Addictions Counselling
PLAR Candidate Guide
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)
The Addictions Counselling diploma program is dedicated to removing barriers and broadening the access to programs at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. We believe that adults acquire knowledge and skills through life and work experience that may align with courses within our programs.
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Why consider a PLAR assessment?

PLAR refers to the combination of flexible ways of evaluating people’s lifelong learning, both formal and informal against a set of established standards. You can receive academic credit for your relevant lifelong learning. The Addictions Counselling diploma program recognizes prior learning in a number of ways.

We recognize:

- Previous formal learning from an accredited training institution through transfer of credit.
- Previous informal learning or experiential learning through a comprehensive prior learning and recognition process.

What are the PLAR options?

To be eligible for PLAR, an applicant must first register or already be registered as a Saskatchewan Polytechnic student.

Option A: Individual course challenge

If you have three years successful experience in the addictions field, and have learned the skills and knowledge for one or more of the Addictions Counselling diploma program courses, you may apply to be assessed for each applicable course.

Fees:

- There will be a charge for each individual course assessment.
- For a listing of the specific PLAR fees, check the PLAR database or call Saskatchewan Polytechnic and ask to speak to the PLAR advisor/counsellor assigned to the Addictions Counselling diploma program at: 1-866-467-4278.

How many courses can be challenged through PLAR in the Addictions Counselling Diploma program?

Currently we have 5 out of 42 certificate courses with PLAR challenges available. There is no limit. You may challenge as many of these courses as you are able to prove prior skills and knowledge through assessment.
## Which courses are PLAR-ready?

### Addictions Counselling Diploma Program Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE CODE</th>
<th>COURSE NAME</th>
<th>PLAR Challenge(s) available through program</th>
<th>PLAR Challenge(s) not available</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPL 144</td>
<td>Academic Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPL 145</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPL 146</td>
<td>Personal/Professional Development</td>
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<td>CDEP 155</td>
<td>Behaviour and Drug Dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDEP 157</td>
<td>Detoxification Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDEP 158</td>
<td>Chemically Dependent Persons</td>
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<td>CDEP 159</td>
<td>Addictions Recovery Models</td>
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<td>CDEP 160</td>
<td>Family Systems</td>
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<td>CDEP 161</td>
<td>Erosion of Addicted Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDEP 162</td>
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<td>CDEP 163</td>
<td>Concurrent Disorders Client</td>
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<td>CDEP 164</td>
<td>Gender Issues</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDEP 165</td>
<td>Special Needs Clients</td>
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<td>CDEP 166</td>
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<td>CDEP 167</td>
<td>Cross Cultural Counselling</td>
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<td>CDEP 168</td>
<td>Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder</td>
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<td>CDEP 171</td>
<td>Human Relations in Addictions</td>
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<td>CDEP 172</td>
<td>Communications in Addictions</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDEP 173</td>
<td>Addictions and Conflict Resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>COUN 149</td>
<td>Assessments and Recovery Plans</td>
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<td>COUN 150</td>
<td>Motivational Interviewing</td>
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<td>COUN 151</td>
<td>Brief Screenings</td>
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<td>COUN 152</td>
<td>Suicide Interventions</td>
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<td>COUN 154</td>
<td>Addictions Counselling Theory</td>
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<td>ETHC 140</td>
<td>Ethics in Addictions</td>
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<td>HLTH 151</td>
<td>Stress Management in Addictions</td>
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<td>HUMD 143</td>
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<td>ADMN 251</td>
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<td>ADMN 253</td>
<td>Industry Documentation</td>
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<td>CDEP 169</td>
<td>Community Mobilization and Development</td>
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<td>CDEP 170</td>
<td>Prevention Programs</td>
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<td>Presentation Skills</td>
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<td>COUN 153</td>
<td>Crisis Intervention Techniques</td>
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<td>COUN 155</td>
<td>Addictions Counselling Practice</td>
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<td>COUN 156</td>
<td>Addictions and Interventions</td>
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<td>COUN 239</td>
<td>Addictions Group Counselling</td>
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<td>COUN 241</td>
<td>Counselling Modalities</td>
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<td>COUN 244</td>
<td>Addictions Group Design</td>
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<td>COUN 245</td>
<td>Addictions Group Facilitation</td>
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<td>HLTH 240</td>
<td>Health Promotion</td>
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<td>PRAC 247</td>
<td>Detox Practicum</td>
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<td>PRAC 248</td>
<td>Developmental Model Practicum</td>
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*Note*: Some courses common to multiple programs at Saskatchewan Polytechnic (i.e. computers, communications, math, and sciences) are managed by associated studies faculty. To see if these shared courses in your program are PLAR-ready, visit the PLAR homepage for links to Candidate Guides for Associated Studies/Communications and for Standardized Computers.

