

**SUBJECT**
**Learner Pathways**

Document reposted December 2018. No change to content.

**BACKGROUND**

Learners take a variety of pathways to achieve their learning outcomes. Learning happens in many different environments and many different ways. All learning should be considered to assure a learner does not have to repeat prior learning. Northern College offers a flexible learning environment to ensure all learning can be assessed to define a learning pathway that continuously moves the learner forward. Factors influencing learner pathways include (but are not limited to) prior learning, including international credentials, accumulation of badges or micro credentials, co-curricular activities, applied research projects, experiential learning opportunities, changes in program offerings, changes in personal goals, breaks in their learning activities, and personal circumstances that interrupt their learning pathway.

All pathways will be **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)** compliant and seeks to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Act addresses barriers in Customer Service; Information and Communication; Employment; Transportation; the Design of Public Spaces.

**POLICY**

Northern College recognizes the need for flexible pathways and will support learners with individualized choices to achieve learning outcomes. Credit for prior learning may be achieved through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), flexible delivery models may be utilized, different delivery options may be utilized, and/or learners may amend their program of study. All options for learner pathways at Northern are in compliance with provincial standards and Ministry directives.

**SCOPE**

- Applies to all students entering, moving through, or leaving Northern college
- Encompasses potential domestic, and international students
- Considers prior, current, internal, and external learning
- Acknowledges credentials from post-secondary institutions (public and private) apprenticeship and continuing education

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**DEFINITIONS**

- **Academic Probation:** A student who has a final Grade Point Average (GPA) that is below the minimum program requirement to proceed to the next academic achievement level is required to meet with his/her program Coordinator within one week in order to determine the appropriate terms and conditions that must be met in order for the student to remain in his/her respective program/course.
- **Advanced Standing:** A student who gets advanced standing is admitted to a second or higher term or year of a program because of transfer credits granted for courses completed at another institution.  
[www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)
- **Accreditation:** Certification by an external agency or professional regulatory body that an educational program meets its standards. In Canada, educational programs are accredited; institutions are not accredited. [www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)
- **Articulation Agreements:** are official agreements between two (bilateral) or more (multilateral) postsecondary institutions that defines the terms and conditions enabling students to transfer between specific programs. Also referred to as “transfer agreements” or “transfer pathways”. [www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)
- **Credential:** Refers to academic or educational qualifications, such as degrees or diplomas that a student has completed or partially-completed. As approved by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), formerly Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), colleges may offer the following credentials: Certificate, Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, Ontario College Graduate Certificate, and Applied Degrees.
- **Credit Transfer/Transfer Credit:** Acceptance or recognition of credit by an institution for courses or programs completed at another institution. May apply to core courses deemed equivalent in content or may be used to fulfill optional elective course requirements. [www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)
- **Credit:** A unit of value assigned to a course for the purpose of counting its value towards a credential such as a certificate, diploma or degree. The number of credits received by students for a course varies widely among institutions.  
[www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)

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- **Course Load – Full-Time VS Part-Time:** A course load is represented by the number of courses or credits a student is registered in and is expressed as a percentage. A course load will define a student status as either full-time or part-time. Full-time status is considered (60%-100%) of a prescribed course load. Part-time status is considered less than (70%) of a prescribed course load or (66 2/3%) of the courses in a given semester.

**NOTE: Students with Disabilities & OSAP:** A student who identifies with a disability and who is a recipient of OSAP will be considered a full-time student **to OSAP** with a (40%-100%) course load.

- **Course Equivalency:** Transfer of course credit from one postsecondary institution to another where courses are considered equal in content or academic value.  
[www.ONTransfer-Glossary](http://www.ONTransfer-Glossary)
- **Course Outlines:** A course outline or syllabus also works as a guide for students. By setting course goals and student learning outcomes, you are informing students about the materials they will engage. The schedule also tells students what expectations are expected of them and provides a timeline of these expectations.  
[www.uleth.ca/teachingcentre](http://www.uleth.ca/teachingcentre)
- **Continuing Education:** Continuing education may include credit and non-credit courses outside traditional post-secondary offerings. Courses are usually offered on a part-time basis, evenings or weekends. Some short courses, seminars, and workshops are offered during the week.
- **Distance Learning:** Includes but is not limited to Video conference, Web-Based courses, Correspondence courses, and online learning.
- **Educational Pathways:** The individual patterning of education-related transitions throughout the life course (Gorard et al., 1998, 2001; Pallas, 2003).
- **Interruption of studies:** A student is either considering or intending to interrupt or suspend study for a specific period of time but intends to resume studies at a future date.
- **Joint delivery:** Also known as “collaborative programing”. Delivery that allows students to graduate with both a university and college credential usually in the same amount of time it would take to complete a university program.  
(Council of Ontario Universities, 2017)

