Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Secondary Schools (PLAR)

A Procedural Handbook

Introduction

This handbook details the procedures to be followed by students and staff in pursuit of credits for prior learning under the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process of the Ministry of Education

Suggestions for additions or improvements to this handbook are always welcome.

**Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Secondary Schools -
As It Relates to Challenges**

1.0   REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Ontario Secondary School Grade 9-12 Program and Diploma Requirements 1999
Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 129 PLAR: Implementation in Secondary
Schools

2.0   DEFINITIONS

2.1   **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION PROCESS (PLAR):** the formal
evaluation and credit-granting process whereby Students, excluding mature Students, may
obtain credits for prior learning. Prior learning includes the knowledge and skills that Students
have acquired, in both formal and informal ways, outside secondary school. Students may have
their knowledge and skills evaluated against the expectations outlined in provincial curriculum
policy documents in order to earn credits towards the secondary school diploma.

2.2   **Challenge:** The process whereby a Student's prior learning is assessed for the purpose of
granting credit for a Grade 10, 11, or 12 course developed from a provincial curriculum policy
document published in 1999 or later.

2.3   **Credits:** Challenge for credit for courses based on provincial curriculum policy documents will be
available to Students only in courses that are actually taught in schools operated by the Board.
All credits granted through the PLAR process - that is, through either the challenge process or
the equivalency process - must represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted
to Students who have taken the courses.

2.4   **Reasonable Evidence:** Documentation that the curriculum expectations of the course have
already been achieved and that the Student would likely be successful in the challenge process.

3.0 POLICY GOVERNING THE CHALLENGE PROCESS

3.1   In accordance with provincial Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 129, Students may
challenge for credit only for Grade 10, 11, and 12 courses in provincial curriculum policy
documents. (See OSS, section 6.6) The implementation schedule for the PLAR challenge
process is as follows:
1.   for Grade 10 courses 2001-2002
2.   for Grade 11 courses 2002-2003
3.   for Grade 12 courses 2003-2004

3.2   Each secondary school course calendar shall contain information regarding challenges for credit
and opportunities for challenge. Schools/Board may not charge Students any fee for undergoing
the challenge process.

3.3   Students may earn no more than four credits through the challenge process, including a
maximum of two credits in any one discipline (one curriculum policy document).

3.4   Students may use certificates or other records of accomplishment earned outside Ontario classrooms as reasonable evidence of eligibility to challenge for credit for a related course within the Ontario curriculum, if they wish to earn credit for the course without taking the course. Students with music certificates that are accepted for credits in OSS, appendix 4, Music Certificates Accepted for Credits, however, are not required to challenge for credit for the appropriate music course, but are granted credits in accordance with OSS Program and Diploma requirements, Appendix 4.

3.5   A record of all challenges for credit that were completed B that is, all challenges for which Students earned a final percentage grade, whether a passing for a failing grade shall be included in the Board's September Report to the Ministry. For semestered schools, this information shall also be submitted in the School March Reports.

3.6   The responsibility for PLAR shall be carried out under the direction of the school principal who grants credits in the school in which the Student is registered. A Student must obtain permission from the principal of the regular day school in which he/she is registered if he/she intends to apply for a PLAR at any other school, public or inspected private.

3.7   Arrangements may be made with other Boards to provide opportunities for eligible Students to challenge for credit for courses that are not offered by the Board

3.8   In cases where a Student who is an adult or the Parent/Guardian of a Student who is not an adult disagrees with the decision of the principal about whether or not the Student should challenge for credit, the Parent/Guardian or adult Student may ask the appropriate supervisory officer to review the matter.

3.9   The challenge process is an evaluation process and shall not be used as a way for Students to improve their mark in a course for which they have already earned a credit, nor as a way to obtain a credit for a course they have previously failed.

3.10   Students may challenge for credit for a course only if they can provide reasonable evidence to their principal (or designate) they would likely be successful in the challenge process. The responsibilities of the Student include:
1.   initiating the PLAR challenge by approaching the school Principal (or designate) for information regarding the process.
2.   completing the application process by gathering 'reasonable evidence' to support the application by the due date.
3.   completing the formal tests and other assessments by the due date(s) as determined by the Supervisory Officer responsible.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Supervisory Officer, School Principal, and Student-applicants for a PLAR.

