

Policy Name: Prior Learning Assessment
Approving Authority: Academic Council

Policy #AA-021
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Statement

The Prior Learning Assessment Policy of Beal University Canada (“BUC” or the “University”) provides a process to award University credits earned by current students through recognition of previous work and life experience. The Academic Council will review the policy annually.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to evaluate knowledge, skills, and competencies which may have been acquired through, but not limited to, work experience, independent reading, hobbies, volunteer work, non-formal learning, travel, service to community, and artistic pursuits.

Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibility for the implementation of this policy is the Registrar’s and academic faculty’s. The Dean has oversight responsibility.

Definitions

Academic Administrator - Dean or Associate Dean

Life Experience - Activities such as self-directed study, paid employment, voluntary work, professional development, service to community, other professional experience, or travel.

PLAR - Prior learning assessment and recognition.

PLAR Assessment - An exam, portfolio, interview, performance, or other assessment method(s) that provides the student with an opportunity to have their prior learning assessed against the course learning outcomes.

Student – Any person who is currently enrolled in any course or program at BUC.

Subject Matter Expert – Also known as an SME provides subject matter expert knowledge in a healthcare area, business area, or technical area of the program.

Policy

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process of evaluating the college level learning, knowledge and skills of adults acquired through life experience. For this learning to be credited, it must be thoroughly described or demonstrated; assessed as to its nature, extent, and depth; and deemed equivalent and current when compared to course or program learning outcomes.

PLAR is to be distinguished from the transfer of academic credit process, in that PLAR focuses on the evaluation of previous life experience rather than on the determination of equivalency of formal educational courses and/or programs. In PLAR, a letter grade or course credit (CR) is granted; whereas in the transfer of academic credit process an exemption (TC) is granted.

The University supports a respectful, discrimination- and harassment-free learning environment, through the promotion of equity, diversity and inclusion. The University is committed to fostering a learning environment where individuals from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to pursue an education. The University acknowledges that equal access to opportunities and services may require treating particular individuals and groups differently through the removal of barriers that marginalized equity-seeking groups experience in trying to obtain this access. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, marital status, family status, Indigenous identity, nationality, race, creed/religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, gender expression, etc. The University is committed to remove barriers to opportunity by promoting equity, diversity and inclusion and creating more inclusive learning environment. The University provides academic and non-academic accommodations and accessibility pursuant to the applicable provincial human rights legislation. Academic accommodations enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and meet the essential requirements of the program. Academic accommodations do not reduce academic standards or alter essential requirements, they provide equitable access to participation.

The University provides individualized accommodations and accessibility supports for students with permanent, episodic, or temporary disabilities and medical conditions, helping to create a learning environment in which disabilities are not a barrier to completion of courses and programs. We do this, in part, by removing barriers to access, deploying technologies that facilitate access for students with disabilities, and providing academic accommodations and other resources.

The University promotes mental health advocacy throughout the University community. The University provides free webinars, literature and 24/7 online/phone mental health resources and a well-being online tool for students through a partnership with Homewood Health. This service supports healthy living and student success with confidential counseling for students and their family members.

The Student Services department is available to assist students and faculty with developing an accessible learning environment and individual plans of accessibility and accommodations to support the academic success of our students.

Related Policies and Documents

AA-016 Admissions Policy

AA-004 Corrective Action Policy

AA-011 Grading and Scholastic Requirements Policy

EC109 Transcript Protection Policy

HR-004 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

SA-003 Student Access to Accommodations Policy

HR-013 Gender Inclusion Policy

HR-014 Accommodations for Religious and Cultural Observance Policy

Addendum: Prior Learning Assessment Recognition Procedures

Addendum

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition Procedures

PLAR procedures and processes respect current standards and/or best practices for PLAR.

Eligibility

To be eligible for PLAR, candidates must be 19 years of age or older, or have a Secondary School Diploma or equivalent.

