



A LEADING POLYTECHNIC
COMMITTED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Applied Financial Services

PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition)



Candidate Guide

A LEADING POLYTECHNIC COMMITTED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

www.nait.ca

Copyright

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology – May 2013

No part of the work(s) herein may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanical including photocopying, recording, taping of information and retrieval systems – without written consent of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Acknowledgements

Adapted with permission from SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology)

The Applied Financial Services program is dedicated to removing barriers and broadening the access to programs at NAIT. NAIT recognizes that knowledge and skills are gained through a variety of processes including life and work experiences that may align with courses within our programs. We are committed to supporting a community in which learners will receive appropriate credit or recognition for prior learning.

Developed by program	December 1, 2014			
Revised	January 28, 2015	November 29, 2016		
Web ready – RPL office	February 2, 2015			



Table of Contents

Why consider a PLAR assessment?	4
What are the PLAR options?	4
How many courses can be challenged through PLAR in the Applied Financial Services program?	5
Is PLAR available at any time of the year?	5
Which courses are PLAR ready?	6
Is it easier to challenge a course through PLAR – OR – take the course?	7
Methods of assessing prior learning	7
If I live out of town, do I have to travel to the NAIT main campus to do PLAR?	7
What services or resources can I access if I have a disability?	8
Are there other methods to gain NAIT course credits for prior learning?	8
What are the implications of receiving PLAR or Transfer Credit for my full time student status?	8
The PLAR Process	9
Guiding principles for developing a PLAR evidence file	10
Types of evidence	10
How long will it take to prepare evidence for PLAR?	11
Steps to complete a self-audit	11
Self-audit Guide(s)	12
BANK 1190 – Work Placement	12
Appendix A: Title Page	14
Appendix B: Employer Validation Letter	15
Employer Validation Checklist	16
Appendix C: Evidence Binder Cover Page	18



Why consider a PLAR assessment?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to the combination of flexible ways of evaluating peoples' lifelong learning, both formal and informal against a set of established standards. You can receive academic credit for your relevant lifelong learning. The Applied Financial Services program recognizes prior learning in a number of ways.

We recognize:

- Previous formal learning from a recognized post-secondary institution through transfer of credit and credential recognition.
- Previous non-formal and in-formal learning through a comprehensive prior learning assessment and recognition process (PLAR).

What are the PLAR options?

To be eligible for PLAR, a candidate must have first applied and have been formally accepted to a NAIT credit program (the non-refundable tuition deposit has been paid). Open Studies students are **not** eligible to apply for PLAR. Please note that your PLAR request will be reviewed within 6 weeks of receipt of the request form, all supporting documents (in English) and verification of fee payment. Submit your PLAR request early!

Individual Course Challenge

If you have at least one year of successful experience in the banking field, and have learned the skills and knowledge for **one or more** of the Applied Financial Services courses, you may apply to be assessed for each applicable course. Please note that NAIT has a 50% residency criterion. Applicants can only receive credit for up to 50% of any NAIT credit program (See [NAIT Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) under **Residence Requirements**). Students should enrol in their courses until official confirmation has been received that credit was granted.

Fees:

- The PLAR evaluation fee is \$150.00 **per** course challenge.
- The course assessment fees must be paid prior to submitting a PLAR request.
- All fees are non-refundable.
- Call NAIT and ask to speak to a Student Service Centre Representative at 780-471-6248 or Toll Free at 1-877-333-6248 or AskNAIT@nait.ca



How many courses can be challenged through PLAR in the Applied Financial Services program?

Currently we have 1 out of 10 certificate courses with PLAR challenges available. Credit is granted per course – partial credit will not be granted. Please note that NAIT has a 50% residency criterion. Applicants can only receive credit for up to 50% of any NAIT credit program. (See [NAIT Academic Regulations and Procedures](#) under **Residence Requirements**)

Is PLAR available at any time of the year?

Contact the program at AFS@nait.ca for more details. Your request will be reviewed within 6 weeks of receipt of the application form, all supporting documents (in English) and verification of fee payment. Submit your PLAR request early!

Please Note: You should enrol in your courses until official confirmation has been received that credit was granted. The program sends an email notification that the application has been processed.

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Contact the program area with any questions or concerns related to the assessment results. [Appeal process](#) available.
- Notify the program if they have decided to decline a course credit that has been granted. Any changes must be requested before the [add/drop deadline](#).



Which courses are PLAR ready?

