



## Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) /College Only

March 2024

MCS-Horizon<sup>1</sup> 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. MCS-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 MCS-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. It should be noted that PLAR is only available for College-level courses for those who are students or who are in the process of applying for college entrance. 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

### **Step One: Consultation**

A student who is interested in PLAR must consult with the Registrar (or 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.

A student who wishes to proceed should submit a PLAR application (one application per course), and a \$50 application fee (per course, non-refundable, non-transferable). PLAR applications can be obtained through our website [here](#). Once submitted, the student can proceed with the Self-Audit.

### **Step Two: Self-Audit**

A student who wishes to test PLAR suitability must complete a self-audit based on learning outcomes stated in the course syllabus. The self-audit should be shaped into a 1-to-3-page statement articulating the course learning outcomes (not assignments) and the basis of the student's competency in meeting the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes can be found from current and past syllabi available on the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the MCS-Horizon partnership please click [here](#).

MCS-Horizon website. The completed self-audit is to be submitted to the Registrar and professor associated with the course.

The general practice is for PLAR assessments to begin either September, January, or May, concurrent with the start of the semester. Students considering PLAR need to submit the self-audit to their professor 6 weeks prior to the start of the semester in which they wish to complete the PLAR process. The final due date for all submissions is Friday of Revision Week.

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. The submission must cite primary evidence that demonstrates competency. Evidence could include indicators such as books read on the subject, conferences attended, practical experiences, assignments completed, credentials gained, etc. The submission must also include the student's self-assessment of each learning outcome using the above descriptive statements.

### **Step Three: Determination of PLAR Suitability**

Upon submission, the self-audit will be reviewed by the professor associated with the course under consideration. The review will determine PLAR suitability. It should be noted that the doing of PLAR is dependent on a professor having the space and time to be engaged with PLAR.

### **Step Four: Outlining & Fulfillment of Requirements**

If the PLAR process is affirmed, the professor will notify the Registrar's office and the student will be registered for a PLAR occurrence of the course in Populi.

To proceed with the outlined PLAR process, the administrative fee must be paid at the beginning of the process. The fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.

- \$200 for 3-credit courses
- \$100 for 1-credit courses, such as Ministry Formation or Writing for Academic Success
- \$150 for 2-credit courses, such as two instances of Ministry Formation or Writing for Academic Success
- \$250 for a block of six credits, such as 6 hours of Internship
- \$300 for a block of 12 hours, such as 12 hours of Internship

Upon confirmation of registration and payment, 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 provide more current or up-to-date perspectives.

Submissions are to be filed and stored on the PLAR course instance created on Populi.

Fulfilling PLAR must also include the meeting, where possible, of portfolio requirements as outlined in the various syllabi.

### **Step Five: 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. With MCS-Horizon's competency-based education, assessment can be either that of "Not Yet Meeting", "Beginning to Meet", "Meeting", or "Exceeding." To demonstrate competency, the assessment must either be "Meeting" or "Exceeding."

If a student does not complete the PLAR process or demonstrate the required competency, the professor will mark the student as "Incomplete" on the course roster and a grade will not be assigned. The incomplete PLAR course instance will not show in the student's transcript.