



A LEADING POLYTECHNIC
COMMITTED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Occupational Health and Safety Diploma Program

PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition)



Candidate Guide

A LEADING POLYTECHNIC COMMITTED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

www.nait.ca



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Northern Alberta Institute of Technology – May 2013

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The Occupational Health and Safety 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.

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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 Occupational Health and Safety 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, an applicant 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 PLAR application form, all supporting documents (in English) and verification of fee payment. Submit your PLAR request early!

Individual Course Challenge

If you have one year full-time or two years part-time successful experience in the field of Occupational Health and Safety and have learned the skills and knowledge for **one or more** of the Occupational Health and Safety 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 an Advising 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 Occupational Health and Safety program?

Currently, we have one diploma course 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 administrative support (OHSD@nait.ca) for more details. Your 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!

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?

Occupational Health and Safety Program Profile			
COURSE CODE	COURSE NAME	PLAR Challenge(s) available through program	PLAR Challenge(s) not available
COMM1111	Technology and Communications	✓	
	Please see Note		

Note No other first- or second-year courses are available.

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)
- Videos

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 [Services for Students with Disabilities](#).

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 Academic Advising 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?

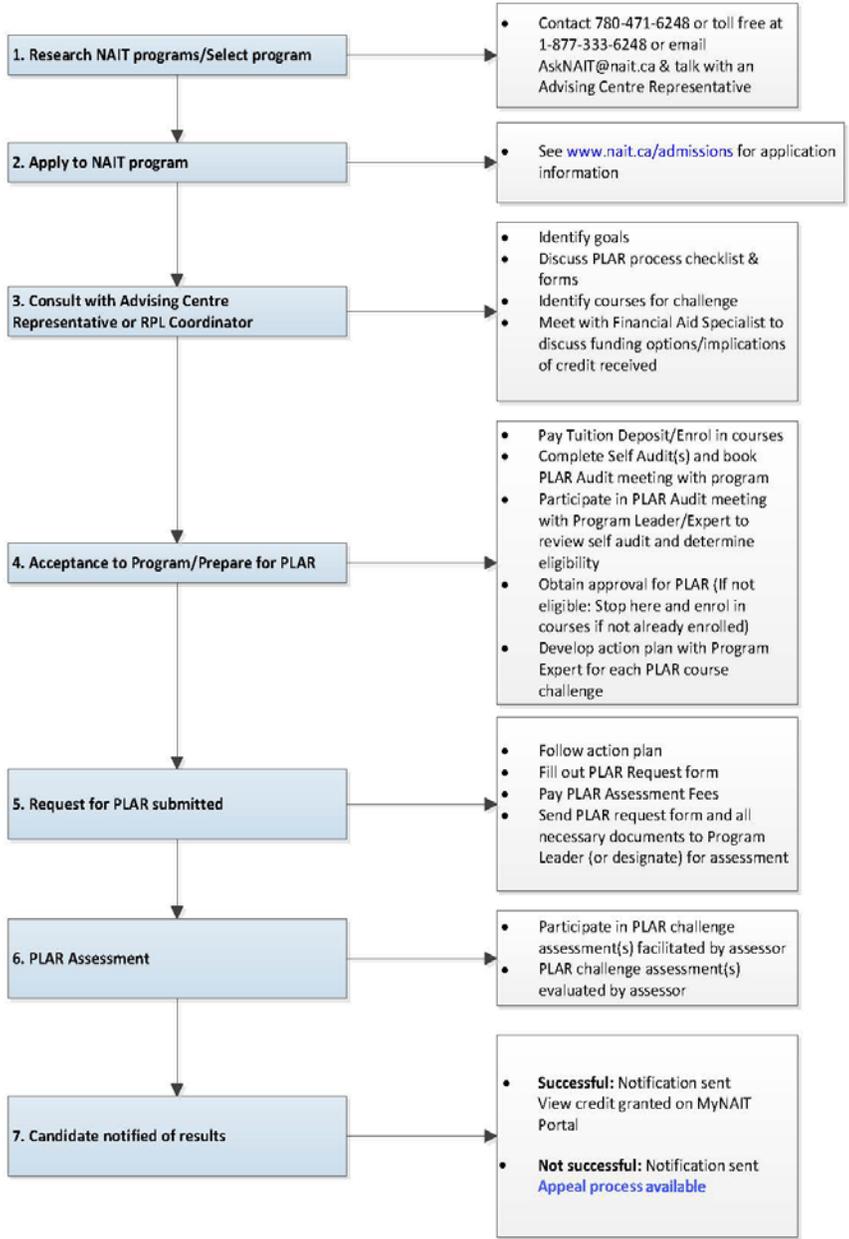
While RPL can mean fewer classes to take and pay for, students should be aware that the definition of full-time status for Financial Aid may be different than NAIT's definition of full-time status. Questions regarding financial assistance should be directed to the [NAIT Financial Aid Office](#). A student 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

Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR) Process

PLAR is the process of identifying, assessing, and recognizing skills and knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning for a specific goal such as advanced credit.



Revised January 5, 2015



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.
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 Occupational Health and Safety 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):

- written descriptions and analysis
- experience (activity) outlines
- observations
- workplace validations
- work samples
- videotapes

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)

COMM1111

This course is for the Occupational Health and Safety Program. Technology and Communications is a foundational course that introduces the students to business communication skills and strategies, and basic computer software skills using the Microsoft Office Suite. The students will utilize these skills to compose, produce, and deliver effective business reports, correspondence, and presentations. As well, the student will learn basic file management in MS Windows™ environment. The skills developed in this course are used and enhanced throughout the two-year program.

The standard for grammar, spelling, punctuation, number style, etc. is based on the Gregg Reference Manual. Please note: The level of Mastery in conjunction with the use of the *Gregg Reference Manual* is being able to use it well enough to teach it to someone else.

Credit unit(s): 4.5

Equivalent course(s): None

Prerequisite(s): None

COMM1111 Technology and Communication 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.	Mastery	Competent	Functional	Learning	None
1. Compose effective business e-mails, memos, and letters, based on sound communication theory and techniques that support corporate OHS management.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Apply and adapt the appropriate writing strategy based on the content and the intended recipient. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Select an appropriate communication channel. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Utilize grammar and punctuation rules. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Write clear, concise sentences. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Compose clear, concise, coherent paragraphs. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Use MSWord to prepare business correspondence and/or utilize MSWord features (e.g. tables). 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Create/Utilize a properly formatted table to present content. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Format an e-mail, memo, and letter. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill - Proofread and edit business correspondence. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept – basic grammar, punctuation, number format, capitalization, abbreviation, spelling, and word usage rules as they apply to business writing 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept – components of well written business documents, including e-mails, memos, and letters so that the documents can be adapted to fit the needs of the reader and/or situation 					



COMM1111 Technology and Communication 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.	Mastery	Competent	Functional	Learning	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept – the different writing strategies that are used to insure that different message content (e.g. good news, bad news) is understood by the reader. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept – how to best use MSOffice to create different business documents (what programs are best for the content that needs to be presented) 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept – the proper formatting for different business documents and for the different components of business correspondence (e.g. tables) 					
<p>2. Research and prepare effective business reports using recognized research methodology, reliable sources, and appropriate documentation that support OHS findings and/or recommendations.</p>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Apply and adapt the appropriate writing strategy based on the content and the intended recipient of the report 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Utilize grammar and punctuation rules. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Write clear, concise sentences. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Compose clear, concise, coherent paragraphs. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Organize content of report based on desired outcome. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Utilize techniques for presenting content clearly and coherently. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Use MSWord to prepare the various components of a report (including, but not limited to, transmittal letters, tables of contents, tables of illustrations, resource pages/bibliographies, and appendices) 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Use MSWord features to enhance a report (e.g. bolding, formatting, bullets, enumeration, tables, or graphics) 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Create/Utilize a properly formatted table to present report content 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Use MSExcel to produce graphics for a report 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Format a report according to APA standards 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills - Proofread and edit a report 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concept – basic grammar, punctuation, number format, capitalization, abbreviation, spelling, and word usage rules as they apply to business reports 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Components of the different kinds of business reports 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Report writing strategies based on content, approach, and intended recipient 					



