PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN BC

Inventory of PLAR options processes, and credit allowances in BC post-secondary institutions

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BCPLAN
British Columbia's Prior Learning Action Network

BCCAT
BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL
ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

Inventory of BC PLAR Practices

Abstract

Starting January 2019 this project aims to research and document the prior learning assessment options, processes and credit allowances in 25 post-secondary institutions across British Columbia. The project's goals are both reflective and archival.

Compiling a record of BC prior learning assessment practices allows an overview and summary which can also be useful for reflective purposes, potentially offering significant insights into the use and practices of PLAR which could be utilized to further research and develop PLAR offerings.

Introduction

This study explores the range of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) policy, processes, information availability, enrollment, and credit allowances in BC post-secondary institutions (PSIs). PLAR is a process which allows individuals to have their prior non-formal or informal learning recognized formally. PLAR is internationally recognized; enabling individuals to gain formal recognition and academic credit for the knowledge, skills, and abilities they have acquired outside of post-secondary education. PLAR provides a critical component in the process of individual development and workforce adjustment, assisting individuals to further their education.

Funding for this research is provided by the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT) and conducted through BC Prior Learning Action Network (BCPLAN). As stipulated in the project proposal to BCCAT, the main questions being answered through this project are:
1. Is information about PLAR available and easy to locate on BC PSI websites?
2. What PLAR options are available for students within BC PSIs?
3. What are the transfer options for PLAR credit in BC PSIs?

Another aspect of the research proposal is providing a summary of PLAR offerings across BC as a resource for students. For this, a webpage is created and housed on BCPLAN's website (https://bcplan.ca/plar-in-bc/).

Literature review

PLAR is an individually governed assessment process in BC Post-Secondary Institutions, however, there are some groups supporting the development of PLAR in BC. BC Prior Learning Action Network (BC PLAN) is a not-for-profit society that is established in 2008 to support British Columbians' engagement with the PLAR process. BC PLAN, a network of individuals and organizations, promotes increased access to post-secondary credentials and skilled employment though assessment and recognition of the skills and knowledge adults bring to post-secondary institutions, to business, and to industries across the province. Another organization which contributes to PLAR in BC is The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), which has been operating since 1994 to provide expertise, advocacy and support for the development of PLAR across Canada.

Research has been conducted in the past to inventory PLAR practices and policies. A report by Mary J. Harrison titled "Best Practices in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Ontario Colleges & Universities" (2018) explored PLAR practices with a focus on Ontario post-secondary institutions. The website review data collection template for the current project is influenced by Mary Harrison's research. Another related study is "Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition in Canadian Universities: View from the Web" (Christine Wihak, 2007). This 2007 study investigated the availability of PLAR information from 60 Canadian Universities websites. The research methodology and website search methods from this study influenced the current project. So to conclude, there have been studies inventorying PLAR practices in the past but there has not been a complete inventory of prior learning assessment in BC. This study aims to fill that gap.

This study also aims to illuminate possible PLAR solutions to the emerging labour shortage facing BC in two significant ways. First is identifying, assessing, and validating prior learning. As quoted in the BC Labour Market Outlook 2018, "*It is predicted that there will be 903,000 job openings between now and 2028.*" Over 77% of these positions will need some level of post-secondary education. For many non-traditional students (those over the age of 24) they have acquired some or much of the knowledge required to do this work through non-formal and informal learning. This learning can be identified, assessed, and validated through PLAR on their way to formal post-secondary credentials. The second way PLAR can be part of the solution for the emerging labour shortage is through adult learning. As the OECD reported in their Future of Work, OECD Employment Outlook 2019, for Canada, "*Adult learning is key to help the most vulnerable navigate a changing labour market.*" Adult learners are more likely to access continued education if they feel their current knowledge and learning will expedite the process. With PLAR they do not need to start at the beginning of a degree, but rather may be able to use PLAR to reduce the amount of credit they need to complete their certificate, diploma, or degree. For adult learners, this access to, and increase in, formal education can play a significant role in increasing the workforces' education level, helping to ensure B.C.'s economy will continue to grow and prosper.

