POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Policy Title:	**ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR PREVIOUS WORK AND LIFE EXPERIENCES (PLAR)**	Area of Responsibility: **VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC**
Policy Section:	**ACADEMIC**	
Effective Date:	**2021 03 11**	**Policy No: 1.6.11**
Supersedes:	**2016 02 18**	**Page 1 of 13**
Mandatory Review Date:	**2026 03 11**	**Last Review Date: 2021 03 11**

1.6.11 - ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR PREVIOUS WORK AND LIFE EXPERIENCES (PLAR)

1. St. Clair College acknowledges that previous learning can be acquired and recognized in either of two ways:

    - Successfully completing academic courses at an educational institution, or
    - Learning by means of a time period of work, life or experiential learning

2. In both types of previous learning, the knowledge and understanding that is gained may be equivalent to courses in a program of study in which the student is currently or prospectively enrolled at St. Clair College. In both cases, that learning should be documented, assessed and recognized in order to be granted academic credit in place of courses in a St. Clair College program of study.

3. This policy covers the process for obtaining credit for learning acquired through work, life or experiential learning. This is known as the PLAR process (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition). For the policy relating to obtaining academic credit for courses of study previously and successfully completed either at St. Clair College or at another post-secondary educational institution (Canadian and international), see policy 1.6.9 relating to obtaining academic credit for previous academic studies at a post-secondary educational institution.

4. Generally, the PLAR process is available for all College courses. However, in some cases, such as capstone courses or courses that are subject to external standards or requirements, programs may designate a course as one that is not eligible for PLAR. In these cases, the applicant for PLAR should be given a clear rationale why PLAR is not available.

5. The denial of PLAR for a College course may be appealed to the Executive Director, Quality Assurance who will consult with the appropriate Chair, the appellant, the Vice President, Academic. With the approval of the Vice President, Academic, the Executive Director, Quality Assurance (or designate) will determine whether a PLAR process should proceed or not with respect to this course.

6. PLAR is to be distinguished from the transfer of academic credit process, in that PLAR evaluates experiential learning and determines that the learning acquired in those experiences is equivalent to the learning outcomes in a course, courses or a program of study offered by St. Clair College.

7. It is not the experience itself that will earn credit but rather the learning that occurs as a result of the experience and this learning must be evaluated to determine whether the learning is equivalent to course and/or program learning outcomes.

    7.1. Examples of previous work or life experiences that could give rise to this type of learning are:
    *   self-directed study,
    *   paid employment,
    *   on-the-job training or company training not resulting in a recognized academic credential,
    *   seminars and workshops,
    *   community development activities,
    *   volunteer work,
    *   travel and
    *   other types of learning that have not been a part of a prescribed course of study that has resulted in an academic credential offered by a post-secondary educational institution.

8. If the learning acquired through work or life experiences can be demonstrated and documented to show that the learning outcomes of St. Clair College courses have been achieved, the College will grant an exemption from the requirement of taking a current course on the basis of the equivalency of learning and the successful achievement of the learning outcomes.

9. PLAR candidates in a bachelor's degree program may be awarded no more than fifty percent (50%) of the total number of hours of the program of study based on prior learning assessment and recognition.

Residency Requirement for PLAR

10. There shall be a residency requirement of twenty-five percent (25%) with respect to courses in all St. Clair College programs of study which means that at least twenty-five percent of the vocational courses must actually be taken under the auspices of St. Clair College. Accordingly transfer credit or advanced standing together with exemptions based on PLAR shall not be granted in excess of 75% of the available academic credit for vocational courses.

    10.1. For the purposes of satisfying the 25% residency requirement only vocational courses are counted and general education courses are excluded.

Eligibility for Obtaining Academic Credit for Previous Work, Life and Experiential Learning

11. Where a student or prospective student has acquired knowledge and understanding through work and life experiences that is equivalent to the learning outcomes of one or more St. Clair College courses, the College provides a process to evaluate and recognize that previously acquired learning.

12. It is the absolute responsibility of a student applying for an academic credit based on prior learning through life and work experiences to provide full documentation and evidence to support the application for PLAR. A failure to do so will result in a denial of credit based on PLAR.