Applied Financial Services Program Profile			
COURSE CODE	COURSE NAME	PLAR Challenge(s) available through program	PLAR Challenge(s) not available
BANK1190	Work Placement	✓	
ACCT1115	Introductory Accounting I	*See Note	
CMIS1150	Introduction to Information Technology	*See Note	
COMM1101	Communications I	*See Note	
ECON1112	Macroeconomics	*See Note	
FNCE1125	Introduction to Finance	*See Note	
MARK1130	Introduction to Marketing	*See Note	
ORGB1135	Organizational Behaviour	*See Note	

***Note:** Currently, BANK1190 is the only course available for PLAR in the Applied Financial Services program. The other courses (ACCT1115, CMIS1150, COMM1101, ECON1112, FNCE1125, MARK1130, and ORGB1135) are available for PLAR through the [Business Administration - Year 1](#). Please refer to the section on Advanced Credit/PLAR Candidate Guide on the “About the Program” page for further details.

For assistance contact NAIT and ask to speak to an Academic Advising Centre Representative at 780-471-6248 (Toll Free: 1-877-333-6248) or askNAIT@nait.ca



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 to 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:

- Product validation and assessment
- Challenge exam
- Standardized tests
- Performance evaluations (including skill demonstrations, role plays, clinical applications, case studies)
- Interviews and oral exams
- Equivalency (evaluations of learning from non-credit training providers)
- Evidence or personal documentation files (providing evidence of learning from life and work experiences and accomplishments)

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

Depending on the mode of assessment, there may be times that you will need to meet with the program on campus. However, we will try to keep travel to a minimum.



What services or resources can I access if I have a disability?

Identify any possible needs related to your disability during your PLAR Audit meeting with the program. If you have a disability and want to know more about what services or resources you may be able to access for your PLAR assessment, please contact [Learning Services](#).

Are there other methods to gain NAIT course credits for prior learning?

Transfer Credit and Credential Recognition

Yes, NAIT may grant credit for previous post-secondary training from a recognized institution that is similar in content, objectives, and evaluation standards to NAIT training. Transfer of credit is different from the PLAR process. Transfer credit and credential recognition guidelines may be found at:

<http://www.nait.ca/86612.htm>

Please Note: This process should be completed prior to your PLAR challenge. If these credits cannot be used for transfer credit or credential recognition, you may be able to use these accredited courses as part of your evidence for your PLAR challenge.

If more information is required, please contact:

- A NAIT Student Service Centre Representative at 780-471-6248 (Toll Free: 1-877-333-6248) or email AskNAIT@nait.ca
- Program Advanced Credit contact (www.nait.ca under programs & courses and contacts)

What are the implications of receiving PLAR or Transfer Credit for my full time student status?