COMM1111 Technology and Communication 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.	Mastery	Competent	Functional	Learning	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Research sources and strategies to support intent and reliability of report 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Proper formatting for different components of a business report. 					
3. Prepare and deliver effective presentations utilizing appropriate props and/or electronic technology to relay information to an audience.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Apply and adapt the appropriate presentation strategy based on the content and the intended recipient 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Utilize grammar and punctuation rules in both presentation and presentation tools 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Compose and deliver clear, concise, coherent presentations 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Organize content based on desired outcome 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Utilize techniques for presenting content clearly and effectively 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Utilize MSPowerPoint to create a properly formatted presentation 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Create a PowerPoint to complement an oral presentation 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Proofread and edit presentation and PowerPoint 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – basic grammar, punctuation, number format, capitalization, abbreviation, spelling, and word usage rules as they apply to business writing 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Components of a successful presentation 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept – Oral presentation strategies and techniques— content, approach, and delivery 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept - PowerPoint do's and don'ts 					
4. Apply research methods and APA citation criteria in report writing					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Select/validate reliable research sources 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Conduct research using library resources and research techniques 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Utilize appropriate APA formatting for in-text citations 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills - Create a properly APA-formatted "References" page for reports or presentations 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts - Research sources and strategies 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts - Applying APA formatting and citation rules 					



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.

Experience with MSOffice products must be at least with MSOffice 2010, preferably with MSOffice 2013. Experience in composing letters and memos must be within the last five years, and creating reports must be within the last five years.

Evidence File

- Letter of employment verifying number of years of employment in which skills have been used and on what time basis (rarely, once-a-week, monthly)
- Electronic Sample of a Business Letter
- Video (optional) of presentation
- Electronic sample of APA formatted report (not .pdf) done for a business/safety purpose
- Electronic sample of PowerPoint (not .pdf) created for business/safety purpose
- Certifications from non-credit sources indicating training in MSOffice

Challenge Exam

- Four 2-hour, timed challenge exams for MSOffice in MSWord, Excel, and PowerPoint.
 - MSWord – Formatting of a letter
 - MSWord – Formatting a report to APA standards, including Table of Contents, In-text citations, and Works Cited (Resources) page(s)
 - Excel – Creation of an Excel workbook, including title pages, insertion of formulas and functions, and creation of simple graphs based on calculated content.
 - MS PowerPoint – creating a business quality PowerPoint, including inserting sound bytes, graphics, and animations.
- Pass mark is 60 percent in each exam.

Resources

The Gregg Reference Manual, 2010, 9th Canadian Edition; Sabin, Miller, Sine, & Strashok; McGraw-Hill Ryerson



Evidence File

Letter From Employer Attesting to Computer Skills (or the candidate can complete a challenge exam)

1. Letter of employment verifying the following information:
 - a. The number of years of employment in which MSWord, Access, Excel, and PowerPoint have been used
 - b. On what time basis the skills were used (e.g. rarely, once-a-week, monthly).
2. The letter must be on company letterhead and signed by the supervisor who has witnessed the skills.

Electronic Sample of a Business Letter (or the candidate can complete a challenge exam)

1. Sample of a business letter composed and formatted by the candidate.
 - a. Sample must be on letterhead of company for whom the letter was written.
2. Letter must be saved as a .doc or .docx (not .pdf)
3. Sample will be evaluated based on accepted business letter writing (Appendix D).

Letter from Employer Attesting to Presentation Skills (or a video of a work-related presentation)

1. Letter of employment verifying the following information:
 - a. The number of years of employment in the candidate has been doing presentations
 - b. On what time basis the skills were used (e.g. rarely, once-a-week, monthly).
 - c. A completed checklist of presentation skills (Appendix A)

Video of Work-Related Presentation

1. Electronic video of work-related presentation.
2. Video will be assessed based on the checklist of presentation skills (Appendix A).

Electronic Sample of a Research Report Using APA Formatting (or the candidate can complete a challenge exam)

1. Sample researched report that was created and saved in MSWord (not saved as a .pdf).
2. Sources for the researched report must be identified in the report and on a Reference page using APA style.
3. Report will be evaluated against an APA report rubric (Appendix B)

Electronic Sample of a PowerPoint Presentation (or candidate can complete a challenge exam)

1. Electronic sample of a PowerPoint created for business/safety purposes.
2. PowerPoint must be saved as a .pptx (not .pdf).
3. PowerPoint will be evaluated against a PowerPoint rubric (Appendix C)

Appendix A Evaluation Rubric – Oral Presentation

Speaker: _____

Length of Presentation: _____

Introduction

- captured audience attention (Method used: _____)
- purpose clearly stated
- clear overview of main points to be covered

Comments:

Needs Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent

Body

- logical flow, well organized
- clear transitions from one section to another; clear beginning and end to each section
- discussion related to topic and section
- terminology understandable or explained

Comments:

Needs Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent

Conclusion

- related back to discussion and purpose
- main points summarized
- clear definite ending

Comments:

Needs Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent

DELIVERY	Needs Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent
Volume - loud enough to be heard at back of room - no fading or rising voice at end of sentences				
Tone – varied, not monotone (reading)				
Distractors - no hesitation sounds (uh, um) - no repeated slang (like, you know, so) - accent did not compromise understanding of message				
Eye contact - on all audience most of the time - no reading from script or screen				
Posture - includes gestures and natural movement - no inappropriate/distracting movements (legs crossed, hands in pocket, playing with hair, scratching) - faced audience; did not turn back to audience				
Grammar – no grammar or pronunciation errors				
Knowledge - referred to notes/text on screen, but did not read from either - knew topic well, no hesitations or loss of place in presentation				
Use of support materials (e.g. PowerPoint) - could bring up presentation on computer - knew slides and could speak beyond slide content - referred to slides but kept faced and talked to audience				

Appendix B Production 1 – Report

Name: _____

	2	Document saved as directed (.docx or .doc)
Cover Page		
	2	Title of report
	2	Writer's name, date
	2	Appropriate Title Page format
	2	Running head (Header)
	2	Page number (Header)
TOC		
	2	Appropriate header (APA)
	2	Footer with writer's name
	2	TOC Title
	4	Levels of headings clearly identified (TOC created with MSWord References)
	2	Dot leader tabs used
First Page		
	2	Title appropriately
All Pages		
	2	No extra paragraph spacing
	4	Paragraphs formatted properly (depending on spacing)
	3	Spacing is appropriate
	2	Headings are used and formatted correctly
	2	Ordinals removed from headings
	2	Appropriate items are bulleted (if any)
	2	Bullets are formatted correctly
	2	In-text citations are where required
	3	In-text citations are formatted according to APA
	2	Margins are correct
	2	Text and headers/footers in appropriate font
	2	Acceptable font
	2	Text aligned appropriately
Reference Page		
	2	Title – References (centered)
	3	All sources are entered
	3	All sources are formatted according to APA
Total		

Appendix C Production PowerPoint

Name: _____

MARK		Criteria & Comments
2		Theme & colour is business-like
2		Easily viewed in large room
1		One theme throughout
5		Minimum of five slides
2		Layout 1
2		Layout 2
2		Layout 3
2		Footer with name and slide number
2		One animated text slide
3		One appropriate slide transition throughout
1		One sound byte
1		One graphic – cited and linked to topic
15		Key points only – no complete sentences, no long phrases unless quotes
/40		
		Spelling errors, word usage errors, punctuation errors (-2 for each different)
		Grammar errors (-2 for each different)
		Consistency in capitalization (-2 if inconsistent on more than two slides)
/40		Total

Business Letter

Writer _____ (Please print clearly)

Mark Sheet Criteria	Instructors Comments
<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening paragraph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Direct opening ◆ Indicates what you want (generally) as a polite request • Body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identifies any background information necessary to clarify the request ◆ Provides any additional requests • Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Requests answer by specific date and tells why ◆ Expresses appreciation 	/3
<p>Content (-2 for each error/omission to a max of -15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courteous attitude (please/thank you if appropriate). Makes requests, not orders. • Complete • Consistent (voice—active; verb tense) • Clear • Considerate (“you” attitude) • Concise • Coherent – ideas linked together, logical • Concrete – avoids relative pronouns (some, many, few) and relative times (tomorrow, next week) 	/15
<p>Correctness (-1 for each type of error to a max. of -10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling, typo, word usage, word choice • sentence structure (fragment, dangling or misplaced modifiers, parallel structure) • punctuation • grammar (noun/verb agreement, pronoun/antecedent agreement) • capitalization • number style 	/10
<p>Overall Impression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional submission 	<p>An exceptional submission is one that not only is nearly error free, but also presents the information using a variety of sentence styles and is concise and clear.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">/2</p>
Final Mark	/30
<p>Letter Format (-2/error)</p>	/10