13. PLAR is available to persons who are interested in obtaining a College credential and who are 19 years of age or older or who have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or other recognized equivalent.

14. Students who have failed a course or who have been unsuccessful in a PLAR application in the past year (12 months) will not be eligible for a PLAR application for the same course except with the written permission of the Chair responsible for the delivery of the course. In either case, the student will have to demonstrate that there have been some new experiences in life or work through which new learning was acquired since the failure of the course or the unsuccessful PLAR application.

PLAR Assessment Methods

15. There are two basic methods or approaches for assessing PLAR: a Portfolio and a Challenge.

Portfolio Method of Assessing Prior Learning

16. The portfolio method of PLAR assessment is generally used to support a PLAR application with respect to multiple courses in a College Program of Instruction.

17. The portfolio method involves the applicant developing and presenting an organized collection of materials, documents, photographs, videos and other evidence that attempts to record and provide evidence that the applicant has achieved the learning outcomes of College courses or programs.

18. The portfolio clearly identifies the number of College courses covered by the portfolio and which in the opinion of the applicant the course learning outcomes have been achieved through work and life experiences.

19. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the contents of the portfolio clearly and convincingly provide substantial documented and fact-based evidence relating to the attainment of the relevant course and/or program learning outcomes.

20. Generally, the creation, development and presentation of a portfolio for assessment by the College is the free choice of an applicant with the support and assistance of the College.

Challenge Method of Assessing Prior Learning

21. With the Challenge method of PLAR, the actual plan or process used to demonstrate and document the prior experiential learning is to be determined by the Chair and the appropriate

faculty members and in consultation with the applicant. The advice and assistance of the Quality Assurance Office may also be sought.

22. The Challenge process may consist of written, drawn, oral, or other evaluation methods. An appropriate combination of tools is preferable to one single method and should be appropriate to the course learning outcomes.

23. Depending on the nature of the course and the course learning outcomes the assessment tool or tools could be any one or more of the following:

- Multiple-choice, short essay, or essay test
- Essay or short essay test
- Performance of an assigned task
- Writing of an essay or research paper
- Creation of a set of technical drawings
- Creation of an artistic object or performance
- Demonstration of learned skills and techniques
- Oral or written interview
- Oral or written description of processes and techniques
- Preparation of assigned plans, maps, documentation
- Such other methods as will demonstrate the achievement of the appropriate learning outcomes.

NOTE: the above list is not intended to identify all possible modes of PLAR evaluation.

PLAR Requirements

24. The PLAR Assessment Plan under the Challenge method should be communicated clearly to the applicant for the PLAR credit and the applicant should be allowed a reasonable time to prepare for the PLAR assessment.

25. Whether the assessment is by Challenge or by Portfolio, the Chair should advise the student in advance of the evaluation and grading assigned to PLAR and how it is recorded on the transcript as the recording of PLAR grades has implications for the grade point average. (See the section of this policy on Evaluation and Grading)

26. In all cases of PLAR, the Chair should also advise the student of the possible impact on student financing and OSAP. Students should be referred to the Financial Aid Office to discuss any possible impact.

27. The PLAR assessment using the Challenge method shall take place in a setting that is appropriate to the methods being used to make the assessment and one that permits the PLAR applicant an appropriate time to complete the assigned tasks.

28. PLAR assessments whether using the Portfolio or the Challenge method may be performed by one or more faculty members who are subject-matter experts in the area or field that is being evaluated in the PLAR process and different faculty members may assess different parts of the required PLAR assessment.

29. Each faculty member involved in a PLAR Assessment is evaluating the candidate on his or her ability to demonstrate or document the achievement of the relevant and appropriate learning outcomes. Accordingly, the decision of the faculty members will usually either be that the learning outcomes have been achieved or they have not.

30. If more than one faculty member is involved in the evaluation of a PLAR assessment, the decision should be a joint decision relating to the final PLAR outcome.

31. The decision of the faculty member or members with respect to a PLAR application must be confirmed by the Chair of the School and then communicated in writing to the applicant by the Chair.

Evaluation and Grading of PLAR Assessments (Recording on Transcripts)

32. Generally, if the learning outcomes of the course which was the subject of the PLAR application have been achieved, the transcript will be coded with "AS" and the course for which the credit or advanced standing based on PLAR was granted will not be counted in the grade point average.