5.0 PROCEDURES

5.1   Principal Responsibilities
5.1.2   Step 1
        Ensure that Students are informed that they are responsible for initiating the challenge
        process and for satisfying all of the requirements, and ensure that Students who are not
        adults (i.e., Students who are under the age of eighteen) are informed that they need
        parental approval before applying to challenge for credit for a course.

5.1.3   Ensure that every prospective applicant and his or her Parent/Guardian, if he or she is
        not an adult, are informed about policies and procedures related to challenging for
        credit, including policies on and procedures for recording results in the Ontario Student
        Record (OSR) and on the Ontario Student Transcript (OST).

5.1.4   Step 2
        Ensure that every prospective applicant is provided with an application form as well as
        materials that indicate what is expected in the course (i.e., the curriculum expectations)
        for which the Student wishes to challenge for credit, to be returned by a date set by the
        Supervisory Officer responsible.
        (See Appendix)

5.1.5. Evaluate each application in consultation with the Student's Parent/Guardian (or with the
        Student if the Student is an adult) and appropriate school staff (i.e., guidance counselor,
        Teacher-Adviser, and subject Teacher) to determine whether reasonable evidence for
        success exists and whether the challenge should occur.

5.1.6   Principals shall use as a guide the table entitled 'Requirements for the OSSD Under
        OSS' in OSS, appendix 8: Equivalent Diploma Requirements, to determine the number
        of credits, including compulsory credits, that the Student must earn, as well as other
        diploma requirements that the Student must satisfy, in order to qualify for the Secondary
        School Diploma.

5.1.7   Principals shall use the **Application to Challenge for Credit for a Course** form
        provided. (See Appendix 1)

5.1.8   Ensure that the Student request to challenge for credit will be entered in the Students=
        Annual Education Plan. A Student must challenge for credit for an entire course,
        whether it is a full-credit or a partial-credit course. Credit will be granted only for the
        specific course for which the Student has successfully challenged for credit.

5.1.9   Inform the Supervisory Officer responsible that an application has been approved.
        (Grade, subject)

5.1.10 Ensure that no more than four credits may be earned by one Student
        in the PLAR challenge process with no more than 2 credits granted
        in any one discipline.

5.1 .11 Use and maintain the forms entitled:
        i)   PLAR Challenge for Credit: Cumulative Tracking Record
                (See Appendix 3)
        ii)   PLAR Challenge for Credit: Interim Tracking Record (Appendix 4)
                No changes of any kind will be made to these forms. These forms must be

included in the Student's OSR.

5.1.12 Ensure that Students who do not have suitable documentation, owing to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., Students who are refugees), will receive counseling concerning the gathering of evidence.

5.1.13 Inform the Students of the date of the assessment in May and the requirements of the challenge.

Board Responsibilities:

5.1.14 Prepare and distribute to the schools the information brochure.

5.1.15 Prepare and distribute to the Principal the Policy and Procedures.

5.1.16 Ensure that a qualified Teacher prepares the assessment tools.

5.1.17 Ensure that a qualified Teacher administers the assessment tasks.

5.1.18 Ensure that a qualified Teacher evaluates the assessment tasks.

5.1.19 Ensure that a qualified Teacher reports Student achievement to the schools.

Record Keeping

5.1.20 The Principal will ensure that a 'PLAR Challenge for Credit: Cumulative Tracking Record' form is maintained and included in the Student's OSR. This form is intended to track the number of credits earned and the disciplines in which credits have been earned through the challenge process, as well as failures and withdrawals. This form should be consulted as part of the Student's application to challenge.

5.1.21 A 'PLAR Challenge for Credit: Interim Tracking Record' form will be maintained for credits earned through the challenge process in a school outside the Student's regular school (the regular school is the school that maintains the Student's OSR).

5.1.22 The principal of the school outside the Student's regular school will use the 'Interim Tracking Record' form to communicate the results of the Student's challenges for credit to the school that maintains the OSR.

