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PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION

Reference document coordinated by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training and prepared
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School to Work and Work to School Transitions

*The opinions expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Ontario Ministry of
Education and Training nor of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This discussion paper on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) has been prepared to provide participants at the Third National Forum on Education with a general understanding of PLAR and the major issues facing organizations involved in its implementation. Extensive consultations were conducted with a nation-wide range of experts and organizations involved in PLAR. The paper provides an historical overview of PLAR's development in Canada and a chart on PLAR activities in governments and education/training institutions across the country. Three important PLAR issues are introduced and suggestions on how the education/training community may wish to collaborate to resolve these issues are presented for discussion.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is based on the premise that significant learning takes place in a wide variety of contexts throughout a person's life, and that it is beneficial to both organizations and individuals to recognize that learning wherever possible. PLAR is a process used to identify, verify and recognize learning (knowledge and skills) that have been achieved through activities such as work, travel, independent study and community work. Examples of recognition gained are educational credit, occupational certification, employment and access to advanced training.

Through the use of assessment methodologies such as standardized tests, demonstration/challenge testing, portfolio and external course assessments, individuals are able to assess their own learning with a view to creating appropriate educational plans; educators are able to evaluate learning that has been acquired outside the classroom for academic credit. Quality assurance mechanisms built into the PLAR process ensure that legitimate learning is recognized and that the integrity of institutions' credentials is maintained.

PLAR has grown considerably in Canadian education/training institutions since 1993 and a number of issues have emerged. Among these are: 1) **Funding** - Although there is general agreement that PLAR costing arrangements should encourage learners and institutions to participate in PLAR, there are currently federal, provincial and institutional financial disincentives affecting the number of learners accessing PLAR services. 2) **Quality Assurance** - Despite initiatives to ensure quality, some organizations express reservations about the integrity and utility of the PLAR process. Lack of information about PLAR as well as a scarcity of research on its efficacy exacerbate these reservations. 3) **Portability** - Education and training initiatives are scattered without cohesion across levels of education, institutions, workplaces and government departments. PLAR's potential to facilitate learners' transitions from one learning environment to another is not being realized.

The Third National Forum on Education's theme, "Education and Life: Transitions" and the sub-theme "School to Work and Work to School", present an opportunity to explore how education/training organizations within and across jurisdictions can collaborate to enhance the lifelong learning process. This paper presents a number of suggestions for such collaboration within the context of PLAR.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide participants at the Third National Forum on Education with a basis for discussion on the topic of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) within the School to Work and Work to School sub-theme. A definition of PLAR, its potential benefits and history are offered and a cross-Canada overview is given. Three key issues facing governments, consumers and direct deliverers are presented. Policy areas are identified in which potential collaboration may be possible. An effort has been made to balance introductory information on PLAR with a discussion of more in-depth issues regarding the future of PLAR.

Preparation of this document included research and extensive consultations with PLAR experts in organizations across sectors, across Canada. Specialists in matters relating to both PLAR and education/training were invited to provide commentary. In keeping with the terms of reference established by CMEC, it is not the purpose of this paper to represent any single perspective or to recommend any specific course of action.

DEFINITION AND RELEVANCE TO EDUCATION

PLAR is based on the premise that significant learning takes place in a wide variety of contexts throughout a person's life, and that it is beneficial to both organizations and individuals to recognize that learning wherever possible. PLAR is a process used to identify, verify and recognize learning (knowledge and skills) that have been achieved through activities such as work, travel, independent study and community work. Examples of recognition gained are educational credit, occupational certification, employment and access to advanced training.

PLAR is an ideal tool to use in responding to the learning needs of Canadians because it supports continuous engagement in learning activities at home, at school and in the workplace throughout our lifetimes. PLAR provides reliable mechanisms through which achievement of common expectations of educators, trainers and employers can be measured, mutually recognized and continuously used for educational and workplace planning purposes.

The Third National Forum on Education's theme, "Education and Life: Transitions" and the sub-theme of "School to Work and Work to School" are particularly suited as a backdrop for discussions on PLAR.   In recent years, governments have been interested in improving links between education and labour force development. This interest now has become a critical need as Canada's labour force struggles to keep up with changes caused by workplace downsizing, closures and technological development. No education/training organization is immune from the need for infrastructural changes to provide accessible, flexible learning mechanisms that are relevant to the workforce. No organization can hope to achieve these changes in isolation.