33. In programs where a course grade is normally a pre-requisite for another course, the code provided (as above), should be accepted as meeting the pre-requisite requirement.

34. In certain situations and only with the specific permission of the Senior Vice President, College Operations, a PLAR credit may be assigned a St. Clair College letter grade after a complete evaluation by the faculty member or members evaluating the PLAR application. The permission of the Senior Vice President, College Operations must be obtained before the commencement of the PLAR process.

35. College transcripts (including codes and code designations) should not indicate that credits have been acquired through prior learning assessment and recognition.

36. College transcripts should not record unsuccessful PLAR attempts as "failures". In the case of an unsuccessful PLAR attempt, the grade shall be transcribed as an "N". Requests to repeat an unsuccessful PLAR attempt will be granted at the discretion of the subject/program Chair and in conformity with the eligibility requirements of this policy. (See sections on eligibility above.)

37. When an academic credit based on a PLAR for a course or courses is granted, the student is exempted from having to take the course for which the credit or advanced standing was granted.

38. Where a student applies for credit or advanced standing based on PLAR in a course or courses in which the student is already enrolled the student should continue to attend classes until the credit or advanced standing is officially entered on the student's transcript or academic record or is otherwise officially notified that the application for advanced standing based on prior work or life experience has been granted.

PLAR for General Education Courses

39. General Education courses may be subject to the PLAR process.

40. Where the applicant wishes to obtain credit through PLAR for an elective general education course, the applicant may choose any one of the electives and must demonstrate that he or she has achieved the learning outcomes of the selected elective general education course.

41. This PLAR process will fall under the jurisdiction of the School that delivers the chosen general education elective.

42. Where a program has a directed or mandatory general education course as part of its curriculum, the applicant may either apply for PLAR of the directed general education course or may choose any one of the other St. Clair College general education courses and challenge the course that the applicant chooses. In the process of attempting to obtain PLAR for general education courses the applicant is required to have at least three separate credits for general education if the program is a Diploma or Advanced Diploma program. These credits for general education must be acquired through actually taking a St. Clair College course or by obtaining credit through the PLAR process or through the process for transferring credit for courses taken at institutions other than St. Clair College.

43. Where the applicant wishes to PLAR a directed or mandatory general education course, the PLAR process will fall under the jurisdiction of the school that delivers the directed or mandatory general education course.

Process for Obtaining Credit for Prior Learning through Work and Life Experiences

44. Students wishing to obtain credit or advanced standing based on previous work or life experiences should contact the Chair responsible for the delivery of the course or courses for which the student would like to begin a PLAR process.

45. A separate application is required for each course or course which the applicant wishes to gain credit through PLAR processes. A separate fee is also attached to each PLAR application.

46. In order to obtain academic credit for life or work experiences, the acquired learning must be described and documented so that it can be assessed as to its nature, extent, and depth and compared to relevant St. Clair College course and program learning outcomes.

47. A student or prospective student should discuss the desire to obtain credit for previous work and life experiences with Chair of the School within which the College program is housed as well as with the Coordinator of the academic program for which PLAR credit is desired.

48. The Chair should determine the extent of the assistance that is needed to make an application for PLAR and should advise the candidate requesting PLAR of the assistance that may be provided through consultations with the Quality Assurance Office, the Program Coordinator, faculty members of the program as well as Student Services. The Program Chair should inform the applicant of all of these resources as soon as possible.

49. A variety of tools may be used to demonstrate and identify the learning that has been acquired through previous work or life experiences.

50. The Program Chair and Coordinator will work with the applicant for PLAR credit to identify the most suitable tool or combination of methods to demonstrate and document the previous learning of the applicant. The advice and assistance of the Quality Assurance Office may be sought in developing the PLAR plan of assessment.

51. In all cases, PLAR evaluation will adhere to the learning outcomes as stated in the approved course outline. Consequently, the scope, context and rigor of the outcomes to be evaluated will not depart from the learning outcomes established for the course.

52. Once the consultations above have been completed, the Chair responsible for the delivery of a course must complete the "Course Addition Form for PLAR" (see attached) and submit it to Registrar's Office. The information from the "Course Addition Form" will be loaded on the student system.