5.1.23 The following entries must be made on the Student's 'Cumulative Tracking Record' form and the 'Interim Tracking Record' form, as applicable:
   a)   For challenges for credit for Grade 10, 11, or 12 courses: the Student's passing percentage grade, failing percentage grade, or withdrawal from the challenge process must be entered on the appropriate tracking record form(s).

   b)   The following entries must be made on the Student's OST:
         - For challenges for credit for Grade 10 courses: Only passing percentage grades will be entered on the OST. If the Student subsequently takes the Grade 10 course, only the higher percentage grade will be recorded on the OST. No notation will be entered on the Student's OST if the Student withdraws from

or receives a failing grade in the challenge process.
- For challenges for credit for Grade 11 and 12 courses: Passing and failing percentage grades will be entered on the Student's OST. No notation will be entered on the OST if the Student withdraws from the challenge process.

c)   Student must provide notification of withdrawal from the challenge assessment 48 hours prior to the date of assessment.

5.1.24 Board must ensure that only Teachers certified by the Ontario College of Teachers conduct the PLAR challenge process. Teachers with expertise in the subject area will develop, administer and evaluate PLAR challenge task for credit.

5.2   Student Responsibilities

5.2.1   Students must apply for a PLAR at the school which they are registered. PLAR applications and challenges will be restricted to certain scheduled periods during the school year.

5.2.2   Students cannot be granted credits through the challenge process for any of the following courses:

a)   a course in any subject if a credit has already been granted for a course in that subject in a later grade either as a single credit or as part of a block equivalency.

b)   a course for which credit has already been granted or for which there is significant overlap with a course for which credit has been granted (e.g. a Student cannot challenge for credit for an academic course if he or she has already earned a credit for the applied course at the same grade level, and vice versa)

c)   a transfer course

d)   a locally developed course

e)   a cooperative education course

f)   a course in English as a second language (ESL), English literacy development (ELD), or Anglais (APD), if the Student has one or more credits in English from the curriculum policy documents for English-language or the documents for French-language schools or from the curriculum guidelines for English or Anglais/English for Grade 9 to 12/OACs under OSIS.

g)   a course in French as a second language (FSL), Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF), or Perfectionnement du français (PDF), if the Student has one or more credits in Français from the curriculum policy documents for Français for Grades 9 to 12/OACs under OSIS

6.0   APPENDICES

Appendix 1.   Application to Challenge for Credit for a Course
Appendix 2.   Record of Assessment of Challenge for Credit for a Course
Appendix 3.   PLAR Challenge for Credit: Cumulative Tracking Record

APPLICATION TO CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT FOR A COURSE

Please complete this application form and submit it to your school principal.

Surname: _____

Given names: _____

MIN/OEN: _____   Grade: _____

Gender: ____ male ____ female   Date of birth: ____ year ____ month ____ day

Name of parent/guardian: _____

School: _____

I wish to challenge for credit for the following course:

Course Title	Course Type	Course Grade/Level	Course Code

I am aware that a passing or failing mark resulting from a challenge for credit for a Grade 11 or 12 course will be entered on my Ontario Student Transcript and that a passing or failing mark or a withdrawal resulting from a challenge for credit for any Grade 10, 11, or 12 course will be entered on my PLAR tracking record and maintained in my Ontario Student Record.

I am aware that the PLAR challenge process will include formal tests (balanced between written work and demonstration, as appropriate for the subject) worth 70 per cent of the final mark, and other types of assessment worth 30 per cent of the final mark. I am aware that my skills and knowledge will be evaluated against the expectations outlined in the appropriate provincial curriculum policy document. I am aware that a maximum of four credits may be granted through the challenge process for courses in Grades 10 to 12, with no more than two in any one discipline.