Students who have failed or passed the course or have been unsuccessful in a PLAR challenge within the past year (12 months) will not be permitted a PLAR challenge in the same course. In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of an academic administrator, this condition may be waived.

Following formal acceptance as a PLAR candidate, the candidate's prior learning is assessed by academic staff who have subject matter expertise in the area. Normally, if the prior learning is deemed equivalent to university course learning requirements, PLAR results will be transcribed using the same grading scheme and pass point as the course. In the case of General Sciences Electives, Degree Breadth courses, and block challenges, results will be transcribed as a credit (CR). Letter grades received through PLAR are included in GPAs and on transcripts with the exception of unsuccessful PLAR attempts which are not recorded on the student's transcript or included in their GPA.

PLAR candidates will be bound by the University's residency policy which states that, for any credential, a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the hours of the program of study must be taken and successfully completed at the University. Programs may require residency immediately prior to graduation.

PLAR candidates for a bachelor's degree may be awarded no more than fifty percent (50%) of the total number of hours of the program of study based on prior learning assessment and recognition.

All University courses should allow candidates to earn credit through PLAR. Clinical courses are not eligible for PLAR credit.

Admission and Fees

An application and remittance of fees for PLAR credit consideration must be submitted prior to the course start date. The Academic Administrator may approve timeline modifications only under exceptional circumstances.

Candidates who receive credit for courses through PLAR must go through the regular admission process, in order to gain entrance into a University program.

The fee schedule for PLAR services is established by BUC and is published on the PLAR website. The fees cover:

- delivery of assessment(s)
- evaluation of assessment(s)
- support for an independent learning contract, as required

PLAR fees are in addition to tuition. PLAR fees are not reimbursed in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR challenge.

Assessment and Evaluation of Prior Learning

Examinations

The purpose of exams is to measure knowledge of the content of, or the achievement of, the learning outcomes that are equivalent to those of a specific course.

Challenge exams are created for students who have not attended the course but who wish to demonstrate that they have achieved the course outcomes. Challenge exams are designed by a course instructor who is also known as a subject matter expert.

Standardized exams are prepared by national organizations, such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP); are applicable to a large population; and measure a specific level of achievement in a specific subject.

Equivalencies

Course equivalencies are awarded to learners who have completed and been evaluated in programs, professional licenses, or professional certificates outside of the college or university system. These non-formal programs and credentials are evaluated by BUC, and credit may be granted if the program or credential meets the BUC assessment criteria.

Portfolios

Portfolios summarize the learning gained from non-formal learning experiences. A portfolio is a collection of information that demonstrates the depth and breadth of what the learner knows and/or can do. A portfolio can be used alone or in combination with other methods of assessment. It provides evidence of learning.

Conditions

Credits granted for prior learning towards a specific program at BUC can be used in other programs at BUC where specific transfer credit exists.

Credits granted for prior learning at BUC may not always be transferable to other institutions. It is the responsibility of the learner to determine transferability.

For programs offered at BUC, a maximum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the credits required in a program will be awarded for prior learning. Exceptions to this would be subject to recommendation by and approval of the Dean.

Not all courses are eligible for PLAR; non-eligibility will be determined by the appropriate department after consultation with the Registrar.

Credit awarded through PLAR will be monitored to avoid awarding credit more than once for the same learning in a course/program.

A successful PLAR will apply only to the designated course and will not constitute a successful PLAR of any prerequisites to that course.

PLAR will not normally be granted for a course previously transcribed without the special permission of the department and without reasonable evidence of the acquisition of new knowledge.

Transcripts reflect the course being granted credit with a grade of T, which will count as credits attempted and taken, but not for GPA calculations.

If a request for PLAR is unsuccessful, there will be no listing on the transcript.

Learners who receive an unfavorable decision from the assessor will have access to BUC's appeal process.

Students are advised to consult with the Financial Aid office regarding any impact enrollment in PLAR courses may have on eligibility for student financial aid.