53. Following Chair approval, and course loading, the Chair should instruct the student to go to the Registrar's Office to register for the PLAR course and pay the tuition fee for PLAR (see attached registration form).

54. Once the registration and fee payment is completed, the student and the faculty member or members chosen to evaluate the PLAR, may commence the challenge exam or portfolio evaluation process.

55. Generally PLAR's must be completed within the semester commenced or within four months from registration in the course whichever is the longer period.

Appeals of PLAR Assessments

56. The determination of a PLAR process is subject to the College's Grade Appeal Policy.

Fees and Charges

57. Fees for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition will be established annually by the Ministry and form part of the College fee schedule. In no case can the PLAR fee exceed the regular course tuition fee, based on the Ministry's specified part-time rates.

58. PLAR fees are in addition to tuition and are not reimbursed in the event of an unsuccessful PLAR process.

59. Payment for PLAR assessments are reimbursed to the academic department or to the individual assessor.

60. Tuition fees for portfolio development courses are to be determined in the same manner as for part-time courses.

61. Assessments of portfolios and challenge evaluations for courses that are part of Ministry approved programs are funded through the operating grant. Details can be found in the audit of enrolment guidelines and in the documentation of the calculation of the operating grant.

PLAR and Student Assistance

62. Financial assistance may be available to eligible students. Students should contact the Financial Aid Office.

63. Reduction of course load as a result of earning credits through PLAR may affect a student's OSAP assistance.

64. Further information on PLAR and OSAP can be obtained from the College Financial Assistance Office.

St. Clair College wishes to thank and acknowledge Algonquin College for their written permission to use their policies and procedures as a guideline for the development of the St. Clair College Policies and Procedures.

Accountability Audit of PLAR Credit

65. To ensure quality, integrity and consistency, the College shall audit each Chair approval of a PLAR credit to ensure that the procedures set out in this policy have been used to grant students academic credit.

66. The audit shall be conducted by the Executive Director, Program and Degree Accountability, in accordance with the process detailed in the Protocol on Accountability Audit of Academic Credit attached as Appendix A.

67. A student will not be given credit for a course unless the request has been green flagged by the Executive Director, Program and Degree Accountability, following an Accountability Audit.

ST. CLAIR
C O L L E G E

COURSE ADDITION FORM FOR PLAR & TUTORIAL

TO:
Scheduling Office (Box33)
Email: DL_Scheduling@stclaircollege.ca

From: _____   DATE:_____

PLEASE COMPLETE IN FULL
Rationale: _____

_____

Student Name:_____   Student #: _____
Student Signature: _____   Date: _____
Program Name: _____
International Student: _____ YES   _____ NO

_____
YEAR/TERM: _____ FALL   _____ WINTER   _____ SPRING
Start Date: _____   End Date: _____   Units of Credit: _____
Total No. of weeks: _____Hours per week: _____   Total No. of Hours: _____
Course Code: _____   Course Name: _____
Course Section: _____   PLAR (Portfolio)= **097** (Windsor) or **597** (Chatham)
                                              PLAR (Challenge) = **098** (Windsor) or **598** (Chatham)
                                              Tutorial = **099** (Windsor) or **599** (Chatham)

_____
Tuition Amount: $_____   Please note that this does not include ancillary fees. These fees will be assessed and added by the Registrar's Office at the time of enrollment.

APPROVALS

Faculty Name:	Faculty Signature:	Date:
Chair Name:	Chair Signature:	Date:

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES FOR PLAR & TUTORIAL

PLAR and Tutorials may be used in the following situations:

1. The student must be <u>in the final year</u> of his/her program of study and <u>eligible to graduate in the current academic year</u> or the requested PLAR or tutorial course in <u>necessary to proceed in the program</u>;
2. The course for which the student requests a PLAR or Tutorial <u>must be required to complete</u> program requirements;
3. The course is <u>not otherwise scheduled</u> in the academic year;
4. A faculty member must be available and willing to teach the course;
5. The course is deemed suitable for PLAR or Tutorial delivery by the Subject Chair.