I am submitting the following as evidence that I am qualified to challenge for credit for this course:

	letter(s) of recommendation from teacher(s) familiar with the course expectations
_____	letter(s) of recommendation from teacher(s) familiar with the course expectations
_____	letter(s) of recommendation from member(s) of the community
_____	a portfolio of relevant work
_____	proof of successful relevant experience in a supervised setting
_____	proof of independent learning in a relevant area
_____	a videotape, audiotape, or CD-ROM with samples of relevant work
_____	proof of relevant prior learning from another educational jurisdiction
_____	proof of successful completion of courses identified as prerequisites for this course

Student Paragraph

Write a paragraph of 100-200 words stating why you want to challenge for credit for this course. Be sure to include the following:
$ ways in which the course credit will help you to fulfil your educational goals
$ your special interest and skills related to this course
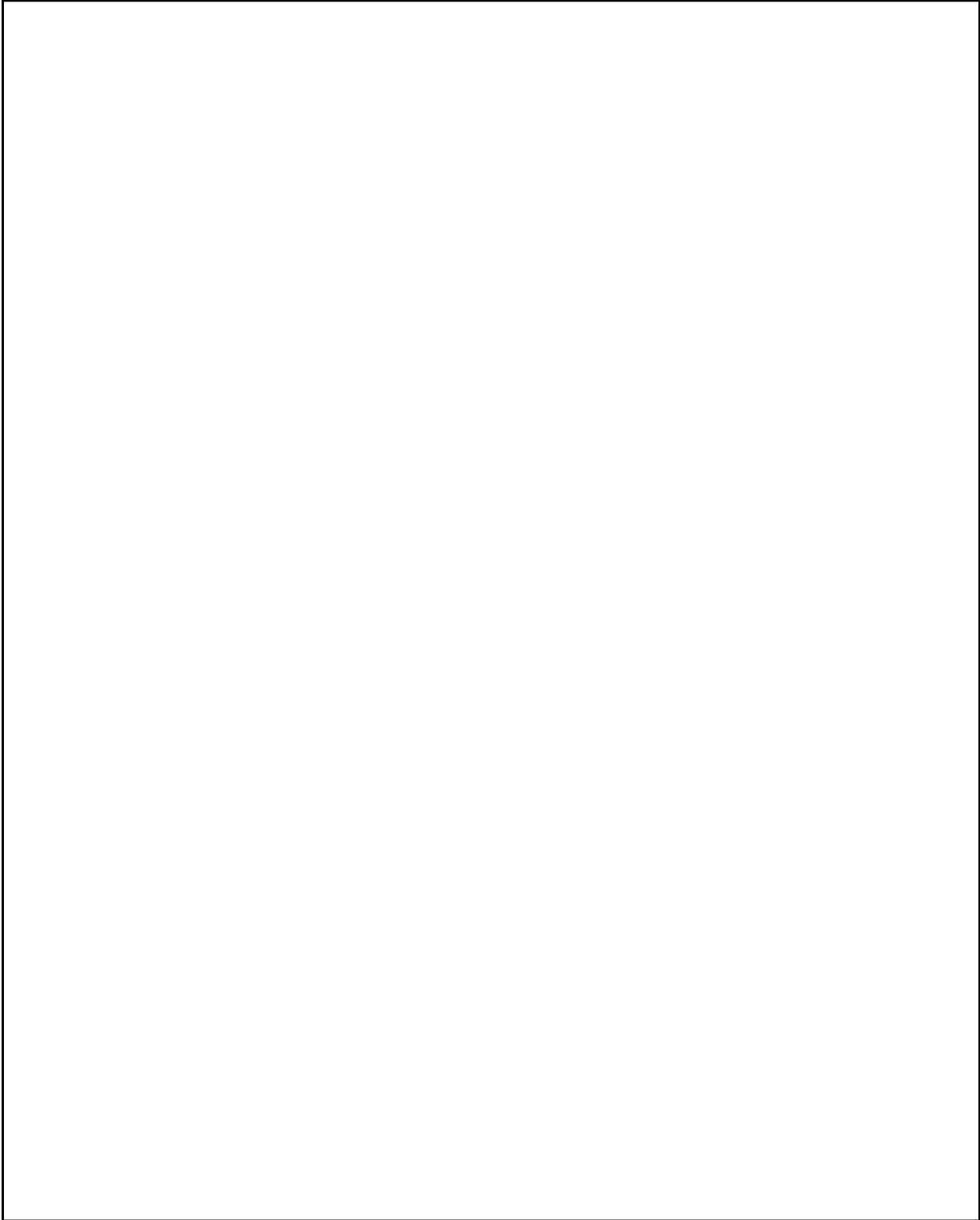
I have reviewed the curriculum expectations and the descriptions of the levels of achievement for this course with a designated subject teacher.

