**Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition**

**Student Guidebook**

What PLAR looks like at UFV: Choosing Courses to PLAR and Getting Approval from Faculty



**ufv.ca**

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# What is PLAR?

The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) recognizes that adult learners bring a lot of relevant, practical knowledge and skills to their academic studies and awards credit for prior learning that is at University level through our Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PLAR Credit Is About | PLAR Credit Is Not About |
| * proving skills, knowledge and abilities * learning in the midst of work, family or recreational situations * extracting the guiding principles used in the academic fields which students then illustrate and articulate to those who teach in the fields * demonstrating, when appropriate, a balance between theory and applied skills in addition to depth and breadth in your knowledge and skills | * the length of time in employment, volunteerism, travel etc. * job titles * classroom learning from accredited post-secondary institutions with awarded credit hours usually with grades, based on known measures of content |

# Types of Significant Learning Experiences

1. Experiences that were particularly significant and from which a great deal of knowledge was gained or important lessons were learned.

**For example:** volunteering for a non-profit organization, school or hospice; directing a fund raising event; taking over for a boss or co-worker who was ill; creating or updating a how-to manual for work; working for a women’s shelter on the hot-line; serving in the military

1. Experiences in which a great deal of time, money and/or effort was spent.

**For example:** learning to fly, scuba dive; researching a family history, working with a handicapped child; traveling to Egypt; gaining Novell certification

1. Experiences which offered pleasure because of efforts and accomplishments.

**For example:** learning to play ragtime or classical music; learning to speak French or German; learning the history of the province or community; learning C++ programming

1. Experiences which were not happy.

**For example:** learning about serious illnesses; experiencing a bankruptcy; working for a failed political campaign; experiencing domestic violence

1. Experiences that gained recognition from others.

**For example:** receiving awards from school, community, church or civic organizations; publishing a how-to manual

1. Experiences during which there was special happiness or sadness.

**For example:** working with AIDS victims; working on an abuse hot-line or in a hospice; helping prepare a family member for death; writing a children’s book or novel; learning computer skills

**While thinking about your prior learning experiences ask yourself the following questions:**

* How could my learning be university level? (There is significant diversity in the content of university level courses you can see by reviewing courses within different disciplines in UFV’s [calendar](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/winter-summer-2014/CourseDescriptions/index.htm))
* How did I experience growth in my field of work, hobbies, and volunteerism?
* Can I answer who, what, when, where and how questions of learning experiences?
* What problems did I have to solve and how did I develop solutions?
* What books or resources did I use?
* What sort of documentation can I produce as evidence of the experience?

# What Kind of Life and Work Experiences Could be Worth University-level Credit?

Many adults have had a variety of experiences from which they acquire university level knowledge and skills. Business people often know sales techniques, business law, human resource management, bookkeeping, supervision, inventory control and/or marketing. Personal assistants often have computer skills, use business English in email, memos and reports and know office procedures. People who have written a great deal may have technical writing or be familiar with writing a variety of reports. A good many managers might know consumer economics. Many people have public speaking abilities. Work with volunteer and human service organizations could lead to credit for management and community development

# How Can PLAR Benefit Me?

* PLAR can save you time by reducing the number of courses you need to take to complete your credential
* Save money – students pay 75% of course tuition to PLAR individual courses
* Avoid duplication of learning
* Gain and apply knowledge of yourself to create educational, personal and professional plans that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific
* Gain confidence and self-advocacy skills which will help you in your remaining studies at UFV

# Transfer Credit vs PLAR

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process designed to award you credit towards your degree , diploma or certificate at UFV by recognizing the learning you have acquired from courses taken in on-the-job training, self-directed study, travel, military service, volunteerism and employment amongst other learning experiences. If you have previously completed university-level coursework, please complete a [transfer credit evaluation](https://www.ufv.ca/admissions/admissions/transfer/official-transcript-guidelines/#d.en.963111) before pursuing PLAR.