There are several methodologies used to conduct PLAR, some of which are:

a) standardized testing (for which validity and reliability checks have been completed)
b) demonstration/challenge testing (e.g. exams, audio presentations, product evaluations)
c) portfolio assessment (presentation of learning from an individual s perspective)
d) external course assessment (e.g. courses offered by industry for college credit)

PLAR has a number of fundamental elements that have been adopted by organizations to ensure high quality PLAR processes. Some of these elements are:

- ▸ Recognition is provided for learning (knowledge, skills), not experience (time spent).
- ▸ Assessments are conducted in relation to specific criteria (e.g. course outcomes).
- ▸ Assessments take into account the necessary depth, breadth and level of learning and the appropriate balance of theory and practice, required for recognition.
- ▸ Only appropriately trained persons conduct assessments.
- ▸ Assessment methods and tools must be high quality and flexible.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

PLAR benefits individuals. It assists them in taking responsibility for their own learning, increases access to education, eliminates duplication of training, facilitates development of educational goals and plans, improves self-esteem and motivation to learn, reduces program workloads, reduces costs and facilitates transition between learning environments.

PLAR benefits institutions. It serves a wide, diverse learner population, increases retention, assists in effective student placement, increases efficiency, and provides opportunities to partner with employers and other community organizations.

PLAR benefits faculty. It stimulates discussions on program content and the relevance of credentials, increases interaction with non-traditional learners, broadens understanding of assessment and evaluation, and creates opportunities for professional development.

PLAR benefits the community. It promotes a high quality workforce, contributes to community stability, reduces the costs of education, provides role models for youth and improves links among industries and educational institutions.

HISTORY

PLAR began at the postsecondary college level in Canada, largely for the purpose of granting academic credit. PLAR was first used in 1980 in the Nursing Diploma program at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. First Nations Technical Institute and Mohawk College in Ontario followed suit in 1982 and 1985 respectively.

The first province-wide implementation was in Quebec CÉGEPs commencing in 1984. In 1992, the Government of Ontario embarked on system-wide implementation for Ontario colleges and from 1992 to the present, a number of other postsecondary institutions and provincial governments (including Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia) developed PLAR policies and procedures at the secondary and/or postsecondary levels.

During the early and mid-1990s, a number of national organizations began to recognize the potential of PLAR and to support the work conducted by institutions. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) supported a number of initiatives, conferences, network development and sectorally sponsored pilot projects in several regions. Recently, HRDC has expressed its interest in facilitating the resolution of issues identified by provincial and national groups through pan-Canadian partnerships.

The Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) adopted PLAR as one of its priority policy development areas and also began to support PLAR initiatives in the early 1990's. The Board proposed a modification to the term then used by most Canadian organizations, "PLA", and recommended that the term "PLAR" be adopted to mark the importance of recognition awarded through assessment. In 1997 the CLFDB also hosted the second National Forum on PLAR which was highly successful.

In the mid-1990s, the usefulness of PLAR began to be recognized by some universities' continuing education faculties. Projects have subsequently sprung up to explore the implementation of PLAR at universities. This area of PLAR development has been slower than at the community college level, but appears to be gaining support. Other sectors, particularly industry and labour generally have not acted to adopt PLAR on their own or in partnership with education/training institutions.

CROSS-CANADA OVERVIEW

It is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the progress of PLAR in Canada. Few institutions collect data; few governments monitor activities. Policy responsibilities for PLAR are frequently scattered across government departments that may or may not be linked and the priority assigned to PLAR varies. Provincial government involvement in PLAR has largely been in the form of policy development and initial implementation funding support to institutions. Few initiatives have been undertaken to use PLAR to link secondary and postsecondary levels of education/training or to enhance mobility across sectors.

The attached chart summarizes major PLAR activities in Canada by province/territory (pages 11-14) and by participant group (page 15). The chart confirms an uneven distribution of PLAR activity across the country. The most active participants are community colleges and national organizations providing financial support for PLAR development. The chart also reveals some

excellent partnerships and projects within some provinces, little activity in others, and limited collaboration across provinces.

At the secondary school level, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have provincial policies on PLAR and Ontario is in the process of replacing its current policy of maturity credits through its Secondary School Reform Project. These provincial policies differ substantively as do provincial funding arrangements.

At the college level, provincial policies on PLAR exist or are nearing completion in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. However, these provinces' positions vary widely on common policy issues. For example, in British Columbia, recording PLAR on college transcripts is currently optional; in New Brunswick transcripts do not record PLAR. Funding arrangements vary dramatically from no provincial support for PLAR activity to sliding scale assessment fees and special budget allocations for promotion, development and delivery. With few exceptions, colleges receive little or no permanent, targeted funding for PLAR activities.

At the university level, formal institutional PLAR policies are least developed across Canada. With few exceptions, activities tend to be on a project basis and funding is limited (see chart).

In apprenticeship, formal provincial PLAR policies are under development in Newfoundland and Ontario. In most provinces, reductions in apprentices' formal training programs are often based on a calculation of the amount of time an individual has spent working in an occupation rather than an assessment and verification of knowledge and skills. The extent to which this practice occurs varies by province and occupation. The extent to which this practice is considered to be PLAR also varies. There are currently no provincial funding mechanisms specifically for PLAR in apprenticeship.

KEY ISSUES

During the research and consultation phase of this work, the following three issues of concern were raised repeatedly.

1. Funding for Institutions and Learners

The management and delivery of PLAR at both the system-wide and institutional levels require human and financial resources. The up-front developmental work and the training of assessors and portfolio instructors are critical PLAR activities, but often represent costs over and above the day-to-day operating costs of organizations. Long-term activities that have additional direct and indirect costs are internal PLAR co-ordination, development of assessment tools, delivery of assessments and support services to PLAR candidates and the search for improved efficiencies through research.

In most provinces, no specific, ongoing funding is provided to institutions to support continuous development or delivery of PLAR. Some institutions are receiving temporary, targeted funding. In a few cases, support has been in the form of temporary allocations for initial implementation; in others, college PLAR assessments are recognized in the calculation of regular provincial operating grants to institutions.

In Ontario, the level of recognition of PLAR assessments in the funding formula for colleges represents about 12% of the funding provided for one student taking one course. In Quebec, assessments are funded at 30% of regular course funding, with an additional 40% provided for cases in which top-up training is required. In British Columbia, flexible assessment is funded in two ways. The first is at the value of 33% of the funding provided for one student taking one course. Funding per student is based on actual credits awarded. The second method of funding is by block grant. British Columbia is currently reviewing its funding mechanism. In all provinces, assessment fees are charged to learners.

Although detailed financial arrangements vary, there is general agreement among supporters that PLAR costing arrangements should encourage both eligible learners to pursue assessments and institutions to offer them. Currently there are financial disincentives affecting both groups, with a direct impact on the number of learners accessing PLAR services. The following are examples of such disincentives:

At many institutions, students enrolled in full-time programs must pay PLAR assessment fees in addition to course tuition, even though they do not take the courses for which their PLAR assessments are conducted.

Decreases in student workloads as a result of PLAR reduce some institutions' operating grants and act as financial disincentives to offer PLAR.

Prior learning assessment fees are often provincially capped. This factor coupled with the lack of other revenue sources, results in deficits for institutions that are pro-active in offering PLAR.

Student eligibility for assistance to finance PLAR assessments under the Canada Student Loan program is inconsistently determined across the provinces.

Credits earned through PLAR can reduce student assistance by reducing students' status to part-time.

Credits earned through PLAR can eliminate student eligibility for some provincial student assistance programs.

Government loan remission policies can reduce the length of re-payment periods for students who have had PLAR, sometimes to the detriment of the student.

Institutions' interpretations of rules on tax deductibility of PLAR fees are inconsistent. Some learners are not able to file for tax deductions even though course tuition fees are often the same amount and are deductible.

Although there may be a number of ways to improve cost-efficiencies in developing, co-ordinating and delivering PLAR assessments, current financial disincentives are resulting in decreases in the volume of assessment activity at many institutions. Experience in Ontario, Quebec and the United States indicates that when financing, sufficient to at least neutralize the costs of PLAR, is not available over the long term, it is difficult for an effective PLAR service to be sustained.

2. Quality Assurance

The need to ensure quality in the PLAR process is an issue repeatedly raised by adult learners, practising institutions and employers exploring the potential benefits of PLAR. Candidates want to be assured that they will be properly placed in a program following their assessments and that assessors are appropriately trained in both PLAR and the subject matter being assessed. Institutions are concerned about maintaining standards and the credibility of their credentials. Faculties express concern that inadequate PLAR processes will set up inadequately prepared candidates for failure. Potential workplace clients want to know that their training funds are being appropriately spent.

Concerns about quality in PLAR have been addressed in several ways in Canada:

- ▸ Standards for assessment, policies and procedures have been developed at most practising institutions.
- ▸ Educators and trainers have begun to prepare course descriptions using learning outcomes, which are clear statements about what an individual needs to know and be able to do to be successful in a course.
- ▸ Institutional faculty and staff have been trained in PLAR so that adequate support services are provided.
- ▸ Institutions have enabled faculty assessors to use a range of appropriate methods and tools in their work.
- ▸ PLAR candidates are provided with orientation to enable them to make informed decisions about undertaking an assessment.
- ▸ Community outreach activities are undertaken to disseminate accurate information on PLAR and promote services to non-traditional markets.
- ▸ National organizations have funded the development of standards for PLAR practices, quality audits and conferences promoting best practices.

Despite efforts to address quality assurance concerns, some workplaces and education/training institutions continue to express reservations about the integrity and utility of the PLAR process as currently structured. These reservations are exacerbated by a lack of information on PLAR and

research on its impact over the short and long-term. PLAR's slow growth rate in universities and workplaces appears to be a result of these concerns.

3. Portability of Recognized Learning

The fact that PLAR is criterion-referenced is both enabling and restrictive. It allows greater recognition of learning within a specific context but that recognition can be limited in its application to other contexts. However, where individuals' learning needs and organizational learning requirements are identified collaboratively, these limitations can be addressed and the results can be dramatic. The case of Gunther, a computer technician who has a one-year Certificate in Computer Studies, illustrates this point.

Gunther lived and worked with several companies in Eastern Europe for a number of years. Lack of work required that he obtain a job in a printing company, first as an assistant and later as a colour separator for publications and advertising. Gunther has come to Canada but has no North American academic credentials. He has been unable to obtain an evaluation of his one-year Certificate in Computer Studies.

At an ESL class provided by a local community-based organization, Gunther learns from fellow students that if he wants to work in his field, he may have to complete additional training and his current credential may not be accepted. He makes inquiries with the local university, a Ministry apprenticeship office and the community college in his region. At the college, staff review his documentation. They accept the ESL certification and confirm that his Certificate in Computer Studies is equivalent to a one-year college certificate. Gunther is granted a one-year certificate through credit transfer.

The college also concludes that some of the courses Gunther has taken in Europe are transferable into credits for the in-school portion of an apprenticeship program through the college's cross-accreditation system. Gunther is awarded two credits toward an apprenticeship program in an automotive trade.

Because Gunther's work experience is extensive, the college suggests that he may wish to request prior learning assessment for additional credit toward a 3-year diploma in computer studies. Gunther takes a one-semester portfolio course that focuses on employment-related skills and career planning. He develops a personalized career path and decides to enroll in the computer diploma program. The learning outcomes documented and verified in his portfolio are successfully assessed against the learning outcome requirements of four computer studies courses. A demonstration of his computer skills is undertaken for an additional elective credit.

After one semester of course work, Gunther decides that he needs to work to finance his future studies. Using his new credentials, he obtains a job with a car manufacturer as an apprentice. He spends three years in the apprenticeship, but his true interest is in research. He takes workplace

training courses in manufacturing and test development at the company's research laboratory to pursue this interest. Gunther completes his apprenticeship, writes a standardized examination and qualifies as a journeyperson.

He then continues to work but returns to the college to complete his diploma on a part-time basis. Another review of the computer studies program reveals that through his workplace training courses he has the learning required in two of the most advanced diploma courses. These workplace-based courses have already been evaluated for credit by the college through its PLAR initiative. Gunther is given credit for these courses and with financial support from his employer, completes the remaining course requirements on a part-time basis. He completes his three-year diploma in computer studies.

Gunther finally decides to pursue his dream and enrolls at the local university's computer studies degree program, specializing in research. An articulation agreement with the region's colleges allows him to enter partway through the second year of the program and study on a part-time basis. He completes his research degree in less than two years and obtains a promotion into the research department of his employer.

Gunther's experience illustrates what is possible when different sectors co-operate to provide a flexible system for lifelong learning. In his case, a community-based trainer, a college, an apprenticeship program, a university and a workplace had each integrated PLAR into their training activities and consequently contributed to his learning without duplication. Several different types of assessment methods and tools were utilized.

PLAR played a significant role in linking the various education/training programs across the sectors and facilitating Gunther's transition from one learning experience to another. As a result he was not only able to remain employed in a rapidly changing work environment but came to recognize the value of his own knowledge and skills. PLAR's ability to assist individuals to be confident about meeting society's demand to continually learn, is perhaps its greatest strength.

The key issues presented above represent specific policy areas that not only reflect practical problems in implementing PLAR but also act as inhibitors to the strategic development of a lifelong learning approach to education and training.

