

TITLE: **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**
(Relates to EL-8: Curriculum and Instruction)

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2000

REVISED DATE: July 1, 2002

PRACTICE:

Red Deer College (RDC) recognizes prior learning of skills, knowledge or competencies that have been acquired through work, formal, informal, and non-formal education or training, self study or volunteer activity in the form of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). RPL can take various forms, and the associated outcomes can be used for a variety of purposes relevant to the individual's educational program at RDC.

Red Deer College supports the guiding principles with respect to the recognition of prior learning, which have been developed and endorsed by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (April 1996):

1. A student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated, nor should more transfer credit be granted than previous learning experiences would warrant for successful completion of the program.
2. Recognition of prior learning should be based on demonstrated learning.
3. Recognition of prior learning should be appropriate to the course or program in which it is accepted.
4. Recognition of prior learning should be consistent with the achievement levels required by the post-secondary program in which it is accepted.
5. Recognition of prior learning should be for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
6. Assessment of prior learning by post-secondary institutions should be made by content specialists, with external advice as necessary.
7. The College offers no assurance that a receiving institution will offer similar recognition of the student's prior learning experience. (Thus, upon transferring to another institution, the student may be required to take the course for which the College has awarded credit via recognition of prior learning.)

8. All materials submitted by applicants for Recognition of Prior Learning are considered confidential, in the same way as any student materials handled by the College, and are to be used only for the purposes for which they were submitted.
9. Prior Learning Assessment files are open to the applicant; assessors and others who may contribute material to the file will be advised of this.
10. Decisions regarding Recognition of Prior Learning can be appealed under the existing Red Deer College appeal policy.

PROCEDURE

RECOGNITION OF FORMAL POST-SECONDARY LEARNING:

In order to obtain recognition of formal learning, a student must provide relevant supporting documentation of an equivalent course (usually in the form of an official transcript) acceptable to the college of an equivalent course. Normally the Alberta or other provincial transfer guide(s) and academic calendar descriptions of courses will be used to determine if the course may be formally recognized. Recognition may also be granted for learning experiences which are equivalent to an identified Red Deer College course (i.e. practica or studio). In these cases, the student must provide documentation acceptable to the College.

1. Transfer Credit

Transfer credit is applicable for students who are bringing programs and courses from other post-secondary and educational institutions, at the post-secondary level.

OUTCOME: When students are granted transfer credit, this information will appear on their transcript as “TR”. Credit is granted but no grade assigned. If students are not eligible for transfer credit, they may elect to apply for Advanced Placement, a course Challenge, or Prior Learning Assessment (outlined below).

2. Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement recognizes learning that enables students to waive a prerequisite and register directly into a higher-level course, or acknowledges that the desired learning outcomes have been achieved in an equivalent course. Advanced Placement is applicable for students transferring courses across programs within Red Deer College.

OUTCOME: If a prerequisite or equivalent course is waived, no credit for the prerequisite or equivalent course is granted; however, the course requirement will be satisfied and “AP” will appear on the transcript for that course, no grade assigned.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR)

Credit obtained through the prior learning assessment process may acknowledge learning that takes place outside of the traditional classroom. Red Deer College recognizes prior learning of skills, knowledge or competencies that have been acquired through work, formal and informal education or training, self-study or volunteer activity.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the assessors of Red Deer College with any transcripts, course outlines, or descriptions, or any other documentation necessary to support the prior learning application. Assessment may take the form of, but not be limited to, any of the following, as required:

- A portfolio: written summary of learning gained from informal learning experiences;
- Letters from employers and/or associates that support the student's claim of skill mastery;
- Photos and/or videos that demonstrate skills and products;
- A list of references of people who can support the claims of mastery, within the context of the activity;
- A summary of group projects with a clear indication of skills mastered;
- Work assessment reports from the applicant's place of employment.
- Standardized tests: Paper and pencil or computerized tests may be used to assess theoretical or applied knowledge relevant to the RDC curricula being reviewed for credit.
- Skills assessment: Such an assessment will be a demonstration of skills within a prescribed environment. i.e. laboratory of practicum setting for the expressed purpose of assessing an individual's ability to meet learning outcome skills of an RDC course or program and obtain relevant RDC credit.
- Review of Employer-Based Training: Review of private or public sector-sponsored training programs – curriculum and learning outcomes will be compared with the content of those courses which may be considered to be equivalent to courses offered at RDC. Academic credit may be granted when the courses and equivalent components are found to be highly compatible.

Note: The assessors and the subject matter experts (Chairs and/or program instructors) will determine the manner in which the learning will be assessed and recognized. It may be through any of the following methods:

1. Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement recognizes learning that enables students to waive a prerequisite or equivalent course and register directly into a higher-level course.

Outcome: If a prerequisite or equivalent course is waived, no credit for that prerequisite is granted; however, "AP" will appear on the transcript for that course, no grade assigned.

2. Prior Learning Credit

Outcome: If credit is granted, PL will appear on the transcript, and no grade will be assigned.

3. Challenge Exam

A Challenge examination process may allow students to obtain a grade when prior learning is recognized.

Students applying for a challenge exam must supply the appropriate supporting documentation, as determined by the assessors, to the College outlining the learning experiences they feel qualify them to apply for the challenge. Upon approval of a Challenge process, the student must pay the requisite non-refundable Challenge fee, and register in the Challenge section of the course.

- a. Students granted the opportunity to challenge a course may be required to write essays, assignments, or exams, to undertake demonstrations or auditions, or to undergo other forms of final evaluations that may normally be required of students registered in the course. Upon completion of the course challenge, the grade earned will appear on the student's transcript.
- b. Students may not challenge an RDC course for which they have already received a passing grade. Students may challenge an RDC course which they have previously failed, if, subsequent to taking the course, they have obtained another learning experience elsewhere.
- c. Students may not challenge a course for which Advanced Placement, Prior Learning Credit or Transfer Credit has already been granted or which has been waived as a pre-requisite for a higher-level course.
- d. A challenge must be completed within the term in which the student is registered in the Challenge section of the course – before the last day of final exams for that term.

Outcome: Once the challenge is complete, the notation "Challenge" will be placed as a course comment underneath the course on the transcript; and a grade will also be assigned. If the student is unable to complete the Challenge exam before the last day of the final exams in the term in which they are registered for the Challenge, they may apply to Withdraw from the Challenge process. If a student is granted a withdrawal from the Challenge process, the notation "WD", with the Challenge comment will appear on the transcript.

GUIDELINES

1. Each department is responsible for outlining any restrictions in student access to Recognition of Prior Learning.
2. In order to receive recognition of prior learning by the College, the individual requesting the prior learning assessment must have already applied to the College and been admitted to a program.
3. To be eligible to receive RPL credit for a course in which they are currently registered, students must file Recognition of Prior Learning applications, on or before the Add/Drop date of the term in which they are registered for that course.
4. In order to qualify for an RDC program credential, students must complete 25% of the credit requirements for the credential through enrollment in RDC courses. If any Red Deer College program wishes to set a different residency requirement, it must have the prior approval of Academic Council.
5. A Recognition of Prior Learning assessment fee will be levied to support the assessment process.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Vice President Education

RESPONSIBILITY:

Assessment Services

Consultation for Review:

Students, Faculty, Academic Council

Standard Practice Review Date:

May 2004

Associated Standard Policy: