

## **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) FOR MATURE STUDENTS**

### **Introduction**

In December 2002, Policy/Program Memorandum No.132 (PPM 132) was issued. The purpose of this PPM is to provide direction to boards in operationalizing the PLAR policy for mature students. The policy direction on PLAR was released in March 1999 in *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements (OSS)*, Section 6.6. Subsequently, Policy/Program Memorandum No.129 (PPM 129) was issued. The purpose of that PPM was to provide direction to boards in operationalizing the PLAR policy for adolescent students.

PPM 132 applies to the following groups of mature students:

1. mature students who are *new* to the Ontario secondary school system as of February 1, 2004 and who are working towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) under OSS diploma requirements
2. mature students who were *enrolled as regular day school students* in the Ontario secondary school system and were placed in Grade 9 in 1999–2000 or later, Grade 10 in 2000–2001 or later, Grade 11 in 2001–2002 or later, or Grade 12 in 2002–2003 or later; and who returned to school as mature students on February 1, 2004 or later to work towards the OSSD under OSS diploma requirements

The following groups of mature students may be granted equivalent credits under *Ontario Schools, Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7–12/OACs): Program and Diploma Requirements, 1989 rev.ed.* (OSIS), Section 6.14: Equivalent Standing for Mature Students:

3. mature students who were *enrolled previously* in the Ontario secondary school system and were placed in Grade 9 before 1999–2000, Grade 10 before 2000–2001, Grade 11 before 2001–2002, or Grade 12 before 2002–2003; and who are working towards the OSSD under OSIS diploma requirements; OR mature students who were *enrolled previously* in the Ontario secondary school system and who are working towards the Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) under *Circular H.S.1, 1979–81*
4. mature students who were *new* to the Ontario secondary school system and were *enrolled as mature students* in the Ontario secondary school system *before February 1, 2004*; who were placed in Grade 9 in 1999–2000 or later, Grade 10 in 2000–2001 or later, Grade 11 before 2001–2002 or later, or Grade 12 before 2002–2003 or later; and who are working towards the OSSD under OSS diploma requirements

The PLAR process for mature students involves three processes: “Grade 9 and 10 individual assessment/equivalency,” “Grade 11 and 12 equivalency,” and “Grade 11 and 12 challenge.”

## **PLAR: Support Materials for Mature Students Enrolled in Ontario Secondary Schools**

### **The Grade 9 and 10 Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process**

A number of materials are provided to support the individual assessment/equivalency process. Sample Assessment Guides are provided for Grades 9 and 10 in Canadian Geography/History, English, Mathematics and Science. Principals may grant up to 4 equivalent credits for demonstrated achievement in each of these areas. These Grade 9 and 10 credits must meet the diploma requirements that would usually be met through successful completion of the Grade 9 and 10 programs.

### **The Grade 11 and 12 Equivalency Process**

A number of materials are provided to support this process. Materials for implementing the equivalency process for Grade 11 and 12 credits have been developed. Sixteen scenarios have been created to assist principals in determining the number of credits to be granted for prior learning and/or work experience based on concrete evidence. This evidence must show learning that relates directly to the Ontario curriculum expectations for specific courses.

### **The Grade 11 and 12 Challenge Process**

A number of materials are provided to support this process. Materials for implementing the challenge process for 16 Grade 11 and 12 courses have been developed. The sixteen sample challenge assessment guides are intended to provide boards/schools with hands-on, ready-to-use materials and activities in the development of assessments for the challenge process.

## **Guiding Principles**

The following principles guided the development of this resource:

- **respect for the knowledge and skills that mature students have acquired, in both formal and informal ways, outside secondary school**
- **maintaining a balance between high standards and equitable opportunities for mature students to achieve their goals**
- **consistency of curriculum expectations, standards of achievement and the implementation process**
- **quality and rigour of assessments**
- **credit-granting integrity**
- **a balance of accountability and flexibility for mature students**

## **Organizational Structure of Each of the Three Processes**

In this resource, the organizational structure of each of the three processes is divided into five or six phases: Orientation, Application, Determination of Equivalent Credits, Assessment, Recording, and Reporting.

<b>Phase of Process</b>	<b>Description</b>
Orientation	Provision of information to student
Application	Student application with appropriate documentation
Determination of Equivalent Credits	Principal and staff decision-making process for determining equivalent credits based on documentation
Assessment	Student participation in Individual Assessment (Grade 9 and 10), and/or Challenge Assessment (Grade 11 and 12)
Recording	Documenting student participation and achievement
Reporting	Communicating student participation and achievement

**The Grade 9 and 10 Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process has all six phases:**

- Orientation
- Application
- Determination of Equivalent Credits
- Assessment
- Recording
- Reporting

**The Grade 11 and 12 Equivalency Process has five phases:**

- Orientation
- Application
- Determination of Equivalent Credits
- Recording
- Reporting

**The Grade 11 and 12 Challenge Process has five phases:**

- Orientation
- Application
- Assessment
- Recording
- Reporting

## PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) FOR MATURE STUDENTS

### PLAR PROCESSES SUMMARY CHART

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is the formal evaluation and credit-granting process whereby mature 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. Mature students may have their knowledge and skills evaluated against the expectations outlined in provincial curriculum documents in order to earn credits towards the secondary school diploma. The PLAR process for mature students involves “equivalency” and “challenge”. Requirements concerning the application of these procedures differ from those for regular day school students because of the broader life experience of mature students.

	<b>Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process: Grade 9 and 10 Credits</b>	<b>Equivalency Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>	<b>Challenge Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>
<b>What is it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An individual mature student assessment process for the purpose of granting up to 16 Grade 9 and 10 equivalent credits through               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) transcripts, or</li> <li>b) transcripts and completion of individual assessments, or</li> <li>c) completion of individual assessments</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for obtaining credits that involves assessment of a mature student’s credentials and other appropriate documentation, such as               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) formal transcripts from educational or training institutions</li> <li>b) documentation regarding apprenticeships, and</li> <li>c) other appropriate documentation of learning gained from other programs, courses, or work experiences</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process for obtaining credits whereby a mature student’s prior learning is assessed through a variety of assessment strategies appropriate for the particular course that include               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) formal tests (written work and practical demonstrations), and</li> <li>b) other assessment strategies</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<b>Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process: Grade 9 and 10 Credits</b>	<b>Equivalency Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>	<b>Challenge Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>
<b>Beginning the assessment process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mature student initiates the process of individual assessment/equivalency by submitting an application form (available from the local school or school board) and providing the appropriate credentials and documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mature student initiates the equivalency process by submitting an application form (available from the local school or school board) and providing the appropriate credentials and documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mature student initiates the challenge process by submitting an application form (available from the local school or school board) and providing reasonable evidence that he/she would likely be successful in earning the credit</li> </ul>
<b>Results of the assessment process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equivalency of up to 16 Grade 9 and Grade 10 credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 10 Grade 11 and 12 equivalent credits (the total number of credits granted through the challenge and equivalency processes combined, for Grade 11 and 12 courses, is 10)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 10 Grade 11 and 12 credits (the total number of credits granted through the challenge and equivalency processes combined, for Grade 11 and 12 courses, is 10)</li> <li>Within the limit of 10 Grade 11 and 12 credits outlined above, there is no maximum on the number of credits that may be obtained in any one discipline</li> </ul>
<b>Subjects/Courses for which credit may be granted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four Subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian Geography/History</li> <li>English</li> <li>Mathematics</li> <li>Science</li> </ul> </li> <li>Up to 4 equivalent credits per subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any Grade 11 or 12 course, whether full- or half-credit (with some exceptions), if the student's transcripts or other documents show evidence of learning that relates directly to the Ontario curriculum expectations for the specific course</li> <li>Half-credits may be granted only if the documented prior learning relates directly to the Ontario curriculum expectations for specific half-credit courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any Grade 11 or 12 course, whether full- or half-credit (with some exceptions), that is actually taught in schools operated by the school board</li> <li>Arrangements may be made with other boards for courses not taught in local schools</li> </ul>