For assistance call Saskatchewan Polytechnic and ask to speak to the PLAR advisor/counsellor assigned to the Addictions Counselling diploma program at: 1-866-467-4278.

**Is PLAR available at any time of the year?**

PLAR challenges are currently being offered once a year.

- March 30 (you must apply by February 15)
Is it *easier* to challenge a course through PLAR or take the course?

Neither is easier. By using PLAR you may reduce the repetition of studying information that you already know. The PLAR process allows you to demonstrate knowledge you already have.

PLAR is not an easy way to certification, rather a “different” way to obtain certification. Your personal level of skill and experience will dictate which courses you choose to challenge. The self-audit section found later in this guide will help you decide if you have a good match of skill and knowledge for a specific course.

**Methods of assessing prior learning**

Assessment methods measure an individual’s learning against course learning outcomes. The assessment methods listed below are the ones most commonly used, but other forms of flexible assessment may be considered. These assessments may include one or a combination of the following assessment tools:

- Evidence file
  - assessments
  - treatment plans
  - discharge summaries
  - incident reports
  - progress reports
  - copies of forms
  - video/audiotapes of presentations & counselling
  - lecture outlines
  - activity outlines
  - brief screenings
- Interviews
- Skill demonstration
- Knowledge exams

If I live out of town, do I have to travel to a main campus to do PLAR?

There will be times that you will need to meet with the program on campus. However, we will try to keep travel to a minimum.

What if I have a disability & need equity accommodations?

At Saskatchewan Polytechnic, we understand that sometimes services must be provided to students in a variety of ways to achieve the goals of fair representation. Therefore, the range of services provided for Education Equity students is as diverse as the needs of those students. We strive for equity (not uniformity) and provide varied services for students with differing needs. If more information is required, please contact a Saskatchewan Polytechnic counsellor at a campus closest to you or refer to the Saskatchewan Polytechnic website: [http://saskpolytech.ca/student-services/support/counselling-services.aspx](http://saskpolytech.ca/student-services/support/counselling-services.aspx)
Are there other methods to gain Saskatchewan Polytechnic course credits for prior learning?

Transfer Credit
Yes, Saskatchewan Polytechnic will grant credit for previous training that is similar in content, objectives, and evaluation standards to Saskatchewan Polytechnic training. Transfer of credit is different from the PLAR process. Transfer Credit guidelines may be found at: http://saskpolytech.ca/admissions/resources/transfer-credit.aspx

It is the student’s responsibility to check with Registration Services for specific campus procedures on this policy. For specific information and guidelines regarding transfer of credit, contact a Saskatchewan Polytechnic educational counsellor.

Equivalency Credit
Equivalency credit refers to the application of credit you may have earned in a previously taken Saskatchewan Polytechnic course to your current Saskatchewan Polytechnic course. Apply at registration services for equivalency credit. This process should also be completed prior to your PLAR challenge. If these credits cannot be used for equivalency credit, you may use these accredited courses as part of your evidence for your PLAR challenge.

Contact us
If more information is required, please contact a designated PLAR counsellor at a campus closest to you.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Moose Jaw
Counselling Services, Room 2.203
306-691-8311 or 306-691-8310
pallisercounselling@saskpolytech.ca

Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Prince Albert
Counselling Services, Room F203 (Technical Centre)
306-765-1611
woodlandcounselling@saskpolytech.ca

Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Regina
Counselling Services, Room 228
306-775-7436
wascanacounselling@saskpolytech.ca

Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Saskatoon
Counselling Services, Room 114
306-659-4050
kelseycounselling@saskpolytech.ca
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process

1. **Consult** with PLAR designated contact
   - call 1-866-467-4278 & speak with an education counsellor
   - identify goals
   - discuss process & forms
   - identify courses for challenge

2. **Complete application** to PLAR
   - meet with program head/faculty
   - review the self-audit
   - determine eligibility
   - obtain approval for PLAR

3. **Schedule PLAR audit meeting**
   - consult with program faculty responsible for each PLAR
   - confirm assessment methods & procedures

4. **Develop an action plan**
   - follow an action plan
   - review your skills & knowledge
   - collect, create & compile evidence
   - obtain validations
   - meet timelines

5. **Pay assessment fees**

6. **Prepare** for prior learning assessment

7. **Challenge facilitated** by assessor

8. **Challenge evaluated** by assessor

9. **Results submitted** to Saskatchewan Polytechnic registration services

10. **Candidate notified** of results

**Successful:** see academic transcript

**Not successful:** letter sent
- consult with program head
- register for course
- grade appeal process available
Guiding principles for developing a PLAR evidence file

1. As you begin the PLAR process you will be advised if any evidence is required. This will be identified in your action plan. Check with the PLAR designated contact before you begin to gather evidence.

2. Evidence must be valid and relevant. Your evidence must match the learning outcomes identified for each course.
   - It is your responsibility to create, collect and compile relevant evidence – if required.

3. Learning must be current within the last three years.

4. The evidence should demonstrate the skills and knowledge from your experiences.

5. The learning must have both a theoretical and practical component.

Types of evidence

There are three types of evidence used to support your PLAR request:

1. Direct evidence – what you can demonstrate for yourself.
2. Indirect evidence – what others say or observe about you.

Ensure that you provide full evidence to your Addictions Counselling diploma program faculty assessor so that your prior learning application is assessed appropriately. Well organized, easy to track evidence will also ensure that none of the evidence is missed or assessed incorrectly.

Here are some examples of evidence that you may be requested to submit as part of your evidence file (if required):

- brief screenings
- assessments
- intakes
- orientation of clients
- treatment plans
- videotapes of interaction(s) with clients
- videotapes of community presentations
- resource lists
- written descriptions and analysis
- experience (activity) outlines
- observations
- progress reports
- workplace validations
- work samples (including business letters, reports, forms, etc.)

All documents that are submitted to Saskatchewan Polytechnic may be returned to the student after the final results have been given and the grade appeal deadline of seven days has passed.
A copy of transcripts and certificates may be included in your evidence file, but be prepared to show original documents at the PLAR audit meeting for validation.

**How long will it take to prepare evidence for PLAR?**

Since the requirements are different for each course, and each candidate has different experiences, the amount of time it takes to prepare your evidence will vary.

**Steps to complete a self-audit**

1. Read through the levels of competence as listed below.

   **Mastery:** I am able to demonstrate the learning outcome well enough to teach it to someone else.

   **Competent:** I can work independently to apply the learning outcome.

   **Functional:** I need some assistance in using the outcome.

   **Learning:** I am developing skills and knowledge for this area.

   **None:** I have no experience with the outcome.

   **Learning outcomes**

   For each learning outcome listed, please self-evaluate your competency levels and record in the appropriate column for each self-audit.

2. Take a few minutes and read through the following self-audit for each course you are interested in as a PLAR candidate.

3. Check your level of competence as you read through each of the learning outcomes for each course. The information will help you in your decision to continue with your PLAR application.

4. In order to be successful in a PLAR assessment, your abilities must be at the competent or mastery level for the majority of the learning outcomes. Some things to consider when determining your level of competence are:
   
   - How do I currently use this outcome?
   - What previous training have I had in this outcome: workshops, courses, on-the-job?
   - What personal development or volunteer experience do I have in this area?

   Be prepared to explain the reason you chose this level if asked by an assessor.

5. Bring the completed self-audit to a consultation meeting with the program head or faculty member in step 3 – PLAR process of the candidate process for prior learning assessment.
CAPL 145 – Writing Skills
The course provides instruction and practice in written communication skills. You will review basic grammar and the mechanics of writing. You will also produce examples of technical writing (including basic reports, research papers using the APA format and using reference materials).

Credit unit(s): 3.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPL 145 – Writing Skills</th>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>I am able to demonstrate it well enough to teach it to someone else.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>I can work independently to apply the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>I need some assistance in using the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>I am developing skills and knowledge for this area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>I have no experience with the outcome.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Examine the structure of written communication in the use of grammar and punctuation.
2. Describe essay development.
3. Complete a formal research essay/report or other formal research document using APA formatting.

