

**TITLE: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSEMENT AND RECOGNITION**

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Red Deer College recognizes prior learning of skills, knowledge, or competencies that have been acquired through any or all of the following: work, formal, informal, and non-formal learning.

**PURPOSE:**

This policy identifies the criteria that governs eligibility for granting credit and/or advanced placement for prior learning and sets out the process for students to obtain recognition.

**SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all students who have applied and/or have been admitted to a credit program at Red Deer College.

**PRINCIPLES:**

Red Deer College supports the guiding principles with respect to the recognition of prior learning (RPL), which have been developed and endorsed by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (March 2007):

1. Student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among institutions of higher education in Alberta shall be optimized.
2. 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.
3. Negotiation of opportunities for student mobility shall be based on the recognition that while learning experiences may differ in a variety of ways, their substance may be virtually equivalent in terms of content and rigor.
4. Recognition of prior learning should be based on demonstrated learning.
5. Recognition of prior learning should be appropriate to the course or program in which it is accepted.
6. Recognition of prior learning should be consistent with the achievement levels required by the post-secondary program in which it is accepted.
7. Effective academic advising, career counselling, and optimum mobility require that the student have prior knowledge of at least the minimum transfer credit which can be awarded.
8. Recognition of prior learning should be for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
9. Assessment of prior learning by post-secondary institutions should be made by content specialists, with external advice as necessary.

10. Individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs, even though responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents. The responsibility of institutions includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.
11. The College offers no assurance that a receiving institution offers 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.)
12. Institutions have the responsibility and the prerogative to investigate the total educational preparation of applicants seeking admission.
13. 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.
14. Prior Learning Assessment files are open to the applicant. Assessors and others who may contribute material to the file are advised of this.
15. Post-secondary institutions are committed to developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer credit and to applying them in a consistent manner.
16. Decisions regarding Recognition of Prior Learning can be appealed under the existing Red Deer College Appeal policy.
17. After students are granted admission to an institution under a transfer arrangement, they shall be granted the same rights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**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. If a prerequisite or equivalent course is waived, no credit for the prerequisite or equivalent course is granted.

**Formal learning:** Credit courses and programs offered at post-secondary institutions

**Informal learning:** Knowledge and skills acquired through life and work experience.

**Non-formal learning:** Non-credit courses, on-the-job training, and professional workshops

**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 where skills, knowledge or competencies have been acquired through work, formal and informal education or training, self-study or volunteer activity.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** The assessment processes that are used to evaluate and provide recognition for the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people have acquired in their lives which includes formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Fee:** Fee charged for assessing out-of-province transcripts, prior learning, advanced placement and portfolios.

**Transfer Credit:** Applicable to students who are bringing programs and courses from other post-secondary and educational institutions at the post-secondary level. When students are granted transfer credit, this information appears 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. Transfer credit is determined by assessing the equivalency of the course presented to an existing credit course. Red Deer College accepts grades of D and higher for transfer credit.

### **GUIDELINES:**

1. Each department is responsible for outlining any restrictions in student access to Recognition of Prior Learning and for obtaining approval by Academic Council for publication in the Academic Calendar.
2. In order to receive recognition of prior learning by the College, the individual requesting the prior learning assessment must have applied and/or been admitted to a credit program at Red Deer College.
3. To be eligible to receive Prior Learning credit for a course in which they are currently registered, students must complete a Recognition of Prior Learning application on or before the Add/Drop date of the term in which they are registered for that course.
4. A Recognition of Prior Learning fee is levied to support the assessment process.

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Applicants or students complete and submit the Recognition of Prior Learning application form. Requests for internal transfer credit of Red Deer College courses are exempt from the RPL fee.
2. **Recognition of Formal Learning:** In order to obtain recognition of formal learning, an applicant or student must provide relevant supporting documentation of an equivalent course (usually in the form of an official transcript) acceptable to the College. Normally the Alberta or other provincial transfer guide(s) and academic calendar descriptions of courses are used to determine if the course may be formally recognized. Recognition may also be granted for learning experiences that 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.
3. **Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning:** It is the responsibility of the applicant or student 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 is a demonstration of skills within a prescribed environment, i.e. laboratory or 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 are 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.
- The assessors and the subject matter experts (Chairs and/or program instructors) determine the manner in which the learning is assessed and recognized. It may be through any of the following methods:
  - a. **Advanced Placement**
  - b. **Prior Learning Credit:** If credit is granted, PL appears on the transcript, and no grade is assigned.
  - c. **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 to the College, as determined by the assessors, outlining the learning experiences that qualify them to apply for the challenge. Upon approval of a challenge process, the student must pay the requisite nonrefundable challenge fee, and register in the Challenge section of the course.
    - Applicants or students who are 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 appears on the student's transcript.
    - Applicants or 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.
    - Applicants or 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.
    - 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.
    - Once the challenge is complete, the notation "Challenge" is placed as a course comment underneath the course on the transcript; and a grade is also 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 appears on the transcript.

- d. The recognition of prior learning applications that are not approved may be appealed to the Registrar. The Registrar's decision is final.

**OFFICER RESPONSIBLE:** Chair, Academic Council

**CONSULTATION FOR REVIEW:** Student Association, Vice President Academic, Registrar, Assessment and Articulation Services, Academic Policy Committee of Academic Council, Department Councils.

**POLICY REVIEW DATE:** November 1, 2014

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** November 1, 2011

**REVISION HISTORY:** July 1, 2000 (Recognition of Prior Learning Standard Practice)  
July 1, 2002  
November 1, 2011 (Standard Practice revised and renamed  
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition)

**RELATED POLICIES:**

- Grading
- Final Examinations
- Graduation, Certification and Completion
- Appeals: Formal

**CONNECTION TO BOARD POLICIES:**

All RDC policies support relevant Board of Governors operational policies.