

## Contact Us

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## What Learners Say about PLAR at AU

*"The PLAR process allowed me to ... examine my hidden skills. I feel confident about those skills, my well-researched coursework and my carefully selected undergraduate degree."*

*"PLAR helped me solidify my educational goals and earn valuable credit toward my degree."*

*"PLAR opened my eyes to how much one learns through experience and informal training."*

*"Overall it has been a great learning experience, I never realized how much I had learned until I started putting this together. It really provides an opportunity to do 'inventory' so to speak and re-evaluate future goals."*

Athabasca University 

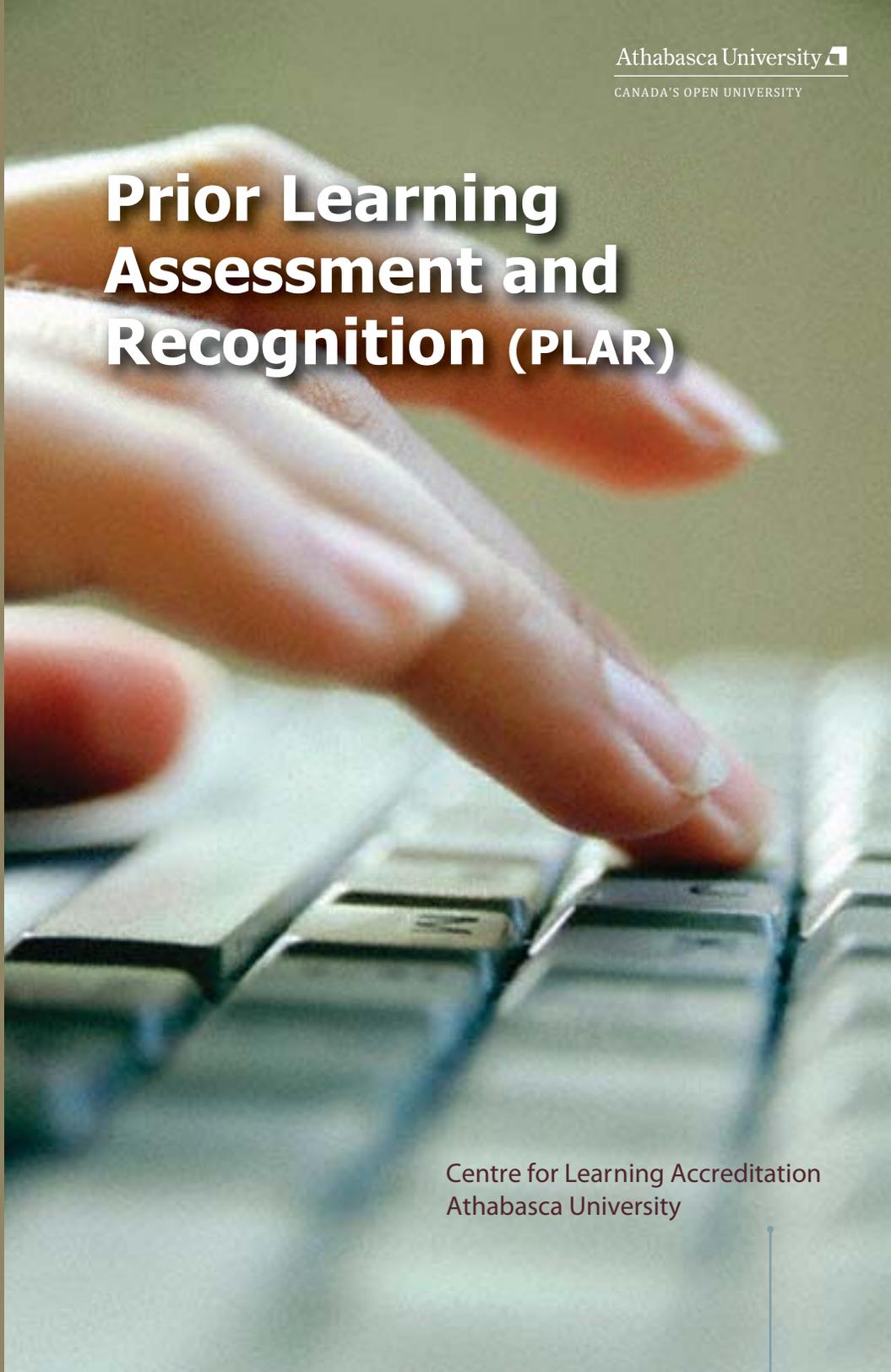
CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY

Website: [www.athabascau.ca](http://www.athabascau.ca) \* Inquiries: [www.askau.ca](http://www.askau.ca)  
Phone: 1-800-788-9041 (Canada/U.S.) or 780-675-6100

Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is the nation's leading provider of distance and online university education, serving more than 37,000 students in 87 countries worldwide. AU offers over 700 courses in more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degree, diploma and certificate programs.