Method

In total, there are 25 post-secondary institutions included in this study; 11 colleges, 11 universities and 3 institutes.

The data presented throughout this report is collected from information made publicly available on post-secondary institutions' (PSI) websites, through interviews with staff and faculty involved in the prior learning assessment process within each institution (specific person interviewed will be mentioned in each individual report) and from the AVED PLAR statistics. The 3 main methods of data collection are website reviews, over-the-phone interviews, and analysis of PLAR enrollment statistics provided by the AVED warehouse. A further explanation of the data collection can be found below.

1) Website review:
    a) A systematic search of PSI websites, academic calendars, and policies is conducted, looking for PLAR information using keywords such as: "Prior Learning Assessment" "PLAR" "Credit Recognition" "Flexible Assessment" etc.
    b) A preliminary search of each PSI website is conducted as the initial data collection and a second, more in-depth search of the websites is conducted after the phone interviews. The interviews provided further context for the second website reviews.
2) Phone interviews:
    a) Interviews are conducted with a faculty/staff member within each PSI to further collect transfer credit and PLAR options details.
3) AVED Data
    a) Analysis of AVED warehouse data on PLAR enrollment in BC.

When collecting data from PSI websites information availability and scope and institutions' policies and practices are the main categories of focus. The phone interviews are conducted using a list of pre-determined questions which asked questions about 4 broad categories: transferability, policies, enrollment, and procedures/practices. The full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix #.

AVED Data

The AVED data is provided by the Central Data research and shows program PLAR enrollment statistics by institution type and by program area. The analysis is utilized to lend further context to PLAR offerings, policies and practices in BC.

Results

Overview
The following sections on policy, credit availability, processes, information availability, and enrollment offer exceptional insight into the range of PLAR options across the province.

Policy

The policy section of this report covers PLAR regulations, policies and structure. The first step of this research project is searching the website for information on prior learning assessment options. Of the 25 PSIs included, 21 (9 colleges, 9 universities and 3 institutes) had prior learning assessment listed on their website, either as a PLAR-specific landing page or as a section on admission or program pages, suggesting that the majority of the PSIs offer PLAR in some form.

The policies and websites are then used to collect data on regulations on the PLAR processes, such as credit award limits, regulations, PLAR structure, etc. The policies, or lack thereof, also indicated the options and foundations in place. 20 of the PSIs included in this study had PLAR policies (10 colleges, 7 universities, and 3 institutes). 5 post-secondary institutions do not have publicly available PLAR policies. Some PSIs mentioned PLAR within other educational policies and some had full PLAR policies. In this study, policies are counted if they are a separate policy and if they include a full explanation of PLAR within the institution, even as a sub-section of another policy. Only one post-secondary institution had neither a policy or website information.

The average PLAR policy age is 9.3 years old; the oldest policy being 19 years and the newest being 1 year. For colleges, the average age is 7.3 years, for universities 9.2 years and for institutes 11.5 years. The age of the policies is included because it can indicate how frequently the policy subject is used. The age of these PLAR policies suggests that they are not as frequently used as the other, more rigorously monitored and revised educational policies.

Another aspect of the policy section is the structure of PLAR within the institution. Of those which indicated (either through an interview or on website/policy) only 3 PSIs had a centralized PLAR department (2 colleges and 1 university). More commonly, PSIs had a more department-by-department PLAR model: 15 PSIs indicated a decentralized PLAR system. PLAR is typically housed within individual departments sometimes with reference to the Office of the Registrar entering credits and accepting payments. Some PSIs also had a central PLAR email which directs inquiries to appropriate departments. In the PSIs with a centralized model there are also decentralized sections or aspect; for example, in one institution there is a centralized PLAR department for distance learning programs, but campus PLAR is conducted individually by departments. So not necessarily all prior learning assessments within a PSI are included in these centralized models. The structure of PLAR within PSIs contributed to the wide variation of practices within and across institutions.