POTENTIAL COLLABORATION

There are a number of areas for pan-Canadian collaboration. Although PLAR is active in parts of Canada, the extent to which provincial governments endorse the recognition of prior learning is unclear. **Agreement among Education Ministers** on the importance of PLAR's integration into secondary and postsecondary education/training systems would clarify government positions and encourage education/training institutions to develop strategies for integration.

Information on education/training policies that include PLAR is not readily available across governments. In follow-up to the above agreement, **support for a pan-Canadian exchange of information on policy issues** related to PLAR integration, would aid development of compatible policies and joint efforts to resolve common issues, such as those related to the Canada Student Loan program.

National Forum participants might consider collaborative actions to develop effective strategic plans that utilize PLAR to its maximum capacity, bearing in mind the three key issues presented here. For example,

1. How can PLAR be **funded** so that both learners and institutions benefit from PLAR?
2. What steps can be taken to ensure the **quality** and integrity of PLAR?
3. How can PLAR be used to enhance learner **mobility** across learning organizations?

PLAR's current growth in some regions and its decline in others, make assessment of its future difficult. The ultimate success of PLAR may depend on the extent to which it is used by institutions, workplaces and governments to facilitate transitions between school and work, throughout the learning lifetimes of Canada's labour force members.

PLAR CROSS-CANADA OVERVIEW - by province/territory				"PLA" and "PLAR" are used in accordance with provincial policies and practices	
PROV/TERR.	**SECONDARY**	**COLLEGES**	**UNIVERSITIES**	**APPRENTICESHIP**	**PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**
BRITISH COLUMBIA	Provincial policy: challenges available for credit in Grades 11 and 12 - no maximum limit. Equivalency assessments for Grade 11 and 12 including selected external learning activities (e.g. cadets, 4-H) - no maximum limit. General Educational Development Test (GED). Provincial funding for assessments is under consideration.	Provincial policy framework and guidelines for postsecondary PLA should be complete by Fall 1998. Specific provincial funding allocation to colleges and institutes for PLA activities. Ongoing funding formula is under review. All colleges/institutes provide PLA but not in all programs. Portfolio, challenges and other approaches are used. Several projects under way between colleges and occupational groups. Report completed on status of PLA at the colleges - October 1997.	Provincial policy framework and guidelines should be complete by Fall, 1998. Each institution is provided with a grant to devote to PLA activities. Every university has PLA co-ordinator. Simon Fraser Univ. has PLA in 5 programs allowing up to 2yrs. of non-traditional learning. Royal Roads Univ. has PLA in all programs. Univ. of B.C. has a policy. Univ. of Victoria supports PLA in principle at the "departmental level". Some faculties have adopted PLA (e.g. social work). The Open University provides PLA services.	Newly established Industrial Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) will examine flexible assessment particularly as it relates to workplace training credits. No specific provincial PLA funding to date. Current assessment and recognition of foreign trade credentials involve elements of PLA (auto service technician, landscape horticulture, electrical trades-entry level).	Consortium of Schools of Social Work offering Bachelor program with PLA for practicums. Partnership - Univ. of Victoria, Malaspina College, and Univ. College of the Fraser Valley offer a degree in Child and Youth Care with a PLA component. Multi-lateral Task Force establishing occupational competencies for 6 sub-sectors in community social services sector. Looking at how PLA can be used to link practice and training with assessment in the workplace and classroom. Centre for Applied Academics is developing examination bank for assessing prior learning of college applicants in field of information technology. B.C. Credit Union is working with colleges to negotiate credit for their training programs. Former Ministry of Education, Skills and Training was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR. Best Practices Report by Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology - Camosun, Douglas, Selkirk colleges, Simon Fraser Univ.
ALBERTA	Provincial policy: challenges for credit for senior high school courses - no maximum limit. Schools apply policy to varying degrees. General Educational Development Test (GED)	Provincial policy framework for PLA is under development. No specific provincial PLAR funding. All colleges and institutes of technology have PLA policies and procedures.	University of Calgary and Athabaska University have PLAR policies. No specific provincial PLAR funding. Athabaska Univ. has a Centre for Learning Accreditation to co-ordinate assessments and accredit external training programs.	Policy on Progressive Assessment Practices for Advanced Placement in Apprenticeship, provides for challenge exams to recognize of additional forms of learning for credit (1997). No specific provincial PLAR funding.	Department of Advanced Education and Career Development: sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR, included PLAR as integral to its Adult Development Reform Initiative, with Department of Education developed *Framework for the Development of Essential Competencies* and companion *Employability Assessment Instrument* to assist in linking prior learning to individual learning plans and portfolio development. Department of Education published CD ROM and workbook *Creating a Career Skills Portfolio*. Central Alberta Technology Preparation Consortium of schools and colleges includes prior learning portfolio development as a condition of high school graduation. Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer published *Principles and Standards for the Recognition of Prior Learning* in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.
SASK.	Provincial policy: challenges for 1 credit through PLA for adults seeking grade 12 No specific provincial PLAR funding General Educational Development Test (GED)	No provincial policies or specific PLA funding. Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) has implemented policies and procedures and is scheduled to provide PLA challenges in all programs by the end of 1997/98.	No universities have PLA policies. The provincial govt. has allocated $100,000 in 1997/98 to investigate the applicability of PLA at universities. A PLA advisory committee has been set up. Faculty development workshops and website to be set up 1998.	No formal provincial PLA policies or funding. Applicants' experiences are reviewed for reductions in in-school and/or workplace components. In some trades, challenges are available for level 1 apprenticeship if courses have been taken in high school.	Prov. government, Univ. of Sask. and Univ. of Regina have partnered to conduct 5 pilot projects related to PLA. Saskatchewan Tribal Councils are considering PLA for health care workers - Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. Department of Post-secondary Education and Skills Training was a major sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.

