



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

#### PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR)

##### A. DEFINITION AND COMPONENTS OF PLAR

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is the formal evaluation and credit-granting process whereby students may obtain credits for prior learning. Prior learning includes the knowledge and skills that students have acquired, in both formal and informal ways, outside secondary school. Where such learning has occurred, students enrolled in the secondary schools of Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board may have their skills and knowledge evaluated against the expectations outlined in provincial curriculum policy documents in order to earn credits towards the secondary school diploma.

The PLAR process involves two components: “challenge” and “equivalency”:

- The challenge process allows students to have their prior learning assessed for the purpose of granting credit for a Grade 10, 11, or 12 course developed from a provincial curriculum policy document published in 1999 or later.
- The equivalency process allows students to have their credentials from other jurisdictions assessed. Students who are eligible for equivalency credits are those who transfer to Ontario secondary schools from non-inspected private schools or schools outside Ontario.

##### B. MINISTRY POLICY AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 129 provides direction to school boards concerning the implementation of *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999 (OSS)*, section 6.6: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. This document has since been revised and republished as *Ontario Schools (OS), Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011*, section 7.2.5.

PLAR procedures are to be made available to exceptional students. Assessment strategies must be adapted for this group in keeping with their special needs; for example, extra time might be allowed for the completion of work or a quiet environment provided for activities. While PLAR may be of benefit to some gifted students, it is not intended to be used as a replacement for or alternative to enriched or other special programs for gifted students.

Note: Policy Memorandum No. 129 does not apply to mature students (i.e., students of at least 18 years of age and returning to secondary school after an absence of at least one year). Mature students returning to secondary school year and wishing to access PLAR are governed under Policy/Program Memorandum No. 132.

All credits granted through the PLAR process, through either the challenge process or the equivalency process, will represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted to students who have taken the courses.

In accordance with the Education Act, the Board will not charge students fees for undergoing the challenge or equivalency process.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD FOR THE CHALLENGE PROCESS

1. The Board will implement policies and procedures governing the challenge process that are consistent with provincial policy (OS, sections 7.2.5 and 7.3.4) and Policy Memoranda No. 129 and 132.
2. The Board will ensure that a clear statement is published in the school course calendars outlining when students can challenge for credit and what opportunities for challenge are available.
3. The Board is *not obliged* to provide opportunities for students to challenge for credit for courses *not taught* in its schools.
4. The Board will use the forms entitled "PLAR Challenge for Credit: Cumulative Tracking Record" and "PLAR Challenge for Credit: Interim Tracking Record" provided by the Ministry of Education. No changes of any kind will be made to these forms.

5. The Board will develop an application form and a form for recording assessment based on sample forms provided by the Ministry of Education.
6. The Board will report to the ministry in the School September Reports the number of all challenges for credit that were completed, whether a passing or a failing grade. This information will also be submitted in the School March Reports.

*D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FOR THE CHALLENGE PROCESS*

1. PLAR procedures will be carried out under the direction of the school principal, who grants credits.
2. The principal will ensure that students are informed that the responsibility for initiating the challenge process and for satisfying all of the requirements belongs to the student.
3. The principal will ensure that students who are under the age of eighteen are informed that parental approval is needed before applying to challenge for a credit for a course.
4. The principal will ensure that every prospective applicant and his/her parents (if the student is not an adult) is informed about policies and procedures related to challenging for credit. The policies and procedures include those governing recording results in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) and on the Ontario Student Transcript (OST).
5. The principal will ensure that every prospective applicant is provided with an application form, as well as materials that indicate what is expected in the course (i.e., the curriculum expectations and the achievement chart criteria) for which the student wishes to challenge for credit.
6. The principal will evaluate each application in consultation with the student's parents (or with the student if the student is an adult) and appropriate school staff (i.e., guidance counsellor, teacher-adviser, and subject teacher) to determine whether reasonable evidence for success exists and whether the challenge should proceed.
7. The principal will ensure development of formal tests and other assessment strategies.
8. The principal will ensure that testing is conducted (i.e., the use of formal tests and of other appropriate assessment strategies).

9. The principal will ensure the evaluation of and reporting on the student's performance.
10. The principal will ensure that only teachers certified by the Ontario College of Teachers conduct the PLAR challenge process. Teachers with expertise in the subject area will implement the PLAR challenge for credit and equivalency process.

E. MINISTRY POLICIES GOVERNING THE CHALLENGE PROCESS

The challenge process is an evaluation process and may not be used by students to improve a mark in a course for which they have already earned a credit. Students may not use the challenge process to obtain a credit for a course which they have previously failed.

Students may challenge for credit only for Grade 10, 11, and 12 courses in provincial curriculum policy documents.

Students may earn no more than four credits through the challenge process, including a maximum of two credits in any one discipline. The term *discipline* refers to the subject area covered by any one curriculum policy document. All courses in that document are considered to belong to that discipline.

Students may challenge for credit for a course only if they can provide reasonable evidence to the principal that they would likely be successful in the challenge process, in accordance with criteria established by the Ministry in OS, in Memorandum No. 129, and with policies and procedures established by Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board. In cases where the adult student, or the student and the parent disagree with the decision of the principal not to grant permission to proceed with the challenge, the parent or adult student may ask the appropriate supervisory officer to review the application.