Credit Availability

A major goal of this study is to inventory credit availability for prior learning assessment, this included credit limits and transferability of PLAR credits. In PSI policies, most had credit limits of some sort, however, this limit often had to do with the available number of courses for which prior learning assessment is available or as residency requirements, which combine PLAR credits in the same category as transfer credits. Of those that indicated their credit limit, 3 of the colleges had no credit limit at all, 4 had a 50% PLAR credit limit (3 colleges, 1 institute), 2 had a 25% PLAR credit limit (1 college and 1 university) and 5 PSIs had a 75% PLAR credit limit (3 colleges, 2 universities). Of those which indicated how PLAR credits are recorded on a transcript, 8 record PLAR credits as letter grades which count toward GPA (4 colleges, 3 universities, and 1 institute) and 6 note the credit as earned through prior learning assessment, which is not given a grade (3 colleges, 2 universities, and 1 institute).

This project also places an emphasis on the transferability of credits. The results of this study indicate that the transferability of PLAR credits is widely varying across BC, with only 44%, of those that indicated, being certain that they accept other PSI PLAR credits. Through interviews, PSI representatives are asked whether credit awarded through prior learning assessment at other post-secondary institutions are accepted. Of the 16 PSIs that provided a response for this questions (some indicated this on website/policies as well as through interview) 7 accept PLAR credits from other PSIs (1 college, 4 universities, and 2 institutes), 5 do not accept other PSI PLAR credits (2 colleges and 3

universities), 2 colleges are unsure, and 2 colleges only accepted PLAR credits from other PSIs under certain conditions.

Processes

When looking at the PLAR processes within institutions, the types of PLAR, assessment methods used, assessors and student support are evaluated.

Prior learning assessment can be used to award credit in multiple ways. There are five main types of PLAR identified through this study: course-based, program-based, Flexible Assessment, Advance placement and credit bank. The types are defined for the purpose of this study as follows: Course-based PLAR is when students are given prior learning assessment based on their knowledge of a specific course (assessment would typically be based on course outlines or key competencies). Program-based PLAR is when students are granted a general, block credit award based on broader program competencies not toward a specific course. Flexible assessment is the waiving of program or course requirements based on prior learning. Advanced placement is advancing students into higher years of a program or degree based on prior learning. Lastly, credit bank is the awarding of credits based on pre-assessment of non-formal training programs or certificates.

Of those which indicated types of PLAR (either on their website or through the interview) 20 PSIs offer course-based PLAR, 4 offer program-based, 3 offer flexible assessment, 6 offer advanced placement and only one university offers credit bank options. Another type of PLAR that is less common, but noteworthy and emerging, is prior learning assessment for military experiential learning; this type is unique to 3 post-secondary institutions. The most common type of PLAR, by a significant amount, is course-based. See figure 1.
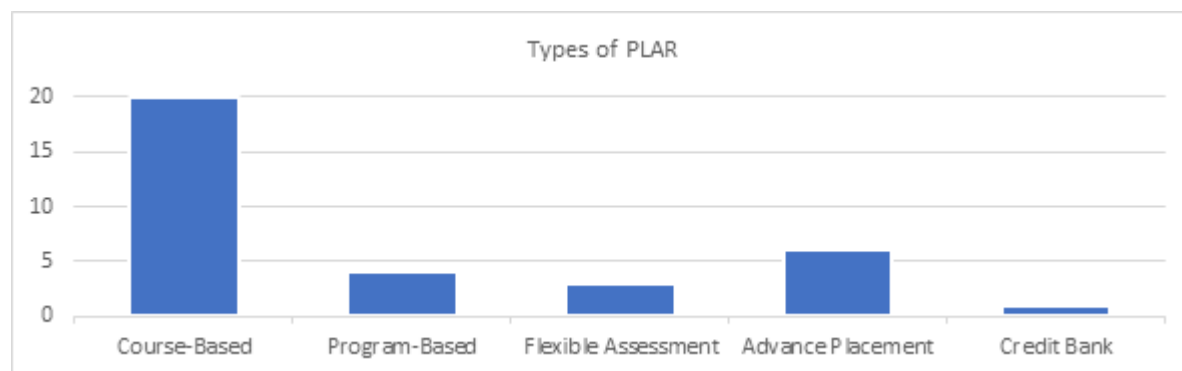
Figure 1