I understand that a board/school committee will review my application.

Signature of student: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of teacher/adviser/
      guidance counsellor: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date application received: _____

Date challenge process completed: _____

RECORD OF ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT FOR A COURSE

Student=s surname:

_____

Given names: _____

MIN/OEN: _____

Gender: _____ male _____ female   Date of birth: _____ year _____ month _____ day

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Course title: _____ Course type: _____

Course grade/level: _____ Course code: _____

Teacher: _____

School: _____

Assessment Strategies Used

a) Formal Tests - 70% of final percentage grade

Overall Expectations Covered	Type of Test	Date Completed	Level of Achievement

Percentage Grade (out of 70%) _____

b) Other Assessment Strategies - 30% of final percentage grade

Overall Expectations Covered	Type of Test	Date Completed	Level of Achievement

Overall Expectations Covered	Type of Assessment Strategy	Date Completed	Level of Achievement

Percentage Grade (out of 30%) _____

Final Percentage Grade _____

Signatures

Subject teacher: _____   Date: _____

Student: _____   Date: _____

Principal: _____   Date: _____

Teacher-adviser/guidance counsellor: _____   Date: _____

Parent/guardian: _____   Date: _____

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION: CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT
Cumulative Tracking Record

Surname	Given Names		MIN/OEN	Student Number	Gender	Date of Birth

School Board/School Authority/Inspected Private School[1]   Number   Name of School

Date (Year/ Month)	School Board/Inspected Private School[2]	Course Grade/ Level	Course Title	Course Code	Discipline	Percentage Grade	Credit	Compulsory	Withdrawal	Authorization[3]

[1] Name of school board/school authority/inspected private school that maintains the student=s OSR
[2] Name of school board or inspected private school through which the student earned the credit(s)
[3] Signature of person authorized to maintain the student=s OSR

Note: For policy on the use of this form, see Policy/Program Memorandum No. 129, APrior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): Implementation in Ontario Secondary Schools@.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION: CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT
Interim Tracking Record

Surname	Given Names			MIN/OEN	Student Number	Gender	Date of Birth

School Board/School Authority/Inspected Private School[1]   Number   Name of School

Date Year/ Month)	School Board/Inspected Private School[2]	Course Grade/ Level	Course Title	Course Code	Discipline	Percentage Grade	Credit	Compulsory	Withdrawal	Authorization[3]

[1] Name of school board/school authority/inspected private school that maintains the student=s OSR
[2] Name of school board or inspected private school through which the student earned the credit(s)
[3] Signature of person who granted the credit(s)

Note: For policy on the use of this form, see Policy/Program Memorandum No. 129, ΑPrior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): Implementation in Ontario Secondary Schools≅.

STEPS IN THE PLAR PROCESS

1. Student inquiries about PLAR

2. Principal gives: - brochure
   - expectations for course
   - advice on process

3. Student discusses with parents/guardian

4. Student returns:

   No ► End

   Yes ► Principal gives: - application package
   - discusses process and requirements
   - notes return deadline (4 weeks)
   - offers meeting with guidance

5. Student leaves with package. Has 4 weeks to prepare credible evidence. Enter on A.E.P.

6. Student returns with evidence. Principal assesses materials:

   No ► End
   ► Appeal

   Yes ► Principal gives details of next step: - date of assessment
   - components of assessment (handout)

7. Principal records on tracking sheet.

8. Student prepares for assessment independently.

9. Student attends assessment day - completes tasks.

10. Qualified teacher evaluates assessment task.

11. Qualified teacher reports to school principal.

12. Principal issues credit and reporting form. Records on tracking form.

13. Counselor inserts reporting form and tracking form in OSR.

14. Counselor adds credit to OST.

15. End.

16. Appeal.