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PROV/TERR.	**SECONDARY**	**COLLEGES**	**UNIVERSITIES**	**APPRENTICESHIP**	**PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

PROV/TERR.	SECONDARY	COLLEGES	UNIVERSITIES	APPRENTICESHIP	PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS
MANITOBA	No provincial policies or specific PLA funding. Some individual high school projects (e.g. Technical Vocational High School school-wide portfolio including articulation with Red River College in some areas). General Educational Development Test (GED)	No provincial policies or specific PLA funding. Red River College has policies and procedures for PLA in all postsecondary programs. Assiniboine College is considering policies and has PLA in some program areas. Keewatin College is reviewing implementation of PLA. Ecole Technique et Professionelle conducts PLA in some programs.	No provincial policies or specific PLA funding. Univ. of Winnipeg is participating in a fed./prov. initiative called Taking Charge to provide training and PLA for sole support parents on social assistance. Pilot currently under way with staff includes PLA orientation, ongoing advisement, portfolio development, faculty training and assessments re: degree and non-degree courses.	No formal provincial PLA policies, funding or initiatives. Challenge of level tests for in-school are available for applicants who meet the time requirements or who have credits from accredited high school or college pre-employment programs.	Brandon Univ. & Winnipeg Transition Centre use career portfolio development and PLA in a counseling certificate program. Bristol Aerospace and Manitoba Aerospace Human Resource Council have partnered with Red River College to deliver training with a PLA component. Manitoba PLA Centre - a partnership between 2 levels of govt. and Red River College to provide information and training to assist business and industry to develop their PLA capacity. The partnership will be expanded to include all postsecondary institutions. Winnipeg Metis Association with govt, education, employers and community-based partners are designing a PLA model for employment purposes. MPLAN - a network of persons interested in practicing and promoting PLA in Manitoba. Department of Education and Training was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.
ONTARIO	PLAR policy, announced January 1998 as part of Secondary School Reform, will be implemented in 2001 with grade 10 courses. Additional grades to be implemented in 2002, 2003. Adolescents: challenge process - maximum of 4 credits in grades 10-12, with no more than 2 in any one subject. Adults: challenge & equivalency processes - up to 16 credits for grade 9 & 10 at discretion of principal. Remaining 14 required grade 11& 12 credits: must take 4 and either challenge, present equivalency or take the remaining 10 credits. General Educational Development Test (GED)	Provincial policies are in place. All colleges provide PLAR challenges and/or portfolio assessments on request for all postsecondary programs. A few colleges are pro-active. Implementation funding provided between 1992 and 1996. Colleges receive funding for assessments through provincial operating grant.	No specific provincial policies or PLAR funding. University of Guelph has a senate policy on PLAR. Ryerson offers PLAR in its Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program. Council of Ontario Universities has a policy supporting the development of PLAR at universities. Supports the operation of 6 pilot projects at universities across Ontario with funding from MET.	PLAR policies re: in-school workplace training and funding are under development. Currently, applicants' experiences are reviewed for reductions in in-school and/or workplace components.	Ontario Prior Learning Assessment Network (OPLAN) A provincial PLAR association that focuses on sharing information and professional development. Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation (MCCR) partnered with Mohawk College to pilot a demonstration to provide an alternative to written Certificate of Qualification exam in apprenticeship; funded development of PLA for College of Midwives; is funding College of Physiotherapists' review of entry to practice and development of PLA tools; is co-sponsoring a project to survey PLAR practices at university professional schools; provides PLAR information on Ministry website. MCCR was a major sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR. Ministry of Education and Training (MET) currently exploring formal PLAR for apprenticeship. Supports the pilot projects conducted by Council of Ontario Universities. MET was a major sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR. Sheridan College developed a multi-media package on PLAR (funded by HRDC) for use in local HRDC offices, training information centres, boards of education and selected community agencies.