You may be eligible to receive [transfer credit](http://www.ufv.ca/admissions/admissions/transfer/) if you have completed courses at a recognized university or college in or outside of Canada. Transfer credit is an evaluation of the school and the courses you have taken, not an assessment of your individual learning. To see whether your previous course(s) or program would receive transfer credits go to the [BC Transfer Guide](http://bctransferguide.ca/).

# Am I a Good Candidate for PLAR?

The following criteria are a guideline only, and are not meant to be exhaustive. Contact your [academic advisor](http://www.ufv.ca/aac/) or a faculty member to discuss your personal suitability.  
  
 **Employment history:**

* At least five years of experience in one job or a number of closely related jobs
* Learned and continually upgraded my skills within my field of employment
* Career plan that also includes educational goals
* Entrepreneurial experience

**Educational history:**

* The knowledge and skills that I possess are a result of informal education such as classes taken at a night school or through an employer or non-formal such as hobbies or independent study
* Completed post-secondary courses that could not be given direct transfer credit
* Foreign credential (completed within the last 5 years) that has not been recognized and given transfer credit in Canada ***OR***
* I have a foreign credential that could not be given direct transfer credit, the credential is more than five years old **but** after completing the credential I continued to have learning experiences (employment, volunteerism, continuing professional development activities) in or outside of Canada  reflecting the credential’s field of study

**Your personal history:**

* I have volunteered my skills. Knowledge and abilities in the community.
* I am willing to take time to document my learning (skills, knowledge and abilities) and explore ways to have it evaluated
* I can provide evidence of my skill, knowledge and abilities

# PLAR Assessment Methods

* Exams (oral or written)
* Performance Assessments
  + presentation, role play, observation, letters attesting to the level of specific skills, knowledge and abilities PLAR candidate demonstrated as witnessed by employer/supervisor, performance review by supervisors and/or peers
* Product Assessments
  + Work sample, self-evaluation, documents created as part of volunteerism, reflective narrative speaking to course or program [learning outcomes](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/courseoutlines/), external training program review

# PLAR Fees

Students pay 75% of course tuition to PLAR individual courses.

Students in the Bachelor of Arts in Adult Education are eligible to pursue program PLAR (up to 45 credits) and pay a flat fee of 75% of 12 credits regardless of how many PLAR credits above 12 they receive.

# What Does PLAR Credit Look Like on My Transcript?

## Assigned Credit

Credit awarded for a specific course.

Example of assigned PLAR credit on a UFV transcript: BUS 225, Letter Grade , 3 credits – a course with a grade assigned, which affects cumulative GPA

*Or*

BUS 225, CR/NCR, 3 credits - a course with credit awarded, but cumulative GPA neutral

## Unassigned Credit

Grouping of 3 or more credits reflecting program outcomes but cannot be equated to the learning outcomes of a specific UFV course. Note: A PLAR candidate could be limited in using unassigned credit if their program is highly prescriptive.

Example of unassigned PLAR credit on a UFV transcript: ADED 1XX, CR, 16 credits - credit with no effect on cumulative GPA

# Does my learning experience have to be recent?

Currency is important in many academic areas e.g. Computer Information Systems (CIS). UFV course outlines and their course learning outcomes are updated on a regular basis.

# How Much Credit Can I Receive?

Please use UFV’s online [calendar](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/Fall-2014/index.asp) to confirm residency requirements in your program. Residency is the amount of courses students must complete at UFV. PLAR credit is not normally considered residency, and it is commonly treated like transfer credit.

# Programs Accepting and Granting PLAR Credit

Virtually all UFV courses and programs are open to PLAR.

# Do I Have to be Enrolled in a Specific Program to Pursue PLAR?

You can be an [Open Studies](https://www.ufv.ca/faos/departments/open-studies/) student and pursue PLAR. UFV strongly recommends students identify a program to complete to help focus PLAR discussions as ultimately, students complete program requirements (required courses and approved electives) in order to graduate. While students can pursue PLAR without identifying a program they want to complete, it is possible that the PLAR credits students earn will not be accepted in the program they ultimately decide to enroll in.