The method used to assess prior learning varied across institutions as well as the type. Assessment methods identified in this study are portfolio, interview, assignments, exams/tests, demonstrations /performance reviews; assessment often utilized a combination of these methods. Of the institutions that indicated assessment methods, in policies, on websites or through interviews; 21 PSIs used portfolios to assess prior learning (11 colleges, 7 universities, and 2 institutes), 13 used interview or oral questioning (7 colleges, 5 universities, and 1 institute), 21 used exams or tests (10 colleges, 8 universities, 3 institutes), 10 assessed prior knowledge through assignments (3 colleges, 5 universities, and 2 institutes) and 15 PSIs utilized performance evaluations/demonstrations to assess prior knowledge. The two most commonly mentioned assessment methods are portfolio and examinations. See figure 2.
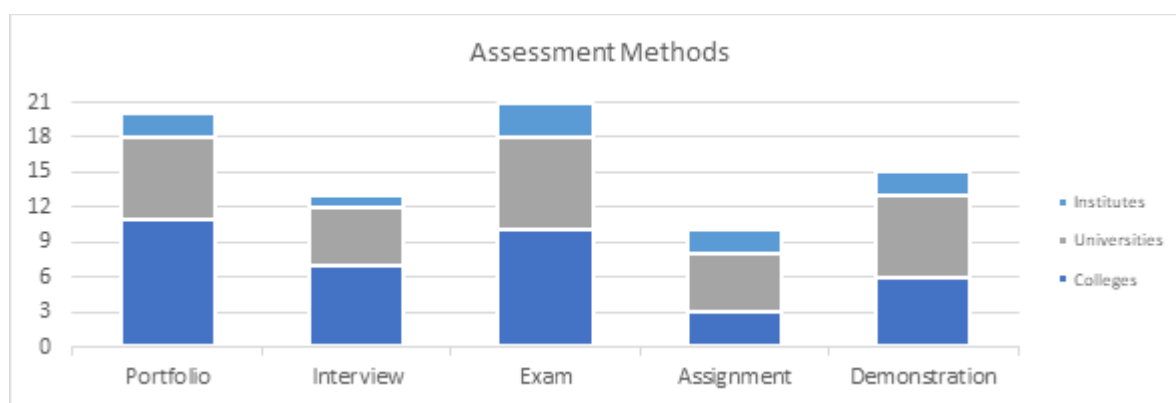

Figure 2

Regardless of the assessment method, assessments tend to be conducted consistently by faculty with subject area expertise or 'subject matter experts'. Most PLAR assessments are conducted by faculty members with subject area expertise, with 8 colleges, 6 universities and 2 institutes indicating using these types of assessors. Another assessor type indicated is assessors who are not faculty but designated or contracted prior learning assessors; these assessors are still described as subject matter experts.

There is limited information available regarding student support offered throughout the PLAR assessment process, as most websites mainly focused on the application process and did not share in-depth details about the assessment process. From the available information: only 10 PSIs indicated the level of support offered throughout the assessment process. 6 of these institutions provide students with either resource, such as handbooks or samples, or communication with an advisor. 4 PSIs provide students with

no or limited support; one institution shared that they informed students they would have limited contact with a PLAR advisor as they worked through the assessment process due to a lack of resources/time allocated to PLAR in their institution.

Information Availability

When surveying the availability of information, what information students have access to was recorded; including pre-requisites for prior learning assessment, fees, and program availability.

Information made available regarding student prerequisites for prior learning assessment requests is not always made clear on websites or in policies, many maintaining a general 'prior experience in program area' blanket statement. When pre-requisites are defined, they fell into four main categories; program or college requirements, 5 years or more related experience, less than 5 years' experience but still a specific minimum years-experience, and general program area knowledge and/or experience. 12 PSIs require students to meet program/institution admission requirements, 9 require a specific amount of experience – only 1 college and 1 university require less than 5 years of experience. 6 PSIs stated only general program area knowledge and/or experience without stating any other specific requirements. The varying and unspecified nature of these PLAR prerequisites indicates subjective, loosely defined prior learning assessment guidelines.