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- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** A memorandum of understanding is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Institutions can use MoU's to establish official partnerships. MoU's are not legally binding but they carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect.
- **Prior Learning:** Is the knowledge acquired prior to studies and can be obtained through a variety of ways including but not be limited to:
  - Industry/workplace training and/or experience
  - Independent study or non-college courses
  - Travel and residency or teaching in foreign countries
  - Military training and service
  - Community and volunteer work
  - Life experiences, culture and heritage. (NC PLAR Guide 2016)
- **Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR):** PLAR is the “*process of identifying, assessing and recognizing what a person knows and is able to do for the purpose of awarding academic credit*” in a course or program. (Canadian Labour Force Development Board. 1999, as cited in the Northern College PLAR reference guide, 2016). The PLAR system evaluates experiential learning and relates it to formal college-level courses and programs and is intended for students who are resuming their education rather than those continuing directly from secondary school. ([NC PLAR Guide 2016](#))
- **Private Institutions:** An education institution is classified as private if it is controlled and managed by a non-governmental organization (e.g. a Church, Trade Union or business enterprise), or if its Governing Board consists mostly of members not selected by a public agency. <https://stats.oecd.org>
- **Program Synopsis:** A program map describing courses to be taken in the order of progression of completion the program for the academic school year.
- **Public Institutions:** An education institution is classified as public if it is:
  - Controlled and managed directly by a public education authority or agency; or
  - Controlled and managed either by a government agency directly or by a governing body (Council, Committee etc.), most of whose members are appointed by a public authority or elected by public franchise.  
<https://stats.oecd.org>.
- **Request for Record Amendment:** A form completed by the department coordinator for a student who is considering amending his/her program of study by adding or deleting a course(s).

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- **Sister School Partnership:** A sister school partnership is a meaningful, reciprocal and sustainable long-term partnership between two schools, aimed at fulfilling a range of purposes as determined by the school communities. Sister school partnerships can be provincial, inter-provincial or international and are based on the principles of mutual educational benefit and reciprocity.
- **Study Period:** A discrete period of study within a course (program), namely term, semester, short course of similar or lesser duration, or as otherwise defined by the registered provider (e.g. Postsecondary, Apprenticeship, Upgrading, Continuing Education, etc.). (Department of Education & Training - AU Gov.)
- **Student Exchange:** Exchange of students between two institutions which have an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- **World Education Services (WES):** World Education Services is a nonprofit organization that provides credential evaluations for international students and immigrants planning to study or work in the United States (US) and Canada. Founded in 1974, it is based in New York, U.S. and Toronto, Canada.


**PRINCIPLES/GUIDELINES**

- Prior learning is part of every learner's pathway and will be assessed accordingly as requested.
- Learners may amend their program of study within the timeframes of the Academic Calendar.
- Course equivalencies will be established where possible with Contract training and continuing education offerings.
- Learner pathways will need to comply with timelines for program completion.
- Learners must successfully complete all program requirements in order to graduate.

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**RESPONSIBILITY**

- The **Pathways Officer** (Registrar's Office) is the main "hub" for student requests for advanced standing. Referrals to appropriate departments/personnel occur when the requests do not have precedent. Final decisions are entered in the Student Record System.
- **Advisors** guide the students with PLAR process.
- **Program Coordinators** review new requests and refer decisions to "**content expert**" Faculty.
- **Student Responsibility** to initiate any pathways processes. Funding supports may differ when pathways has changed.

**APPROVED BY PRESIDENT**



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**Fred Gibbons**


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**Date** May 24, 2018
**PROCEDURES**
**New Academic Procedures** (formerly policies):

- Acquisition of Additional Credentials #A29-PR-1 (formerly Policy #A-3)
- Advanced Standing #A29-PR-2 (formerly Policy #A-4)
  - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) (formerly Policy #A-22)
- Distance Learning #A29-PR-3 (formerly Policy #A-12)
- Interruption of Studies #A29-PR-4 (formerly Policy #A-11)
- Program Amendments #A29-PR-5 (formerly Policy #A-14)
- Recognition of Postsecondary Equivalent Courses #A29-PR-6 (formerly Policy #A-16)
- Timelines from Program Completion #A29-PR-7 (formerly Policy #A-21)
- Withdrawal from the College #A29-PR-8 (formerly Policy #A-20)

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