	<b>Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process: Grade 9 and 10 Credits</b>	<b>Equivalency Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>	<b>Challenge Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>
<b>Deferral issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principal may defer assessment on Grade 9 Canadian Geography and Grade 10 Canadian History until the student has had sufficient time to develop language skills and/or become more familiar with Canadian culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the determination of equivalent credits may be made early to assist with planning, principals should delay assigning Grade 11 and 12 equivalent credits until mature students have met the PLAR requirement of taking and successfully completing four Grade 11 and 12 courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Grade 9 and 10 credits granted must meet the diploma requirements that would usually be met through successful completion of the Grade 9 and 10 program</li> <li>All credits must represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted to students who have taken the courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mature student's transcripts and other documents must show evidence of learning that relates directly to the Ontario curriculum expectations for specific courses</li> <li>There must be a direct relationship between the credentials and/or other appropriate documentation presented by the mature student and the curriculum expectations for a specific Grade 11 or 12 course in one of the Ontario curriculum policy documents published in 2000 or later</li> <li>All credits must represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted to students who have taken the courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are some courses for which a mature student cannot be granted credits (see PPM 132, p. 9)</li> <li>The assessment and evaluation must be based on the curriculum expectations and levels of achievement of the Ontario Curriculum – all strands and all categories – published in 2000 or later</li> <li>Mature students may challenge for credit for a specific course a second time after an appropriate interval, if they can provide reasonable evidence that they are likely to be successful after having benefited from additional study and experience during the interval</li> <li>All credits must represent the same standards of achievement as credits granted to students who have taken the courses</li> </ul>

	<b>Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process: Grade 9 and 10 Credits</b>	<b>Equivalency Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>	<b>Challenge Process: Grade 11 and 12 Credits</b>
<b>Number of <u>funded</u> assessments for a mature student per fiscal year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One assessment for up to 16 Grade 9 and 10 credits per mature student per fiscal year only</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> an individual assessment includes all assessment activities related to the granting of up to 16 Grade 9 and 10 credits to any one mature student in any one school year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One assessment for up to 10 Grade 11 and 12 equivalent credits per mature student per fiscal year only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for each completed challenge for credit (for up to 10 full-credit courses per student or the equivalent in half-credit courses), whether successfully or unsuccessfully completed</li> </ul>
<b>Number of times a mature student may participate in the process during the school year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specified limit – students who fail an assessment may retake it as often as necessary for them to complete it successfully</li> <li>• <b>Note:</b> Counselling is important in helping students make decisions about this process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limits set by local boards regarding the number of times during a year when a student may present documents for the determination of equivalent Grade 11 and 12 credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limits set by local board procedures regarding the number of times during a year challenges will be held for various courses</li> </ul>
<b>Charges for conducting the assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No charge for mature students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No charge for mature students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No charge for mature students</li> </ul>
<b>How results are recorded on Interim and Cumulative Tracking Records</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass/Fail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course code is listed, with “EQV” being entered in the “percentage grade” column</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage grade</li> </ul>
<b>How results are recorded on OST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One total, of up to 16 equivalent credits for Grade 9 and 10, is entered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each course code is entered, with “EQV” being entered in the “percentage grade” column</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each individual course code is entered with a percentage grade</li> </ul>

**THE MATURE STUDENT:  
THE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) PROCESS  
OR THE ONTARIO SCHOOLS, INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR DIVISIONS (OSIS) PROCESS?**