# Getting Started at UFV

**You must be enrolled as a student at UFV to pursue PLAR**

Prior to assessing a candidate’s suitability for PLAR he or she must be enrolled as a student and have applied for transfer credit if courses were completed elsewhere. Follow the steps below to begin the admissions process. The instructions are designed for someone who is totally new to UFV, so depending on a candidate’s experience at the university, he or she may be able to skip some steps. Students can meet with UFV Educational Advisors in Student Services to discuss the steps below.

1. Access a UFV calendar [online](http://www.UFV.ca/calendar) to see UFV and program specific entry and completion requirements and [apply](http://www.ufv.ca/admissions/admissions/apply/)**.** Downloadable forms to use when applying by fax, by mail or in person are available at the same site. UFV offers both continuous enrollment programs and closed admission programs that often require firm pre-requisites. You may have to enroll in preparatory program in order to meet the prerequisites of the program from which you ultimately intend to graduate.
2. Contact all the community colleges or universities at which you completed course work and request transcripts of your marks to be forwarded directly to UFV’s [Office of the Registrar](http://www.ufv.ca/contact_us/).
3. Pay the $45 non-refundable admission fee.
4. Receive a UFV student number.

# Steps to Choosing Courses to PLAR

* 1. If you have been admitted to a program, your program advisor can create a [program plan](http://www.ufv.ca/advising/program-planning/) that details how your transfer credit applies to your program (if you have prior experience completing post-secondary courses), which courses still need to be completed and what kind of electives your program allows. If you are not admitted to a program you would like to complete, please contact [Student Services](http://www.ufv.ca/studentservices/contact-us/) and speak with an Educational Advisor who can clarify your options and help you develop an educational plan.
     + - If you are unsure which courses reflect your prior learning you can discuss possible options with your program advisor or an Educational Advisor
       - To see course requirements and approved electives for specific programs, review the [Program Index](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/fall-2014/General/programindex.htm) in UFV’s online calendar
  2. After reading the learning outcomes of a course on a course [outline](http://www.ufv.ca/calendar/courseoutlines/) ask yourself if you have ever thought one or more of the following things:
     + - I’ve done this type of work before
       - I’m doing this type of work now
       - I feel comfortable that I already have skills, knowledge and abilities that reflect the course learning outcomes but I’m not sure what evidence I can provide to prove it.
  3. Review faculty developed PLAR requirement documents (if they have been developed for the course in question). Contact the department attached to the course to ask if any PLAR criteria have been established.

# Confirming PLAR Eligibility with Faculty

Note: All documents referenced in this section are included in the Appendix

1. Once you’ve identified one or more potential PLAR courses, below there are three ways to prepare yourself to talk with faculty about your PLAR potential if PLAR criteria for a specific course don’t yet exist.
   * + - Expand your resume and focus on the aspects of your learning experiences that relate to course learning outcomes.
       - Create [learning statements](http://www.ufv.ca/plar/students-and-prospective-students/learning-outcomes-and-learning-demonstration-statements/) that speak to the learning outcomes of the courses
       - Create a Draft Action Plan

Note: Creating a physical document that can be emailed to faculty prior to meeting or left with faculty after your meeting for them to review increases the likelihood faculty agrees you are eligible for PLAR and agrees to be your faculty PLAR assessor.

1. Begin reviewing your personal, professional and educational history to identify physical or electronic evidence of learning
2. Meet with faculty to discuss your background and learn how faculty believe you may be best able to demonstrate your skills, knowledge and abilities in relation to a specific course or discipline
3. Complete a PLAR action plan with faculty that includes the following information:
   * + Request a letter grade or CR/NCR) PLAR, the assessment method being used, what PLAR criteria or standards or specific kinds of evidence are needed to be successful, what support faculty is giving, when is the assessment and where (if necessary)

# Appendix

Note: To see more examples and tips please refer to [www.ufv.ca/plar](http://www.ufv.ca/plar)

## Tips on Creating a PLAR Resume

## Sample Resume 1

## Sample Resume 2

## Tips on Creating Learning Statements

## Glossary of Action Verbs

## Learning Statement Verb Options

## Sample Learning Statements 1

## Sample Learning Statements 2

## Types of Evidence of Learning

## Action Plan Template 1

## Sample

## Action Plan Template 2

## Sample