Many students consider cost-effectiveness to be a benefit of pursuing prior learning assessment, and in many cases, PLAR is more cost-effective than taking the full course, however not in all; 6 PSIs charge students the full tuition cost for a prior learning assessment. Of the PSIs which indicated PLAR fees, 13 PSIs charge 25-75% less than the tuition of a normal course; 4 charge students 75% of course tuition, 5 charge 50% of a course's tuition and 2 PSIs charge students 25% of a course's tuition. While there is variation in the cost-savings for prior learning assessment across PSIs, the majority included in the study did offer PLAR at a cost-saving rate.

Another factor that can impact the cost-effectiveness of PLAR is the fee structures, which also varied across institutions. If a PLAR fee is by a base-rate, regardless of credits awarded, students can save more per-credit, the more they utilize prior learning assessment. 17 of the PSIs charge a flat rate for prior learning assessment (8 colleges, 7 universities and 2 institutes), 2 charge students on a per-credit rate (1 college and 1

institute) and 3 PSIs use a combination of flat-rate per-credit fee structure (2 colleges and 2 universities).

The top program areas that offer prior learning assessments are Health Services, Family and Childcare/Social Work, and Business programs. Business and Health Services had PLAR options in 8 of the PSIs each and Family and Childcare/Social Work had PLAR option in 7 PSIs. The next most mentioned program with PLAR options is science (in 4 PSIS) and education in 3 PSIs. Culinary Arts, Adult Education and Arts programs are each mentioned with prior learning assessment options at 2 PSIs each.

Enrollment

From the 13 interviews, only 6 PSIs actively track student enrollments and 2 PSIs are in the process of creating reporting plans. Due to the lack of reporting plans in place, the data provided on enrollment, via the interviews, is limited. Validating the use and analysis of the AVED Warehouse data.

In the interview PSI contacts are asked if they have noticed any trends in their prior learning assessment enrollment. Of the 9 that responded to this question, only 3 PSIs mentioned a decrease in PLAR enrollment in their institution, one of those cited decreased resources contributing to a decrease in advertising which then caused a decreased enrollment rate. One commented that the enrollment rates are stable, and 5 noticed an increase in prior learning assessments being completed. So, the majority indicated an increase in PLAR assessments being completed.

Advertising can influence the rate of student enrollment. Of the PSIs which indicated whether they actively advertise prior learning assessment options, none have any active push advertising. 2 Universities advertise their PLAR options in a limited manner, such as, communication with students at events, or within programs; 8 of the PSIs do not advertise their PLAR options. This data shows that there is a lack of advertising PLAR across BC PSIs.

Another important aspect of prior learning assessment is student success. The success rate of students pursuing prior learning assessment varied across the PSIs; 7 of the 9 that responded to this question indicated a high success rate, while 2 indicated a success rate of lower than 50%. Those with high success rates indicated that their selective application process resulted in only strong candidates beginning the PLAR process and

is the cause of the success rate. Another institution noted its unique PLAR model as a factor contributing to student success. Students' prior knowledge is assessed and then had an option to take a top-up course in the areas they are lacking prior knowledge.

The average credit award students received through prior learning assessments varied widely, however, most PSIs were unable to provide this information, due to the lack of reporting plans. Of the 5 institutions who were able to share the average credit awards being received, their responses ranged from 39 credits to 3 credits with a total average of 15 credits. These responses were indicated during interviews and may only be representative of an individual department.

The program area that utilizes prior learning assessment most commonly across BC, based on the website search and interviews is Human and Social Services. 10 of the PSIs had PLAR available for Human and Social Service programs. The second most commonly occurring program areas are Business and Health, each with 8 institutions. The next most common area is Arts and Science programs with 6 PSIs. The final programs are tied with 2 each: Culinary Arts, Adult Education. The below AVED data shows a more complete overview of PLAR assessments by program area.

