

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) at Horizon College and Seminary- February 2019

Horizon College and Seminary is student-centric, with a genuine desire to minimize redundant education for individuals who have acquired skills and knowledge via learning from life and vocational experiences. Horizon therefore strives to accommodate mature students who have clearly mastered learning outcomes related to a course or courses. At the same time, all assessment of previous learning (and potential recognition for credit) must be done in a way that maintains Horizon's integrity with credentialing and graduation standards. Recognition of credit can only be given where learning outcomes have clearly been demonstrated. Therefore, PLAR calls for more than the tabulation of experience. It calls for reflection, articulation, and documentation of learning from experience. Where there is sufficient alignment between life learning, and outcomes, credit can be granted. There are six main steps to a successful PLAR process:

- Consultation
- Self-Audit and Application
- Determination of PLAR Suitability
- Outlining of Requirements
- Fulfillment of Requirements
- Assessment.

Consultation

A student who is interested in PLAR must consult with the Registrar (or his/her designate) to identify educational goals, discuss the PLAR process, identify course or courses for challenge, and learn (and decide) about the self-audit. Ongoing consultation is critical to determining PLAR suitability and potential recognition.

Self-Audit and Application

A student who wishes to test PLAR suitability must complete a self-audit based on learning outcomes associated with the course or courses under consideration. Learning outcomes can be found from current and past syllabi.

To complete a self-audit, the student should assess his or her competency in each learning outcome through the use of the following descriptive statements:

- I have no learning or experience in this area.
- I have observed or been oriented to this.
- I can participate and assist with this.
- I can do this with minimal assistance.
- I can do this without assistance.
- I can do this without assistance and teach it to others.

If most of the responses are comprised of the first three statements, then a student will be advised against doing PLAR, and counselled instead to take the course. To move forward with the PLAR process, a student's self-audit must be dominated by the last three statements. A student who wishes to proceed should submit a PLAR application (one application per course), a \$50 application fee (per course, non-refundable, non-transferable), and the self-audit, shaped into a 2 to 3-page statement articulating the course learning outcomes and the basis of the student's competency in meeting the learning outcomes. That submission must cite primary evidence that demonstrates competency.

Determination of PLAR Suitability

Upon submission, the self-audit will be reviewed by the Registrar in consultation with the professor associated with the course under consideration. The consultation may also include a meeting between the student and the professor. The review will determine PLAR suitability.

Outlining of Requirements

If the PLAR process is affirmed, then assessment methods will be determined by the professor and outlined for the student. Specifics could include any of the following:

- Request for the self-audit statement to be expanded and amplified.
- A written reflection paper that articulates and integrates life-learning with course outcomes. This could also take the form of an autobiographical narrative which might include a chronological record of significant life learning.
- Interviews.

- Written and/or oral tests.
- Demonstration of a particular skill through simulation. Examples might include leading a Bible study or preaching a sermon.
- Request for the student to collect relevant artifacts into a portfolio that would substantiate the life-learning. Examples include:
 - Reports, projects, and/or assignments
 - Curriculum or lesson plans
 - Audio/video recordings of preaching, teaching, training, facilitating, performing; etc.
 - Published materials
 - Record of independent study
 - Creative work such as poems, stories, drawings/paintings, music, etc.
 - Resume or curriculum vitae, with relevant portions to the PLAR assessment highlighted
 - Documentation and/or reflections on international travel taken for ministry and/or educational purposes
 - Awards, licenses, examination scores, certificates/diplomas, performance test results
 - Course outlines from education or job training, or from workshops/seminars
 - Reference letters
 - Job evaluations
 - Written descriptions of work or accomplishments, captured in newspapers, denominational papers, journals, magazines, etc.
 - Annotated bibliographies on relevant books read
 - Sample of academic writing
 - Evidence of community involvement
- Completing an assignment or assignments. Examples may include reading theoretical materials that complement vocational and/or life-learning, or reading materials that offer more current or up-to-date perspectives.

To proceed with the outlined PLAR process, the administrative fee is \$200 for every 3-credit course. The fee is non-refundable and non-transferable. The fee is paid at the beginning of the process. (For 1-credit courses such as Ministry Formation, the fee would be \$100; for 2-credit courses, such as two instances of Ministry Formation, the fee would be \$150. For a block of six credits, such as 6 hours of Internship, the fee would be \$250; for a block of 12 hours, such as 12 hours of Internship, the fee would be \$300.)

Fulfillment of Requirements

A student who has been accepted for PLAR has up to three months to complete the requirements. The precise due date will be recorded via the email of record sent to the student by the Registrar. Up to three one-month extensions can be granted at the cost of \$100 per month.

Assessment

Once requirements are completed, submissions are assessed by the professor. The key question is, “Has the student previously gained competency with the learning outcomes related to the course under consideration?” Related assessment questions include:

- How broad is the student’s knowledge and skills in the subject?
- Does the student have the required level of learning?
- Is the knowledge, and the related skills, current?
- Is there sufficient information?

In the assessment, the student must demonstrate competency with 100% of the learning outcomes for PLAR recognition. If the student falls short, but still meets 75% or more of the course’s learning outcomes, supplemental work will be required, as determined together by faculty and the student. Any submission that falls short of the 75% threshold will be deemed ineligible for supplemental work and PLAR recognition.

A student who is deemed to have met all learning outcomes through prior learning will be granted credit for the course. At a minimum the assessment will be that of “Meeting.” For transcript purposes, the equivalent grade will be that of a B- or higher.

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