	<b>PLAR PROCESS UNDER OSS</b>	<b>THE OSIS PROCESS</b>
<p><b>To which mature students does the process apply?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. mature students who are <i>new</i> to the Ontario secondary school system as of February 1, 2004, and who are working towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) under OSS requirements</li> <li>2. mature students who were <i>enrolled as regular day school students</i> in the Ontario secondary school system, and were placed in Grade 9 in 1999–2000 or later, Grade 10 in 2000–2001 or later, Grade 11 in 2001–2002 or later, or Grade 12 in 2002–2003 or later; and who return to school as mature students on February 1, 2004 or later, to work towards the OSSD under OSS diploma requirements.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. mature students who were <i>enrolled previously</i> in the Ontario secondary school system, and were placed in Grade 9 before 1999–2000, Grade 10 before 2000–2001, Grade 11 before 2001–2002 or Grade 12 before 2002–2003; and who are working towards the OSSD under OSIS diploma requirements; <i>OR</i> mature students who were <i>enrolled previously</i> in the Ontario secondary school system and who are working towards the Secondary School Graduation Diploma (SSGD) under <i>Circular H.S. 1, 1979–81</i></li> <li>4. mature students who were <i>new</i> to the Ontario secondary school system, and were <i>enrolled as mature students</i> in the Ontario secondary school system <i>before February 1, 2004</i>; who were placed in Grade 9 in 1999–2000 or later, Grade 10 in 2000–2001 or later, Grade 11 in 2001–2002 or later, or Grade 12 in 2002–03 or later; and who are working towards the OSSD under OSS diploma requirements.</li> </ol> <p><b>Note:</b> Mature students in groups 3 and 4 may choose to have their prior learning assessed and credits granted through the PLAR process under OSS. Such students will be required to meet OSS diploma requirements.</p>

	<b>PLAR PROCESS UNDER OSS</b>	<b>THE OSIS PROCESS</b>
<p><b>What are the major processes for obtaining credits?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLAR for mature students involves three processes: Grade 9 and 10 Individual Assessment/Equivalency Process; Grade 11 and 12 Equivalency Process; and Grade 11 and 12 Challenge Process.</li> <li>• Up to 16 Grade 9 and 10 credits may be granted to a mature student through the equivalency process at the discretion of the principal, following individual assessment.</li> <li>• Mature students may earn 10 of the remaining Grade 11 and 12 credits needed to meet diploma requirements in three ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ø They may demonstrate achievement of the required secondary school curriculum expectations and receive credit through the challenge process;</li> <li>Ø They may present education and/or training credentials and/or other appropriate documentation for a determination through the equivalency process;</li> <li>Ø They may take the course.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mature students must earn a minimum of 4 Grade 11 and 12 credits by taking the necessary courses at a secondary school, through correspondence, or through any of the alternative ways described in section 6.8 of OSS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to diploma credits already accumulated by mature students (transcripts necessary), there are three types of equivalent-credit allowances that a principal may give to raise the total number of accumulated credits for mature students to a maximum of 26 credits: maturity allowance, equivalent-education allowance, apprenticeship-training allowance.</li> <li>• A maturity allowance of up to 12 credits may be given on the basis of age and length of time out of school.</li> <li>• Equivalent-education allowances may be given for individual courses successfully completed but not normally identified as secondary education (transcripts necessary), if they are considered acceptable by the principal. <b>Note:</b> (a) 110 hours of instruction may be considered equivalent to one equivalent credit; (b) Courses that normally qualify for college or university credit cannot be used under this allowance.</li> <li>• Two equivalent credits may be allotted for the successful completion of each period of an apprenticeship-training program under authority of the Apprenticeship and Tradesmen’s Qualification Act, <i>Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1980, chapter 24.</i></li> <li>• Mature students must earn, subsequent to becoming mature students, at least 4 Ontario credits from the Senior Division.</li> </ul>

	<b>PLAR PROCESS UNDER OSS</b>	<b>THE OSIS PROCESS</b>
<b>What are the compulsory credit requirements for mature students?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature students working towards the OSSD under OSS diploma requirements must complete 18 compulsory credits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ø Up to 14 compulsory credits through the Grade 9 and 10 equivalency process;</li> <li>Ø 4 Grade 11 and 12 credits: Grade 11 English, Grade 12 English, Grade 11 or 12 Mathematics, one of Grade 11 or 12 Science or Grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 Technological Education (see PPM 132 for possible substitutions).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mature students must also successfully complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC).</li> <li>• Mature students must complete the number of hours of community involvement activities as determined by the principal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal shall determine which compulsory courses must still be completed by the mature student to earn an OSSD (See OSIS, Appendix D).</li> </ul>
<b>How are the results recorded on the student's <i>Ontario Student Transcript (OST)</i>?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The code "PLE" is entered for Grade 9 and 10 equivalent credits which must be recorded as one total.</li> <li>• All Grade 11 and 12 credits must be listed separately.</li> <li>• For Grade 11 and 12 equivalent credits granted through the equivalency process, "EQV" is entered in the "Percentage Grade" column.</li> <li>• For Grade 11 and 12 credits earned through the challenge process, the percentage grade earned is entered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each type of equivalent credit granted has a special code: "QEE" for equivalent-education allowance; "QAP" for apprenticeship-training allowance; "QMA" for maturity allowance; and "QSE" for credits granted for course work completed outside Ontario.</li> </ul> <p>When "QEE", "QAP", "QMA", or "QSE" is recorded in the "Course Code" column, the code "EQV" is entered in the "Percentage Grade" column.</p>