Students may use certificates or other records of accomplishment earned outside Ontario classrooms as reasonable evidence of eligibility to challenge for credit for a related course within the Ontario curriculum.

Reasonable evidence means documentation that the curriculum expectations of the course have **already been achieved** and that the student would likely be successful in the challenge process.

Students with music certificates that are accepted for credits in OS (Appendix 4, Music Certificates Accepted for Credits), are not required to challenge for credit for the appropriate music courses. Credits will be granted in accordance with Appendix 4 and section 7.3.4.

A student must challenge for credit for an entire course, whether it is a full-credit or a partial-credit course. Credit will be granted only for the specific course for which the student has successfully challenged for credit.

Students cannot be granted credits through the challenge process for any of the following courses:

- a course in any subject if a credit has already been granted for a course in that subject in a later grade either as a single credit or as part of a block equivalency;
- a course for which credit has already been granted or for which there is significant overlap with a course for which credit has been granted (e.g., a student cannot challenge for credit for an academic course if he or she has already earned a credit for the applied course at the same grade level, and vice versa);
- a transfer course;
- a locally developed course;
- a cooperative education course;
- a course in French as a Second Language (FSL), if the student has one or more credits in Français from the curriculum policy documents for Français for Grades 9 to 12 under OS or the curriculum guideline for Français for Grades 9 to 12/OACs under OSIS;
- a Religious Education course.

A student will be permitted to challenge for credit for a specific course a second time if the student can provide reasonable evidence to the principal that he or she is likely to be successful after having benefited from additional study and experience during the interval.

Students' requests to challenge for credit will be entered in their annual education plans as part of their plans for fulfilling their educational goals.

#### *F. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CHALLENGED CREDITS*

Assessment and evaluation through the PLAR process will be based on the curriculum expectations and the achievement charts in the Ontario curriculum policy documents. Assessment and evaluation must be based on all the strands in a course and on all categories of knowledge and skills and the descriptions of achievement levels given in the achievement chart that appears in the curriculum policy document for the discipline. A

student's level of achievement will be recorded as a percentage grade on the OST in the same way as achievement in other courses.

Assessment and evaluation strategies for the challenge process must include formal tests (70 per cent of the final mark) and a variety of other assessment strategies appropriate for the particular course (30 per cent of the final mark). The formal tests must have a balance between written work and practical demonstration that is appropriate for the subject/discipline. Other assessment strategies may include evaluation of written assignments, demonstrations / performances, laboratory work, quizzes, and observation of student work. The principal is responsible for developing and administering the formal tests and for determining which assessment strategies are most appropriate for each course for which a student is challenging for credit.

G. RECORD KEEPING OF CHALLENGED CREDITS

A "PLAR Challenge for Credit: Cumulative Tracking Record" form will be maintained and included in the student's OSR. This form will track the number of credits earned and the disciplines in which credits have been earned through the challenge process, as well as failures and withdrawals.

The following entries will be made on the student's "Cumulative Tracking Record" form, as applicable:

- *For challenges for credit for Grade 10, 11, or 12 courses:* The student's passing percentage grade, failing percentage grade, or withdrawal from the challenge process.

The following entries will be made on the student's Ontario Student Transcript (OST):

- *For challenges for credit for Grade 10 courses:* Only passing percentage grades will be entered on the OST. If the student subsequently takes the Grade 10 course, only the higher percentage grade will be recorded on the OST. No notation will be entered on the student's OST if the student withdraws from or receives a failing grade in the challenge process.
- *For challenges for credit for Grade 11 and 12 courses:* Passing and failing percentage grades will be entered on the student's OST. No notation will be entered on the OST if the student withdraws from the challenge process.

## H. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD FOR THE EQUIVALENCY PROCESS

Students who are eligible for equivalency credits are those who transfer to Ontario secondary schools from non-inspected private schools or schools outside Ontario. Equivalency credits are granted for placement only.

The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will implement policies and procedures related to the equivalency process that are consistent with provincial policy (OS, section 4.3 and Appendix 2).

The Board will ensure that information on the equivalency process is included in school course calendars.

## I. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL FOR THE EQUIVALENCY PROCESS

- The principal of the receiving school will, in the process of deciding where the student should be placed, determine as equitably as possible the total credit equivalency of the student's previous learning, and the number of compulsory and optional credits still to be earned.
- The principal will use as a guide OS, Appendix 2: *Guide to Determining Diploma Requirements for Students Transferring into Ontario Secondary Schools* to determine the number of credits, including compulsory credits, that the student must earn, as well as other diploma requirements that the student must satisfy, in order to qualify for the secondary school diploma.
- In cases where an adult student (18 years of age) or the parent of a student who is not an adult disagrees with the principal's placement decision for students transferring to an Ontario secondary school from a non-inspected private school or a school outside Ontario, the adult student or the parent may ask the appropriate supervisory officer to review the matter.

The principal will note that OS diploma requirements (including completion of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test and the completion of 40 hours Christian Service/Community Involvement) apply.