**Essential Skills Practitioner Training
(ESPT) Certificate Program**

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition
(PLAR)
Program Guide

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Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) Program Guide

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What is PLAR?

PLAR is an acronym for Prior Learning Assessment Recognition and is a process used to assess and recognize prior learning. Learning can occur in a number of informal and formal ways; PLAR provides a way to recognize this diversity by acknowledging competence with course equivalence. When learning is assessed as equivalent to the outcomes defined for a course, program or graduate profile, then equivalent course completion is awarded.

At Douglas College, students can use PLAR to achieve up to 75% of a credential. Successful PLAR will result in the award of non-credit CE courses. These courses lead to a Continuing Education Certificate.

Is PLAR for You?

By challenging courses in the ESPT certificate program through PLAR, you believe you have already learned and know the content of the course(s) and can demonstrate this. Many practitioners have taken related educational courses and workshops, or have experience working with Essential Skills. Our ESPT certificate informs employers, funders and educators that you have a high level of formal Essential Skills knowledge and training.

Challenging our courses through PLAR may be for you if you answer "yes" to most of the following questions:

- ❑ Do you currently work in the field of career development, employment counseling, education, workplace training, human resources etc., which has exposed you to Essential Skills for a minimum of one year?
- ❑ Do you feel confident that you know and can articulate the content of the ESPT course concepts through a portfolio and/or formal interview and/or written assignment?
- ❑ Are you prepared to make the commitment to learn about PLAR and to identify and document evidence of your knowledge, skills and abilities?
- ❑ Are you a self-directed learner?
- ❑ Are you actively pursuing growth in your field?

People who choose to PLAR courses in the ESPT program should know that it is not easy and they must feel confident in their knowledge and experience with Essential Skills to be successful.

Benefits of PLAR

- Successful candidates can earn up to 75% of an ESPT credential with significant savings of time and energy.
- Our PLAR process gives practitioners maximum credit for the Essential Skills knowledge and experience they already have.
- Savings on tuition costs.
- Complete your assessment from any location through internet chat software (Collaborate, Skype, Google Hangouts) or by email and phone.

ESPT PLAR Process

To assess a practitioner's prior learning, we currently apply two approaches as follows:

Equivalent Courses

For the individual who has taken equivalent courses, submission of the course syllabus and student transcript allows us to evaluate and determine if the link between course objectives and outcomes are consistent. For individuals with experience in Essential Skills, the ESPT PLAR Assessor will employ a 'challenge examination' approach through a formal interview and/or assignment-based assessment. Assessments are designed to ensure the individual can demonstrate learning outcomes for the specific course being challenged.

Essential Skills Experience

For individuals with experience in Essential Skills, the ESPT PLAR assessor will employ a 'challenge examination' approach consisting of a written, oral or performance test as determined to be appropriate for the course being challenged through the PLAR process. Assessments are designed to ensure the individual can demonstrate learning outcomes for the specific course being challenged.

Students who are challenging a course they have previously been enrolled in must wait one year from the date of their last registration in a course they have previously been enrolled in before challenging it and must demonstrate that additional applicable learning has occurred since registering in the course.

Normally, credits awarded through prior learning assessment are limited to 75 percent of the total credits required to meet the graduation requirements for the credential to which the credit is applied. Exceptions to this limit may be considered by programs.

PLAR Courses and Fees

Up to 75% of courses may be recognized through PLAR.

Course Name	Hours	PLAR Cost	Course Cost (online format)
ESKL 1000: Introduction to Essential Skills	10	$225	$395
ESKL 2300: ES Methodology and Task Analysis	30	$350	$595
ESKL 1100: ES Assessments, Interpretation and Application	22	$295	$495
ESKL 1200: Creating an Essential Skills Portfolio	10	$225	$395
ESKL 1300: Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Essential Skills	30	$350	$595
ESKL 2400: Work Experience Study	3 months	**Not eligible for PLAR**	$225

PLAR Registration Process

Step 1: "Is PLAR for me?" decision checklist
- ❑ I have at least 1 year experience in the field and/or related coursework
- ❑ I am motivated, flexible, organized, and self-directed
- ❑ I have the time and energy to devote to this process
- ❑ I want an Essential Skills credential for my current/future career
- ❑ I have read this introductory booklet

If you answered YES to these questions move on to Step 2.

Step 2: Self-Assessment: Can I demonstrate the learner outcomes for the course(s)?
Complete the Pre-PLAR self-assessment for the course you wish to challenge. The self-assessment package will help you determine if you have the knowledge necessary for successful PLAR. Individuals choosing to submit a completed course syllabus can use the self-assessment to check to whether objectives and outcomes have been covered.

Upon completing the pre-PLAR self-assessment package you should be able to decide whether to pursue PLAR or register for the regular course.

Step 3: Registration Process

1) Complete the PLAR Registration Form with ALL the courses you wish to PLAR. Submit this along with your completed pre-PLAR self-assessment(s) to the program assistant via email.

2) The program coordinator will review and approve for processing.

3) After making the payment, you will receive the appropriate course PLAR package from the PLAR Advisor.

Step 4: Completing the PLAR Assessment

Your PLAR Advisor will send you an electronic PLAR course package with confirmation of your registration and his/her contact information. You have 8 weeks to complete the PLAR assessment. This completion date will be extended ONLY in exceptional circumstances and is subject to additional registration fees. Your PLAR Advisor will provide you with the support and guidance you need to prepare for the PLAR assessment; however, please note that individuals wishing to pursue PLAR should possess the knowledge required. PLAR Advisors do not offer instruction. Your PLAR advisor will assist you to determine and schedule the best approach for the assessment (i.e. Skype or in-person).

Step 5: Assessing the PLAR Assessment

You will be assessed by a PLAR Assessor (different from your PLAR Advisor) who will evaluate your knowledge based on set criteria for each course. The assessment is conducted as scheduled and requires a response within a specific time frame. Interviews are conducted via online chat software (e.g. Collaborate, Skype, Google Hangouts) or in person, and proper identification is required to begin the process. Upon completion of your assessment you will receive notification of your outcome:

1. Course equivalence recognized, or
2. Course equivalence not recognized, student directed to take course