PLAR assessment methods
If you qualify for PLAR, you may be asked to demonstrate your learning in one or more of the following ways. Be prepared to discuss the expectations during a consultation meeting.

1. Evidence file
2. Challenge exam
3. Formal essay

Resources
The suggested resource is available at all Saskatchewan Polytechnic bookstores.

Suggested website for APA information:
Saskatchewan Polytechnic Libraries, APA research information: Saskatchewan Polytechnic Library - home
CDEP 162 – Abuses in Families
You will examine the types of abuses that occur in a family. You will also be introduced to various referral strategies for families entering into the healing process.

Credit unit(s): 2.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDEP 162 – Abuses in Families</th>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Learning</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Mastery: I am able to demonstrate it well enough to teach it to someone else.</td>
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<td>Competent: I can work independently to apply the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional: I need some assistance in using the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning: I am developing skills and knowledge for this area.</td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>None: I have no experience with the outcome.</td>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Examine abuses in families.
   - Define abuses in families
   - Examine domestic violence
   - Examine child abuse
   - Examine abuses within diverse populations
   - Examine the cycles of abuse

2. Examine the cycles of abuse.
   - Examine the cycle of violence theory
   - Examine the cycle of violence model

3. Present community and personal responses to family violence/abuse.

PLAR assessment methods
If you qualify for PLAR, you may be asked to demonstrate your learning in one or more of the following ways. Be prepared to discuss the expectations during a consultation meeting.

1. Evidence file

2. Practical assignment (presentation)

Resources

CDEP 166 – Gambling/Internet Issues

You will examine the nature and extent of problem gambling/internet use, the phases of problem use and the signs and characteristics of individuals who experience problem use. The course covers the introductory level screening/assessment tools used for compulsive gambling/Internet use, and the relapse recovery process and referral sources for problem gambling/Internet users. You’ll recognize the differences, similarities and relationships between gambling and other addictions.

Credit unit(s): 1.0

<table>
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<td>Mastery</td>
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</table>

1. Describe gambling problem issues.
   - Describe the history of gambling issues
   - Identify the principles of gambling and types of gaming activities
   - Describe the rise of Internet gaming

2. Examine the relationship between gambling and other addictions.
   - Describe an impulse control disorder
   - Describe an addictive disorder
   - Describe the relationship between gambling and other addictions

3. Use some screening and assessment tools for problem gambling.
   - Discuss some assessment instruments used in work with problem gamblers

PLAR assessment methods

If you qualify for PLAR, you may be asked to demonstrate your learning in one or more of the following ways. Be prepared to discuss the expectations during a consultation meeting.

1. Evidence file
2. Interview
3. Practical assignment
   Complete assessment tools which may include videotaped role-play.

Resources

ADMN 251 – Administrative Functions

You will become familiar with the administrative functions required of addictions services agencies. You will examine organizational structure, working with community-based organizations, measuring outcomes, and management styles. You will also practice time management and job search skills.

Credit unit(s): 3.0

ADMN 251 – Administrative Functions

| Mastery: | I am able to demonstrate it well enough to teach it to someone else. |
| Competent: | I can work independently to apply the outcome. |
| Functional: | I need some assistance in using the outcome. |
| Learning: | I am developing skills and knowledge for this area. |
| None: | I have no experience with the outcome. |

1. Examine administrative functions.
   - Describe the purpose of managers
   - Describe the nature of organizational structures

2. Examine the administrative functions of community-based organizations.
   - Identify the function and roles of the members of a community-based organization
   - Identify the functions and roles of boards of community-based organizations

3. Develop outcome measures.
   - Determine the subject requiring evaluation
   - Select participants in the evaluation
   - Clarify the goals of the evaluation and their scope
   - Assess the evidence
   - Develop outcomes
   - Monitor achievement
   - Report findings and make ongoing recommendations

4. Manage time.
   - Discuss the need for time management
   - Identify time management techniques and tools
   - Apply time management techniques

5. Demonstrate job search skills.
   - Describe methods of conducting a job search
   - Practice job search skills

6. Prepare resumes for addictions services agencies.
### ADMN 251 – Administrative Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Functional</th>
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<td>I have no experience with the outcome.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

- Discuss resume development
- Prepare a resume

7. Simulate job interview skills in addictions services.

- Describe preparation for an interview

## PLAR assessment methods

If you qualify for PLAR, you may be asked to demonstrate your learning in one or more of the following ways. Be prepared to discuss the expectations during a consultation meeting.

1. Evidence file
2. Interview
3. Practical assignment (identify outcome measures)
**ADMN 253 – Industry Documentation**

You will learn how to write formal business letters and memos, and agency reports for staff presentations. You will also prepare other types of reports to government and various human service agencies. You will examine the function of public relations when working in human services agencies and/or as a community prevention worker. You will practice writing news releases.

**Credit unit(s):** 2.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADMN 253 – Industry Documentation</th>
<th>Mastery</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mastery:</strong> I am able to demonstrate it well enough to teach it to someone else.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competent:</strong> I can work independently to apply the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Functional:</strong> I need some assistance in using the outcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning:</strong> I am developing skills and knowledge for this area.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>None:</strong> I have no experience with the outcome.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Complete agency reports.
   - Describe business reports
   - Describe informal reports
   - Complete an agency report

2. Prepare business correspondence.
   - Write a business letter
   - Write a memo
   - Complete forms

3. Write a research paper.
   - Identify the main themes of research papers
   - Write a research paper

   - Describe the purpose and nature of public relations
   - Describe the guidelines for using media
   - Prepare press releases
**PLAR assessment methods**

If you qualify for PLAR, you may be asked to demonstrate your learning in one or more of the following ways. Be prepared to discuss the expectations during a consultation meeting.

1. **Evidence file**

2. **Challenge exam**
   - Write a research paper.
   - Write different types of press releases.

**Resources**

Suggested website for APA information:

Saskatchewan Polytechnic Libraries, APA research information:  Saskatchewan Polytechnic Library - home
Addictions Counselling

Appendices
Appendix A: Employment validation letter

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Instructions: The employment validation letter provides a statement of verification of employment in an exceptionality focused setting. The employment validation letter must be printed on letterhead of your current employer and signed by the human resources department indicating the length of employment and working environment(s). A letter template has been provided for your use. Please copy the content below and fill-in the fields as directed. The completed letter should be included with your PLAR evidence and submitted to the PLAR assessor for the Addictions Counselling diploma program.

Letter template (On employer's business letterhead)

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

I have reviewed the employment records of ____________________________ and ___________________________

Name of employee/candidate

Name of employee/candidate

can verify that the above candidate has been employed by ____________________________

Name of employer

for ____________________________

Length of employment

Please contact me at _______________ or _______________

Phone

email

with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

____________________________

Name

____________________________

Job title

Signature
Sample letter of validation

Date

Wendall Fromm, Executive Director
New Horizons Recovery Centre
Box 1812
Henribourg, SK S6J 1H0
(306) 555-8899

Dear Mr. Fromm:

As we discussed on the telephone, I am writing to ask you for a letter to validate the knowledge, skills and attitudes I developed while working in your centre.

I am in the process of seeking credit recognition in a Saskatchewan Polytechnic program for some of the skills, knowledge and attitudes I developed and demonstrated while working with your organization. Your letter will assist me by providing evidence that I have successfully performed the tasks outlined in the attached PLAR Employer Validation checklist. If I can provide evidence that I have successfully performed tasks and demonstrated skills, knowledge and attitudes in the areas outlined in the attached checklist, I will receive credit for the following course(s) in the Addictions Counselling diploma program:
- (course name)
- (course name)

Please provide me with a letter indicating the term of my employment with your organization, my position there, and a general statement about my role, and the scope of my responsibilities. Also, please complete the attached checklist by indicating those tasks I have carried out. I may be eligible to receive credit for those areas in which you indicate a yes rating.

The subject matter of some of the courses for which I am seeking recognition for may require me to provide evidence of issues involving clients or general confidentiality. Due to the sensitive nature of addictions counselling facilities, I would like to assure you that any examples of my work that I share as part of my portfolio or as evidence to demonstrate my competency will not disclose any personal information of a client past or present or any materials considered confidential to the centre.

If you require clarification, please contact me at (306) ____________.

Thank you for assisting me in achieving recognition for the skills, knowledge and attitudes I developed while working for your organization.

Yours truly,