1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 This policy establishes clear guidelines for how academic credit may be applied for and awarded through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). By making pathways into and through programming more accessible, PLAR can help expedite program completion and career success for students in their communities, this province and beyond.

1.2 At NSCC PLAR is used to recognize and assess informal, non-formal and experiential learning that occurs over time regardless of context. PLAR may help a student gain admission into a program of study or reduce the number of courses required to complete a program.

1.3 In Nova Scotia, PLAR is recognized as a type of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that ensures consistent, reliable, transparent, fair, and quality-assured assessment of relevant prior learning that has occurred in a variety or work, life and/or educational settings.

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to the assessment of prior learning acquired through informal, non-formal, and experiential learning experiences for the awarding of college credit. The scope of PLAR is limited by NSCC's Residency requirement, which is the percentage of total units in a program of study that must be completed by a student through NSCC to be granted an NSCC credential. NSCC's residency requirement is 25%.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 ACADEMIC CHAIR is a College position that leads the delivery of high quality and consistent teaching and learning in programs assigned to their portfolio.

3.2 ACADEMIC COURSE CREDIT refers to credit that is awarded in recognition of having met the conditions for passing a course in a program of studies.

3.3 ADVANCED STANDING refers to an academic status granted by NSCC to a student who holds a sufficient number of equivalent credits from a post-secondary institution to meet all program learning outcomes for the first academic year of a 2-year program.

3.4 ADVISOR in terms of the PLAR process, an advisor may provide timely and accurate information on College requirements, policies, processes and help the student connect to college resources and engage confidently as a learner. An advisor may also assist students to set and meet meaningful goals that align academic, career, and personal development. Adapted from The College Collaborative Advising Program Guide, April 2018.

3.5 ACADEMIC HISTORY is an unofficial document that is a permanent chronology of a student’s credit and non-credit course work at the College. Academic histories also record successful completion of course milestones required for graduation.
3.6 **COLLEGE CREDENTIAL PROGRAM** a program of study that recognizes the successful completion of all program requirements within College approved timelines.

3.7 **COURSE OUTLINE** refers to a document that outlines the learning requirements and outcomes of a course.

3.8 **EQUIVALENT LEARNING** refers to learning acquired through formal, informal, non-formal, and/or experiential learning experiences which are assessed to be equivalent to the learning outcomes identified in a course or program.

3.9 **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING** refers to knowledge and/or skills acquired through life experiences.

3.10 **FORMAL LEARNING** refers to knowledge and skills gained through accredited learning from a formally recognized educational institution.

3.11 **FACULTY** refers to a person or persons appointed by the College to deliver a course and evaluate students in accordance with the learning outcomes and course outline.

3.12 **INFORMAL LEARNING** refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes, that a student has acquired through a combination of work, non-formal, and/or experiential learning experiences.

3.13 **INTERNAL EQUIVALENCY** refers to the official acknowledgement of a previously completed NSCC course that is equivalent to a course taken within the current program of study.

3.14 **LEARNING OUTCOMES** formal statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or demonstrate in order to receive a pass mark in a course.

3.15 **NON-FORMAL LEARNING** refers to the skills and abilities and attitudes that students have acquired from non-credit courses, on-the-job-training, and workshops.

3.16 **OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT** an official document of a student’s academic record, certified by the Director, Enrolment & Registrar or designate.

3.17 **PART-TIME COURSE LOAD** is when a student is enrolled in less than 60% of the mandatory courses in their program of study as per the curriculum document in a given semester.

3.18 **PLAR CANDIDATES** refers to individuals who have decided that PLAR is a sound educational decision for their career pathways and are preparing for assessment of their prior learning.

3.19 **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR)** refers to a type of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It is the process for assessing non-formal and informal learning acquired in work, life and educational settings as equivalent to the learning outcomes of a college course. When faculty and/or other subject matter experts (SMEs) assess and verify that a student’s learning is relevant, valid, sufficient, authentic, and can be measured reliably against course outcomes, academic credit may be awarded. PLAR ensures consistent, transparent, fair and quality-assured assessment of relevant lifelong learning regardless of context.

3.20 **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION PLAN** (PLAR Plan) refers to a
document prepared by faculty/SMEs and their Academic Chairs for students proceeding with PLAR. A PLAR Plan clarifies the breadth and depth of learning required to PLAR a course and may be useful for developing an advising-assessment schedule. A PLAR Plan would include a course description, course learning outcomes and objectives as well as the corresponding evaluation and assessment methods. Reference to reading lists and other resources may also be included.

