support of programs, faculty, academic leaders, advisors and student supports, with a focus on academic quality, student access and student mobility.

EVENT

PLAR in Practice: Foundations, Process, and the New Toolkit

Duration 1 hour

Details

Interested in learning how Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) works at Fanshawe and how to confidently support learners through the process? This interactive session will introduce the new self-paced FanshaweOnline PLAR learning modules and provide a walkthrough of the new PLAR site on MyFanshawe. Together, we will explore how PLAR functions in practice, clarify expectations and roles, and examine assessment approaches that uphold academic quality. Participants will have the opportunity to examine new tools and resources while considering how PLAR can be integrated into their programs in ways that strengthen learner mobility and support a consistent, transparent process.

[Show More](#)



Save for Later

or

Assign

[Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition \(PLAR\)](#)

Quality Partnerships serves as Fanshawe's central point of contact for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This section outlines PLAR processes, timelines, assessment requirements, and data collection. Resources include:

- Self-paced learning modules
- Process and timelines
- Creating PLAR Learner Guides
- Assessing PLAR Submissions
- PLAR dashboard
- Related PLAR resources and Links

Knowledge Mobilization

PLAR Tools/Resources

- PLAR Toolkit

PLAR Learning Modules

- FanshaweOnline Self-Directed Faculty Training

PLAR Information Sessions

- Faculty/staff sessions to review PLAR Toolkit

PLAR Presentations

- Academic leadership presentations to review PLAR process

PLAR Feedback

- Faculty Testimonials, feedback on tools/resources, additional training

Scalability

What to consider when developing your own PLAR Toolkit:

- Conduct research and identify internal gaps and opportunities
- Use Fanshawe sample documents as guidelines - available through the ONCAT website: <https://www.oncat.ca/resources>
- Create a centralized hub for resources and supports
- Develop a communication and knowledge mobilization plan
- Share best practices through the CRALO RPL Working Group

Thank You



FANSHAWE

Prior Learning Assessment
and Recognition

Faculty engagement in PLAR
promotes collaboration and
supports student success,
access, and mobility.