The university's mission is to eliminate the geographical, financial, social and cultural barriers that traditionally limit access to post-secondary achievement. The flexibility of AU's distance and online learning programs allows students to obtain a quality post-secondary education on their own terms—anywhere, anytime. AU provides the perfect opportunity to experience all the advantages of a traditional university education in a non-traditional setting: at home, at work or anywhere else people may decide to study.

# Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)



Centre for Learning Accreditation  
Athabasca University

# → Get credit for what you already know!

Centre for Learning Accreditation  
<http://priorlearning.athabascau.ca/>



## Prior learning assessment and recognition

(PLAR) is a way of assessing your experiential, non formal learning. At AU, we assess your prior learning relative to your Athabasca University program of study.

To do so, we use the portfolio learning method, which involves your assembling evidence in a portfolio to show assessors how your experiential learning relates to the credential you are pursuing. Most portfolios are submitted electronically. Paper copies are rare. The materials in your portfolio are assessed by a team of academic experts in the fields in which you claim learning.

You can prepare either a program-based or course-based portfolio, depending upon your program. You can receive credit for specific courses or broader credit toward your overall program requirements.

PLAR does not award credit for experience, or for the number of years in a job, for the number of workshops attended or for the type or level of position you hold. PLAR asks you to bring your experience forward as university-level learning related to the AU credential you want.

PLAR offers you both time and cost savings. While it is a great opportunity, it is not for everyone. You may find that you do not want to engage in the reflective, time intensive process needed to create a successful portfolio. On the other hand, many learners find this experience to be one of the most rewarding of their academic activities.

## Key Principles

AU's portfolio process rests on the underlying principles that learners

- possess knowledge related to the program
- know and are able to apply theories and concepts used in that program
- have the capacity to analyze using data, theories and concepts
- can present knowledge clearly, concisely and at a university level

## The Portfolio

When completed, your portfolio will include the following parts:

- a cover and/or title page
- a declaration page
- a table of contents (depending on submission type)
- a résumé
- a program plan/DegreeWorks
- a short autobiographical essay
- a critical reflection (optional)
- prior learning statements (learning summary or competency worksheets)
- documentation

Review sample portfolios online at <http://priorlearning.athabascau.ca/virtual-portfolios.php>

## Beginning the PLAR Process

*Get information:* Contact the Centre for Learning Accreditation. CLA staff members will help you plan and develop your portfolio.

*Visit the CLA website:* Our website at <http://priorlearning.athabascau.ca> offers detailed instructions, templates and examples. Be sure to review the virtual portfolio to see what the finished product should look like.

*Our mentoring system:* We will work with you from start to finish during the PLAR process:

- to help you determine where PLAR credit will best fit into your program
- to assist you in the writing process
- to ensure that you are following the correct format
- to help you demonstrate the learning that you have already acquired in your life, on the job or in the community

## Other Important Things to Know

You must be enrolled in an AU program before entering the PLAR process.

As PLAR credit is applied to a specific AU credential—the degree or university certificate you want—we recommend that you get detailed information about your program and course by consulting the AU Calendar or accessing your program's web page on the AU website ([www.athabascau.ca](http://www.athabascau.ca)).

You need not wait for PLAR results before enrolling in AU courses. To avoid taking courses for which you are likely to receive PLAR credit, choose courses in which you have little or no background. AU student advisors can help you with your course selection. Contact them at [advising@athabascau.ca](mailto:advising@athabascau.ca) or call 1-800-788-9041 or 780-675-6100.

PLAR is different from transferring credit to AU. You can transfer credits received through earlier formal studies at other institutions to your AU program and still complete the PLAR process to receive additional credit for experiential learning. Credit transfers must be completed before beginning the PLAR process.

## Fees

A single fee of \$791 covers the entire PLAR process, including mentoring, assistance and the assessment of your portfolio, regardless of how many credits you may be awarded.