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PROV/TERR.	**SECONDARY**	**COLLEGES**	**UNIVERSITIES**	**APPRENTICESHIP**	**PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**
QUEBEC	Provincial policies and funding are in place for PLA in 50 vocational education programs. Ministry produces PLA materials and assessment tools used to evaluate competencies. In non-vocational programs, assessment tests in French, English and Math for recognition of "level of scholarity." PLA policies and tests are in place for adults in secondary schools.	Provincial funding policy in place. All cegeps provide PLAR on request. Assessments are funded at 30% of regular course funding, with an additional 40% provided for cases in which top-up training is required.	No specific provincial PLAR policies. No institutional PLAR activities identified.	PLAR tests available in several subject-areas through which learners can earn a postsecondary Diploma of Vocational Studies.	Some individual projects under way to tie technical programs in secondary schools with colleges. Regroupement des colleges du Montreal metropolitan was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR
NEW BRUNSWICK	Provincial policy: no specific PLAR funding. Challenges for up to 2 credits total in Grade 11 & 12 courses in english-administered schools.	Provincial policies and procedures are in place. No specific provincial PLAR funding. All campuses provide PLAR challenges in all programs. No portfolio development. Recognition of informal learning and external courses toward the Adult High School Diploma program is permitted on a case by case basis. General Educational Development Test (GED)	No specific provincial PLAR funding. Univ. of New Brunswick and Univ. of Moncton have PLAR policies.	No formal provincial PLAR policies, funding or initiatives. Applicants' experiences are reviewed for reductions in in-school and/or workplace components.	Department of Advanced Education and Labour project under way on training PLAR assessors through distance learning. PLAR project under way between New Brunswick Community College and the Registered Nurses Association. The New Brunswick Community College is exploring potential of partnerships with industry (e.g. aquaculture workers). Department of Advanced Education and Labour was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.
NOVA SCOTIA	Provincial policy: challenges for up to 6 credits, maximum 2 per senior grade level only. No specific provincial PLAR funding. General Educational Development Test (GED)	College policies and procedures in place, all 14 campuses provide PLAR in all programs. Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) exploring portfolio development as part of curriculum for academic upgrading, core programs. Portfolio Development Course offered as part of Faculty Development Institute. NSCC PLAR brochure being prepared for distribution in Spring 1998.	St. Mary's Univ. has a PLA policy. Other institutions are exploring PLAR's potential application. PLAR available in a few programs (e.g. Atlantic School of Theology Masters of Divinity). Dalhousie Univ. has developed an MBA in Financial Services in co-operation with the Canadian Institute of Canadian Bankers.	No formal provincial PLA policies, funding or initiatives. Applicants' experiences are reviewed for reductions in in-school and/or workplace components.	PLA Centre, funded by HRDC, work endorsed by Department of Education and Culture, collaborative initiative by 5 Metro Halifax universities, NSCC, employers, community-based organizations, Native Council of Nova Scotia, to provide PLA services to individuals/groups for transition into further education/training, labour force development, organizational human resource development, community capacity building. Responsible for encouraging, assisting postsecondary institutions to adopt PLA principles and practices. Centre exploring pilot portfolio course projects with several university partners, providing PLA services to CFB Halifax on contract basis and "train-the-trainer" program to Ministry of Community Services (MCS) professionals. MCS sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.
PEI	No provincial PLAR policies or activities. General Educational Development Test (GED)	No provincial policies but Department encourages adoption of PLAR. PLAR model piloted (1997/98) currently under evaluation; college-wide application under consideration.	No PLAR policies or initiatives.	No formal provincial PLAR policies, funding or initiatives.	Department of Education was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.