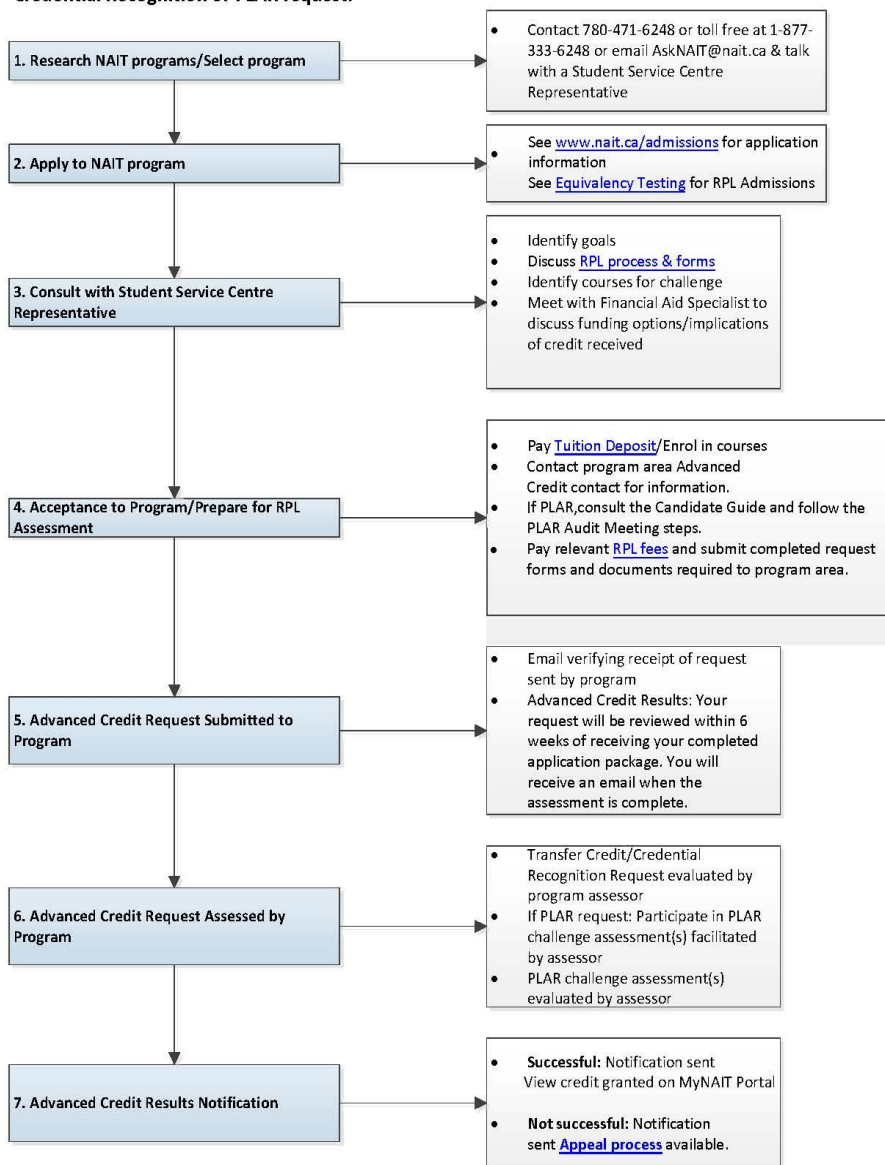
While RPL can mean fewer classes to take and pay for, students should be aware that the definition of full-time status for Financial Aid may be different than NAIT's definition of full-time status. Questions regarding financial assistance should be directed to the [NAIT Student Service Centre](#). A student who qualifies for advanced credit should review the [NAIT Academic Regulations and Procedures](#), Academic Honors and if necessary, seek further consultation with Advising or Program staff since eligibility for semester honors, Dean's Honor Roll, an honors diploma/certificate or awards may be affected.



The PLAR Process

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process at NAIT

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) evaluates the learning that people have acquired in their lives. Post-secondary institutions, use RPL to evaluate this learning for advanced credit purposes within a program of study. NAIT grants advanced credit through the assessment of [transfer credit](#), [credential recognition](#), and [prior learning assessment and recognition](#) (PLAR). **Please note you must be accepted to your program and have paid the non-refundable tuition deposit before submitting a Transfer Credit, Credential Recognition or PLAR request.**



Revised August 10, 2016



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 (see program home page Advanced Credit Contact) for your program **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 five 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.
3. Self-evidence – what you say about your knowledge and experience.

Ensure that you provide full evidence to your Applied Financial Services PLAR 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):

- detailed resume
- workplace validations
- videotapes/SKYPE

All documents that are submitted to NAIT may be returned to the student after the final results have been given and the advanced credit appeal deadline of 10 days has passed. A copy of transcripts and certificates may be included in your evidence file, but original transcripts that were submitted at the time of application to NAIT will be available online. Be prepared to show original parchments 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 (**at least 80%**). 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 4** – of *The PLAR Process* for prior learning assessment. Select [Program Advanced Credit Contact \(PLAR\)](#) to book consultation.



Self-audit Guide(s)

BANK 1190 – Work Placement

This course provides the banking student valuable on the job experience where the student can learn more in the financial environment and strengthen the skills that he or she has acquired. The student is placed with a suitable employer for a full time employment experience during the month of April. This is a pass/fail course based on a satisfactory student report indicating the financial institution deems the student employable after the completion of the work placement.

Credit unit(s): 3

Equivalent course(s): N/A

Prerequisite(s): BANK 1136 and BANK 1137

BANK 1190 – Work Placement						
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. Demonstrate acceptable work performance to comply with the needs of the financial institution.						
▪ Attention to detail with minimal errors						
▪ Work well within a team based environment						
▪ Provide advice and/or recommendations to clients						
2. Apply effective communication skills in delivering superior customer service.						
▪ Possess strong customer service skills (I.e. Can do attitude)						
▪ Resolve customer concerns in an efficient and effective manner (ensuring customer loyalty is maintained)						

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

Requirements

The PLAR candidate will submit the following evidence to support meeting of course learning outcomes one and two. *Note to Assessor: Please check off all applicable evidence.*

Please include the following in your evidence file

- ☐ **Binder** – separated into sections and each section is clearly identified as to what is within the section.
- ☐ A **cover page** as the first page of the binder that identifies the student name and course the candidate is applying to PLAR. Refer to [Appendix A](#).
- ☐ **Employer validation checklist** (validated by the employer)
- ☐ Signed **letter of validation** on company letterhead.
- ☐ A **personal resume** detailing the relevant work history of the candidate.
- ☐ If applicable, any **additional items** to support the evidence file.