AVED Data:

The Central Data Warehouse defines a Full-Time Equivalent student (FTE) as representing full-time and part-time enrollments converted to represent the number of students carrying a full-time course load. One student whose course load is equal to the normal full-time number of credits or hours required in an academic year for normal progression in a recognized program would generate 1.0 Student FTE. (e. A student taking a normal full-time course load in one year would be 1.0 Student FTE. While a student taking one-half of the normal program course lad in one year would be 0.5 Student FTE. (Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, 2018, page 6).

Prior Learning Assessment and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) for Domestic Students by Institution Type

Select B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions[1]
Fiscal Year 2013/14 to 2017/18

Institution Type	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs
Teaching Intensive University	1344	167.72	1318	169.15	1619	205.00	1086	553.61	884	560.35
Institute	822	62.04	641	53.53	609	50.14	785	78.78	864	81.82
College	779	75.17	782	68.87	715	65.07	526	48.67	549	50.64
Grand Total	2945	304.93	2741	291.55	2943	320.22	2397	681.07	2297	692.82

Source: Central Data Warehouse, May 2018 submission.

Prior Learning Assessment and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) for Domestic Students by Course CIP Cluster[2]

Select B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions[1]
Fiscal Year 2013/14 to 2017/18

CIP Cluster (Program Area)	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs	Number of Assessments	FTEs
Health	767	75.66	839	85.44	872	84.71	1066	389.02	1073	410.49
Arts and Sciences	458	44.16	309	32.71	412	48.48	301	170.33	274	173.10
Business and Management	789	90.06	690	78.69	709	82.98	502	60.39	343	41.09
Human and Social Services	514	47.85	478	42.26	375	35.83	208	20.83	279	27.65
Engineering and Applied Science	133	12.92	180	18.74	297	26.22	146	16.69	122	17.37
Education	88	14.29	63	11.05	90	19.29	56	5.07	103	9.66
Visual and Performing Arts	68	5.48	50	5.39	106	9.84	55	13.04	52	8.45
Developmental	66	9.24	45	6.24	22	2.72	45	3.99	28	3.12
Personal Improvement and Leisu	33	2.91	33	2.34	31	2.49	10	0.91	21	1.72
Trades	29	2.35	54	8.68	29	7.66	8	0.81	2	0.17
Grand Total	2945	304.93	2741	291.55	2943	320.22	2397	681.07	2297	692.82

Source: Central Data Warehouse, May 2018 submission.

1. Data do not include Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Northern British Columbia, or the University of Victoria. Data include both domestic students, and exclued international and offshore students.

2. Fiscal year is from April 1 to March 31

3. CIP Clusters are grouped two-digit Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes. Please refer to the Notes sheet for further details. For more information on the Classification of Instructional Programs, please see:

These AVED statistics show an overall decrease in the number of prior learning assessments being completed. Although the overall assessment numbers are declining, FTE's are increasing, which indicates an increase in the average number of credits being awarded per assessment. These assessments occurred most commonly in Teaching Intensive Universities, however, the number of prior learning assessment decreased in Teaching Intensive Universities since the 2013/14 fiscal year.

Health programs are the most common program for prior learning assessment, with a significant gap before the next most common programs: Human & Social Services and Business & Management. This data is slightly different from the top programs surveyed through interviews and website data, as Human & Social Services is the most common; however, the top three program areas are the same.

This analysis of the AVED statistics is a preliminary review, further analysis of this data would provide beneficial insight into prior learning assessment trends.