3.21 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) is a comprehensive term that refers to the recognition of the sum of an individual’s learning that has occurred prior to the present. RPL recognizes that learning is life-long and occurs in formal, non-formal, informal work, life and educational situations. In addition, RPL places value on all learning including the unrecognized knowledge, skills, abilities, and values that individuals gain throughout their lives. Furthermore, RPL creates pathways for recognizing that some prior learning may be equivalent to the content of one or more college courses.

3.22 RESIDENCY the minimum percentage of total units in a program of study that must be completed by a student through NSCC to be granted an NSCC credential.

3.23 STUDENT a person who is registered in a course or program at NSCC.

3.24 STUDENT SERVICES a team of professionals available to students to support and assist them in their learning at NSCC.

3.25 SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT (SME) refers to faculty, academic chairs and others recognized by NSCC as determined under NSCC Procedure 25.03: Recognition of Subject Matter Expertise in a Field of Study.

3.26 TRANSFER CREDIT refers to credit awarded for courses completed on the basis that the learning outcomes are equivalent and current to the courses within a student’s program of study.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 APPLICATIONS FOR PLAR

a. PLAR candidates can learn about PLAR from a variety of sources including College web and print materials, during key events, and during student advising and orientations.

b. PLAR candidates who believe that they have learning from prior work and/or life experiences that is equivalent to the content of one or more college courses will have the opportunity to apply for PLAR.

4.2 ADVISING FOR PLAR
ENROLMENT Policies and Procedures

25.01 Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) [POLICY]

a. PLAR candidates will have access to advising throughout the entire PLAR process, from general enquiry to assessment and follow-up.

b. PLAR candidates are responsible for completing and submitting a PLAR Application form, and for the quality of their preparation for assessment.

4.3 PLAR FEES

a. PLAR fees established by NSCC are published on the College website.

b. PLAR fees must be paid in full before the assessment of prior learning can proceed. PLAR fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

4.4 COURSES AVAILABLE FOR PLAR

Where programs are bound by relationships with professional, accrediting and/or regulatory bodies, some courses may not be eligible for PLAR.

4.5 PLAR ASSESSMENTS

a. PLAR assessments will be completed by subject matter experts which may include faculty, academic chairs or others who will verify that a candidate’s prior learning is relevant, sufficient, authentic, current and can be measured reliably against course outcomes for the awarding of college credit.

b. College credit will be granted when all course learning outcomes are met.

c. A PLAR Plan containing evaluation methods and assessment criteria will be prepared for each PLAR candidate.

4.6 STUDENT APPEALS

Students have the right to appeal PLAR decisions using the Student Appeals process as prescribed by the Student Appeals policy (32.01) and procedure (32.02).

4.7 REVIEW OF PLAR ASSESSMENTS

Candidates have the right to review their PLAR assessments and related grading criteria with a subject matter expert. The original grading sheet will be retained by the Academic Chair and/or subject matter expert.

4.8 OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS

Recognized PLAR credits will be recorded on official transcripts with a ‘P’.

4.9 IMPACT ON HONOURS CALCULATIONS, STUDENT LOANS, FINANCIAL AID, BURSARIES AND OTHER AWARDS

a. PLAR results will not be included in calculations for honours, awards or bursaries.
b. PLAR credit may reduce a student’s course load status from full-time to part-time. Changes in courses load status may impact the ability to qualify for student loans, financial aid, awards and bursaries.

4.10 LIMITATIONS ON THE USE OF PLAR AND RECORDED PLAR CREDIT

PLAR cannot be used:

a. to upgrade a course grade for which credit has already been granted by NSCC;
b. to upgrade a failing course grade given by NSCC;
c. to earn a course grade when a student has audited a course; or
d. in place of or in addition to a Supplemental Evaluation.

4.11 QUALITY ASSURANCE

a. PLAR is quality assured through on-going professional development and continuous review of policies, practices and procedures.

5.0 POLICY SUPPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATED POLICIES &amp; PROCEDURES</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.02 Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Procedures</td>
<td>Request for PLAR/Challenge Credit Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.01 Evaluation Policy</td>
<td>RPL Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.01 Graduation Requirements and Program Progression Policy</td>
<td>The College Collaborative Advising Program Guide, April 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.11 Grading Policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.01 Student Appeals Policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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