"Course Addition Form for PLAR & Tutorial" forms are available in the Program Chairs' offices or on College website: https://www.stclaircollege.ca/forms

- The Program Chair must complete the **"Course Addition Form for PLA & Tutorial"** and submit it to the Scheduling Office by emailing DL_Scheduling@stclaircollege.ca or through inter- office mail (Box 33). The information from the submitted form will be loaded on the student system.
- Once approval is received and the course is loaded on the student system, the Faculty/Chair must notify the student to contact the Registrar's Office to register and pay the tuition fee for the course to be enrolled (in person or by email: info@stclaircollege.ca).
- The additional form: "**Request for Academic Credit for Previous Work and Life Experiences" (PLAR)** and all accompanying supporting documentation must be submitted to the Registrar's Office. Once complete, please email information to Juli Vlaminck at jvlaminck@stclaircollege.ca. This form can be found on the College website: https://www.stclaircollege.ca/forms
- Once the Chair's approval has been received and the student is registered, the faculty member and student may commence the PLAR or Tutorial
- Payment for the PLAR or Tutorial will not be processed to the instructor unless prior approval is received from the Chair and until a grade has been provided for the student. PLAR or Tutorials must be completed within the semester commenced.

Appendix A

Protocol on Accountability Audit of Academic Credit

Preamble

This Protocol is made by the President in accordance with Policy 1.6.9 - Transfer Credit for Previous Academic Studies and Policy 1.6.11 - Academic Credit for Previous Work and Life Experience (PLAR), and is intended to set out the process to be used by the Executive Director, Program and Degree Accountability (hereinafter referred to as the Accountability Office) for conducting audits of credit transfer and PLAR requests for academic credit.

The term *"Official Transcript"* shall be defined as an official document:
- That is generated by the previous learning institution recording the official grade for the subject course.
- That contains an original signature and the Official Seal of the Office of the Registrar or designate of that institution; A copy of the original document is acceptable provided the Program Coordinator has compared the copy with the original and has certified on the face of the copy that the copy is a true copy of the original transcript.
- That was received directly from the said institution. For the purpose of clarity the college may accept delivery of an Official Transcript directly from the student, provided the recipient is satisfied the document has not been tampered with in any manner.
- That has been translated in accordance with the requirements of this protocol in the case of transcripts written in a language other than English.
- Electronic transcripts may be accepted as official transcripts in the absence of an Official Seal and original signature provided their authenticity is confirmed by the Registrar's Office prior to granting a transfer credit.

The term *"Course Outline"* shall be defined as any document or collection of documents, generated by the previous institution, that contain sufficient detail to enable a proper comparison to be made with the SCC credited course and should include reference to specific course content, course objectives and/or outcomes, textbook requirements, evaluation methods and frequency. For the purposes of clarity, a brief course description, in the absence of additional information about the course, would not be a considered as a course outline.

Protocol

1. The Executive Director of Program and Degree Accountability or some other person as designated by the College President shall review all templates (including attachments) for any group credit transfer, individual credit transfer or PLAR credit that has been approved by the appropriate Program Chair before the student is given credit for the course. A student will not be given credit for a course unless the request has been green flagged by the Executive Director, Program and Degree Accountability following an accountability audit.

2. Subject to paragraph 23, which creates an exception for credit transfers previously entered onto the ONCAT data base or the Registrar's Office Internal Credit Transfer List, every request for credit will be audited.
3. A credit transfer audit shall examine the following:
   - The proper college template is attached to the request.
   - The proper college template is completed correctly.
   - An Official Transcript is attached, unless the previous course was completed at SCC in which case an Official Transcript is not required.
   - Where an Official Transcript is required and the previous course was completed at a private or foreign institution, a Request for Official Transcript and/or Course Outline Exemption Form is submitted, if for legitimate reasons an Official Transcript cannot be produced.

- A course outline of the previously completed course is attached, unless the previous course was completed at SCC; or is part of a Transfer Agreement of which SCC is a participant; or has been entered into the ONCAT data base, in which case a course outline is not required.
- Where a course outline is required and the previous course was completed at a private or foreign institution, a Request for Official Transcript and/or Course Outline Exemption Form is submitted, if for legitimate reasons a course outline cannot be produced.
- The previously completed course is sufficiently (70%) equivalent in content and outcomes to the SCC credited course and in the case of General Education courses the previous course complies with MTCU General Education requirements.
- The previously completed course is equivalent in credit weight to the SCC credited course.
- Where a Request for Official Transcript and/or Course Outline Exemption Form is submitted, that the Form discloses sufficient evidence to make a proper comparison between the previous course and the SCC credited course.

4. A PLAR credit audit shall examine the following:
- That the template required to process such requests has been completed properly and certified by the faculty member conducting the review and that the requirements of Policy 1.6.11 have been met.
- That the course learning outcomes of the subject course are consistent with the granting of a PLAR credit and that the method used to determine if the student has sufficiently demonstrated an ability to perform course learning outcomes accurately measures same.
- That the Program Chair has approved the PLAR review and granting of a PLAR credit following completion of the review.

5. For the purposes of greater clarity, the Request for Official Transcript and/or Course Outline Exemption Form was developed to deal with requests involving courses completed in jurisdictions outside of Ontario or at private institutions. It would be extremely rare that such request would be made for a course completed within an Ontario public institution.

6. Results of the audit shall be completed in writing and attached to the credit request template.

7. In the case of a successful audit, the template shall be forwarded by the Accountability Office to the Registrar's office for processing. The Registrar's Office shall process the credit and drop the uncompleted subject course that the student is obtaining credit for from the student's schedule when applicable (ie: student is registered for the course during the current semester).

8. If the student is subsequently registered for the credited course in another future semester it is the obligation of the students to ensure that the course is dropped from their schedules.

9. In the case of an unsuccessful audit, the Accountability Office shall return the template to the Registrar's Office for correction (if appropriate). Corrections shall be made electronically. Hand written corrections are not acceptable.

10. Once the template has been corrected it will be forwarded to the Accountability Office for a further audit. In the case of a successful audit, the process outlined in paragraph 7 above shall be followed. In the case a second unsuccessful audit, the process outlined in paragraph 9 shall be followed, however, it is recognized that the opportunity to correct the template may not be afforded if correction would not change the results of a red flagged audit.

11. All credit request documentation, including audit results, shall be stored by the Registrar's Office.

12. At the conclusion of each month, the Executive Director, Program & Degree Accountability, shall ensure that a comprehensive chart of statistical data for the specific month, and year to date, is completed and forwarded to

the President, Vice President, Academic, Associate Vice President Academic, Executive Director, Centre for Academic Excellence and all Program Deans and Chairs.

13. The President shall ensure that the statistical data referred to in paragraph 14 above, is forwarded to SOG at least once every calendar year or additionally as required by the President.

14. For statistical results, any template returned to the Registrar's Office for correction shall be considered a red flag even if it is subsequently corrected and resubmitted.

Foreign Documents

15. Any document submitted in a foreign language shall be correctly and fully interpreted into the English language by an interpreter who has certified in writing that:
    - The interpreter is fluent in both the English language and the language that is to be translated;
    - The interpreter is at arm's length to the student;
    - The translation attached to the document is an accurate translation of the document submitted;

16. This written certification shall be signed by the interpreter and shall clearly disclose the interpreter's name and contact information.

17. The certification of the interpreter does not require an official legal notarization but such notarization or any other information may be required by the Chair if in the Chair's opinion such additional information is required to process the request for academic transfer.

18. Any financial costs incurred to obtain a proper translation of foreign documents shall be the responsibility of the student.

ONCAT

19. St. Clair College is a participating member of ONCAT and will comply with Ministry policy and protocol with respect to same.

20. Where the previous course has been completed at another Ontario college or university the auditor shall also determine if the previous course qualifies for entry into the ONCAT data base.

21. In such cases the previous course shall be compared to the SCC course in such detail as to ensure that the ONCAT data base is not compromised.

22. A course shall not be entered into the ONCAT data base unless the credit transfer that forms the basis of the entry has been audited by the Accountability Office and the Accountability Office has certified in writing that the course is approved for entry into the ONCAT data base.

23. Credit transfer requests that have been previously entered onto the ONCAT data base or the Registrar's Office Internal Credit Transfer List shall be processed without an accountability audit.