2. Demonstration/Role Play

There will be 2 role plays required based on customer service and advice opportunity scenarios provided by the assessor. These scenarios are based outcomes one and two. One hour will be allowed for each scenario including candidate preparation time.

3. Structured interview based on situational and behavioural questions

This will be a five question interview of approximately 30 minutes comprising questions directly related to BANK1190 course learning outcomes. The candidate must be able to successfully identify all of the points required for each question asked.

Resources

The following scenario is an example of what will be used in the role play:

1. A common customer scenario that allows for an advice opportunity to be generated, would be provided to the prospective student they would be given some time to prepare approximately 30 min. An Instructor would act as the customer and another Instructor would be observing the interaction.

An example of a customer service scenario:

A customer comes in with several cheques totaling over \$20,000.00. The customer mentions that she has to deposit them before she loses them. The CSR asks if she will be using the money any time soon and if she would be interested in hearing about the interest she could earn on the money.



Appendix A: Title Page

Applied Financial Services

BANK1190 Work Placement Practicum

Student name:

Date:



Appendix B: Employer Validation Letter

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Instructions: The employment validation letter provides a statement of verification of employment in a setting relevant to the course(s) being challenged through PLAR. 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 Applied Financial Services.

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

I 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



Employer Validation Checklist

Applied Financial Services

Name: _____

BANK 1190

Student ID: _____

Work Placement

Date: _____

Completion date: _____

Employee/PLAR candidates for the challenge of BANK 1190 must have this form completed by their direct supervisor/employer. The supervisor/employer is responsible for ensuring the employer validation checklist accurately reflects your abilities in each area identified.

Directions: On the following page(s) there is a list of skill and knowledge factors that the employee is required to achieve in completing BANK 1190. Please validate the employee/candidate's performance by placing a ✓ in the appropriate column. Add any clarifications/observations in the "Optional Comments" section. Sign and date below.

Mastery: Able to demonstrate it well enough to teach it to someone else. Competent: Work independently to apply the outcome. Functional: Some assistance in using the outcome. Learning: Developing skills and knowledge for this area. None: No experience with the outcome.	Mastery	Competent	Functional	Learning	None
1. Demonstrate acceptable work performance to comply with the needs of the financial institution.					
• Attention to detail with minimal errors					
• Work well within a team based environment					
• Provide advice and/or recommendations to clients					
2. Apply effective communication skills in delivering superior customer service					
• Possess strong customer service skills (I.e. Can do attitude)					
• Resolve customer concerns in an efficient and effective manner (ensuring customer loyalty is maintained)					



Note: The employer/ supervisor may be contacted by the NAIT assessor to confirm/clarify information provided.

Comments:

Employee information *(please print)*

Dates of employment: _____ to _____

(dd/mm/yy)

(dd/mm/yy)

Employment description: Full-time ☐ Hours per week: _____

Part- time ☐ Hours per week: _____

Position(s) held _____

Candidate information *(please print)*

Name _____ Student number _____

I affirm that I am the person who has performed those items checked on this checklist. I acknowledge that the performance checklists used are solely for the purpose of skills assessment for the NAIT Applied Financial Services requirements, and are not intended to replace or modify company operating or safety procedures, and may not be appropriate for use in all circumstances.

PLAR candidate's signature _____ Date _____

Employer/Supervisor's information *(please print)*

Name _____ Phone _____

Organization/employer _____

Address _____

I affirm that I am the person who has administered this checklist, and that I have conducted this candidate's skills assessment with integrity. I also affirm that the above named candidate is the person whose performance I evaluated, and that the above named person performed the checked tasks at the indicated level without assistance from me or any other person.

Employer/supervisor's signature _____ Date _____



Appendix C: Evidence Binder Cover Page

Evidence File for: _BANK1190

Program Name: Applied Financial Services

Student Name:

Address:

City:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

NAIT Student ID:

I attest that the enclosed evidence are correct and have been compiled by myself. I attest that I am the person named in this application and the evidence unless otherwise signified.

Signature: _____

Date: _____