In conclusion, the results of this research indicate PLAR policy, credit availability, processes, information availability, and enrollment are mixed. For many PLAR programs, the policy is dated and often decentralized. In addition, there are, at times, inconsistencies between website information, policy information, and information shared via interviews for this project. Credit availability varies greatly, and credit transferability is weak, with just 44% of PSIs accepting PLAR credit from other schools. PLAR processes (types of PLAR, assessment methods, and student support) are also highly diverse amongst the PSIs studied for this report. The one exception for PLAR processes is that the vast majority of PSIs reported using subject matter experts, primarily faculty members, to do PLAR assessments. This workload is often done off of the side of assessors' desk and is not included in their workload agreements. PLAR information availability is also mixed often with the information being difficult to find. Lastly, PLAR enrollment also varies.

Discussion

Prior learning assessment practices are utilized in various ways to varying extents across BC PSIs, with a lack of standardization across and even within the institutions; the lack of standardizations within the institutions can be illustrated by the department-by-departmental regulation of PLAR within institutions, most people who are interviewed could only speak to their specific department's prior learning assessment options. Another finding that illustrated the lack of standardization within institutions is when one PSI which is interviewed listed a prior learning assessment option on their website, but when interviewed they indicated that no PLAR whatsoever is available within that institution.

Prior learning assessment offerings are found to be widely varying across BC; ranging from no PLAR options to extensively developed PLAR policies and processes. Most institutions offered course-specific prior learning assessments. Consistencies occurred in the assessment models across PSIs; assessments are mainly completed by subject matter experts working within the program area with exams and portfolios being the most common methods of assessment.

Across BC PSIs there is a consistent lack of PLAR advertising, lack of PLAR enrollment tracking, a lack of defined student support as they complete PLAR, and a lack of central PLAR policy. Some PSIS attributed these to a lack of resources allocated to prior learning assessment, while some simply do not have a well-developed PLAR option. However, a significant majority of the PSI utilize prior learning assessment to one extent to another.

PLAR Recommendations

So, what does the future of PLAR look like? From these responses prior learning assessment appears to be at varying stages across BC PSIs, with differing visions for the future of PLAR.

In the interviews, participants are asked if their institution had any future PLAR plans. They responded with a range of answers, such as; no future PLAR plans, (two institutions which answered similarly, cited a lack of resources preventing them from expanding PLAR options). Another response is that they are in preliminary discussions about PLAR or updating their current PLAR policies. Other institutions had responses that indicted more developed PLAR options, such as: creating a more centralized PLAR model within the institution, commencing PLAR pathway/transfer options with other institutions and even considering developing a 3-credit portfolio development course for prior learning assessment students.

Prior learning assessment in BC is currently fragmented and inconsistent, although the existing websites and policies suggest that there are foundations in place. The lack of advertising to students indicates that PLAR, while in place, is not in practice, and not being fully utilized within institutions.

Limitations

This study is limited by the sample size in multiple ways. The current study does not include all PSIs offering PLAR, it does not include private institutions in BC, which also have prior learning assessment options. Another way the sample is limited is by the interviews; we are not able to connect with all the PSIs for an interview. The interviews are also limited due to the departmentalized nature of PLAR; one single person is not able to speak to the whole institution's PLAR options and we could not speak to every department in every institution.

Aside from the interviews, information availability presented a limitation, as not all information about PLAR is publicly available.

Another limitation is that there is a limited shared vocabulary for PLAR across PSIs, so the terms used to collect data and represent results in this study, such as flexible assessment versus course-based, may be interpreted differently, potentially impacting communication of results.

These factors limit the scope and generalizability of data collected.

Future Research suggestions

There is a need for more research in the area of prior learning assessment. Future research could address the limitations of this study, for example, to include more post-secondary institutions and go beyond the rage of this study to include comparisons across Canadian post-secondary.

This AVED data is available, but is it being fully utilized? Further research into the AVED statistics could provide valuable insights into enrollment and program trends. Research into best prior learning assessment practices could be important to the development of PLAR as it becomes more widely utilized. Studying assessment methods and the common practices and good practices are. Studying student resources; what are they, what could they be, and what defines a good student resource? Future research into the impact of prior learning assessment on students' educational success, career development and life would provide unique insights into long term benefits of PLAR.