PLAR CROSS-CANADA OVERVIEW - by province/territory				"PLA" and "PLAR" are used in accordance with provincial policies and practices
PROV/TERR.	**SECONDARY**	**COLLEGES**	**UNIVERSITIES**	**APPRENTICESHIP**	**PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**
NEWFOUND-LAND	No provincial PLAR policies or activities. General Educational Development Test (GED)	Provincial guidelines for institutional policy development will be circulated in Spring 1998. Provincial funding for 2-year implementation period ended Dec. 1997. College of the North Atlantic will provide PLAR in all programs and is developing procedures and marketing materials.	Memorial University has a Challenge for Credit policy.	Provincial policy in place since Sept. 1997. Provides all individuals seeking certification with the right to PLAR. Developmental funding has been provided by HRDC in 1998 to develop and deliver workshops to HRDC, Department and college staff.	Apprenticeship training initiative funded by HRDC for one year. Newfoundland and Labrador Council on Higher Education was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR
N.W.T.	No PLAR policies or activities	PLAR policies and practices in place.	N/A	No formal provincial PLA policies or initiatives	Dept. of Education, Culture and Employment and Aurora College have completed a background research document on the viability of implementing PLAR. A committee was established in early 1998 to review issues.
YUKON	No PLAR policies.	Yukon College has adopted PLA into its academic regulations and are in the early stages of development and implementation.	N/A	No formal PLAR policies or specific funding.Applicants' experiences are reviewed for reductions in in-school and/or workplace components.	Department of Advanced Education was a sponsor of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR.

PLAR CROSS-CANADA OVERVIEW - by participant group	"PLA" and "PLAR" are used in accordance with provincial policies and practices
PARTICIPANT GROUP	**INITIATIVES**
Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE)	An association dedicated to promoting professional development for continuing educators in universities across Canada. The association maintains awareness of PLAR issues and activities through liaison with a range of organizations, promotes implementation of PLAR policies at universities and research in PLAR and distributes PLAR information to member organizations. Also works with the Ontario Council for University Lifelong Learning (OCULL)
Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB)	Development of recommended national PLAR standards/principles Development of Quality Audit tool for delivery organizations and consumers Establishment of a PLAR website Research project on the prior learning assessment and recognition needs of foreign educated/trained persons Development of a Skills and Knowledge Profile for individuals (in partnership with Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union of Canada) Organization of the 1997 National Forum on PLAR Project to research the feasibility of a national service to recognize and credit workplace training
Cross-Canada Study on PLAR	A research study partnership on PLAR at 6 colleges and 1 cegep across Canada from 1993/94 - 1997/98 (in progress). Partners are Douglas College, Red River College, Fanshawe College, Conestoga College, Mohawk College, Collège Ahuntsic, College of the North Atlantic, and an independent PLAR consultant.(Funded by HRDC)
CSTEC Steel Industry Training Program	A steel industry led partnership among 19 colleges/cegeps across Canada, 34 steel-producing companies and the United Steel Workers of America to develop and deliver training for steel industry workers. The program includes portfolio development, PLAR demonstrations and evaluation of workplace training for credit toward a certificate.
Canadian Forces Community College Network	A partnership between the Department of National Defense and colleges/cegeps across Canada designed to systematically and jointly recognize learning acquired through military training programs for academic credit.
Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)	A national association for the advancement of PLA in Canada. Membership includes education and training institutions, government organizations, business, community-based organizations. Hosts an annual PLAR conference, produces a PLA newsletter for members and maintains a web-site. Currently planning a project on setting national standards for PLAR practitioners.
New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL)	A network of persons, organizations and institutions interested in conducting research on the relationship between formal and informal learning. Currently conducting a national poll on informal learning. A sub-group of NALL is focusing on PLAR and overseeing several projects including a Values project - a discussion and assessment of the interests of various stakeholder groups involved in PLAR. (Funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada - SSHRC) (Funded by HRDC).
Forum for International Trade Training (FITT)	A project undertaken by FITT, with CAPLA, to develop PLA procedures, to give academic credit for prior learning to people involved in international trade.
Canadian Technology Human Resources Board	Development of a project contracted to the Alberta Society of Engineering Technologists (ASET) to develop a national consensus towards best practices for a PLAR process for engineering and applied sciences technicians and technologists. The project will establish a National Technology Credit Bank, a career portfolio and system of prior learning assessment and recognition, to assist employers, workers and institutions to record and recognize skills and knowledge of technicians and technologists.
Mining Industry Training and Adjustment Council - Canada	The council, comprised of 3 unions and several mining companies in Canada, has an agreement with 20 colleges/cegeps to conduct training course development with a PLAR component.

<h1 style="text-align: center">SOURCES OF INFORMATION</h1>

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Canadian Forces Community College Network	
Forum for International Trade Training	
Canadian Technology Human Resources Board	

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