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Appendix

Website Review Template

Institution public information:	Y/N	Other	Description
Information Availability			
Provide clear and freely available information, written in plain language, in both print and digital media?			(E.g. landing page, website materials)
Identify the value and/or benefits of PLAR?			(E.g. list benefits of PLAR and to whom they apply)
Uses plain language to ensure clear understanding for all candidates. Transparency providing information.			(Per CAPLA guidelines "Reduce barriers…" Transparency)
Offer resources for staff/other institutions?			(E.g. SFU references BCIT PLAR page)
Application/Admission			
Outline registration / application process?			
Outline applicant requirements / admission requirements?			(E.g. what makes a good PLAR applicant?)
Develop awareness of required forms?			(Link to forms)
Costs Associated			
Clearly explain costs associated?			(What does PLAR cost? If shown, why – e.g. correlate with course fees or per credit?)
Explain refunds?			(Do they? What if credit award is denied or student withdraws?)
PLAR Processes			
Identify the multiple streams of PLAR offered?			(List – if needed describe)
Clearly describe steps of the PLAR process?			(What are they? Beginning, timeline, deadlines etc.)
Specific programs offering PLAR?			(Is the PLAR at this institution limited to specific courses/programs? List)
Policies related to PLAR			(Link to PLAR policies)
Explain Withdrawal process?			(Can students withdraw?)
Offer PLAR course/evaluations online?			(E.g. online assessment, online course)
Provide resources?			(Link to – examples or templates)
Explain roles of those involved in the process in the institution?			(E.g. advising, registration, support, assessment and feedback. List)
Where in the institution is PLAR housed?			(Which department assesses / creates policy?)
Assessment/Credit Award			
Describe how credit is assessed/awarded?			(Assessment processes/methods)
Explain limits for credit earned?			(e.g. "up to 50% of degree")
Explain the appeal process?			(Policies? – Link to)
Transferability of Credits			
How are PLAR credits recognized on transcripts?			(Contribute to GPA, indicated as PLAR? Etc.)
Accept PLAR credits from other institutions?			(Also interview Q – if listed online as well, great)
Are PLAR credits transferable to other institutions?			(– also interview Q)
Contact Information			
Student Contact/Referral			(Who are students recommended to contact regarding the process?)
Potential Contact for Interview:			(Conducting phone interview with?)

Interview Questions

Policies
- o Does your institution actively promote PLAR? (E.g. advertising, advisor referrals)
- o How are PLAR processes and policies shared with the students?
- o Which streams of PLAR does your institution offer?
    - o i.e. Does your institution grant credits towards specific courses, blocks towards program credits, flexible assessment or advanced placement?
- o Where is PLAR housed/located within the institution?
- o Who conducts the credit award assessments?
- o What are the credit award limits?
    - o Upper Level or Lower Level credit distinctions? (limits, ranges etc.)
- o Who do students contact to begin the PLAR process?
- o Does your institution offer support as students work through PLAR?
    - ▪ Do you have a course/module for students considering PLAR? (pre-PLAR)
    - ▪ Do you offer a course/module as students go through PLAR? (during-PLAR)
- o Does your institution have any future PLAR plans?

Transferability
- o Does your institution accept PLAR credits from other institutions?
- o How is PLAR indicated on a transcript? (e.g. Noted as PLAR, graded, count towards GPA?)

Students
Demographics

- o Gender/Age
    - o Avg/distribution
- o Top programs students going through PLAR are enrolled in?

Enrollment

- o How many students do you have going through the PLAR process currently?
    - ▪ How many are full-time equivalent?
    - ▪ How many are in each stream?
- o How many students completed the PLAR process last year?
    - ▪ How many in each stream?
- o How many students do you expect to have complete PLAR this year?
- o What is the student success rate when completing PLAR? (How many that start the process receive credit?)
- o What is the average credit award that students are students receiving?
- o Have you noticed any year-to-year trends in PLAR enrollment/completion?

Fees
- o What is the PLAR fee structure?
    - ▪ At what point in the process do students pay the fee?
    - ▪ Is the fee per-credit, per-course, a set cost, or other?
    - ▪ Offer refunds?