## **EXCERPT FROM THE ONTARIO STUDENT TRANSCRIPT (OST) MANUAL, 1999**

### **Procedures for Mature Students**

There are two possible procedures for mature students depending on the date on which they return to secondary school.

#### **Procedure 1**

Principals will follow the process described in *Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (OSIS)* for granting equivalent credits to mature students who re-enter secondary school before the 2003–2004 school year. (*Note: PPM 132 sets the implementation date for procedure 2 to February 1, 2004 for certain groups of students.*)

#### **Date**

Enter the date (yyyy/mm) on which the equivalent credits were granted by the Ontario secondary school principal.

#### **Course Title**

For equivalent credits that have to be entered as a total, enter “Equivalent Credits”. Use the common course titles given in the list of common course codes for all courses completed through an Ontario secondary school program.

#### **Course Code**

Enter the appropriate code for each type of equivalent credit granted. (See OSIS, Section 6.14, for a description of the first three types.) The codes for equivalent credits are:

QEE Equivalent-education allowance

QAP Apprenticeship-training allowance

QMA Maturity allowance

QSE Credits granted for course work completed outside Ontario

#### **Percentage Grade**

When “QEE”, “QAP”, “QMA”, or “QSE” have been recorded in the “Course Code” column, enter the code “EQV” in the “Percentage Grade” column.

#### **Credit**

Enter *the total number* of equivalent credits in this column.

#### **Compulsory**

Enter *the total number* of compulsory equivalent credits in this column.

**Procedure 2**

Principals will follow the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process for granting credits for work previously completed to mature students who re-enter secondary school at or after the beginning of the 2003–2004 school year. (*Note: PPM 132 sets the implementation date for procedure 2 to February 1, 2004 for certain groups of students.*) Such credits may be granted through the equivalency process or the challenge process. (See OSS, Section 6.6.)

**Date**

Enter the date (yyyy/mm) on which the credits were granted (through the PLAR process) by the Ontario secondary school principal.

**Course Title**

For equivalent credits that have to be entered as a total, enter “Equivalent Credits”. Use the common course titles given in the list of common course codes for all courses completed through an Ontario secondary school program, for all Grade 11 and 12 courses for which the student has been granted a credit through the challenge process, and for all equivalent credits granted for Grade 11 and 12 courses through the equivalency process.

**Course Code**

Enter the code “PLE” for Grade 9 and 10 equivalent credits. *These credits must be recorded as one total.*

Use the appropriate course codes for all of the following:

- equivalent credits granted for Grade 11 and 12 courses through the equivalency process
- credits granted for Grade 11 or 12 courses through the challenge process
- courses completed through an Ontario secondary school program

**Percentage Grade**

For equivalent credits granted through the equivalency process, enter the code “EQV” in the “Percentage Grade” column. For credits earned through the challenge process or through a secondary school program, give the percentage grade earned.

**Credit**

For Grade 9 and 10 courses, record the total number of equivalent credits in this column. Up to 16 equivalent credits may be granted for Grade 9 and 10 courses.

For Grade 11 and 12 courses, enter the appropriate value for individual credits granted or earned. Up to 10 credits may be granted through the PLAR equivalency or challenge process. (Students may, of course, have earned some or all of these 10 credits through a secondary school program.) Students must earn 4 additional Grade 11 or 12 credits through a secondary school program.

**Compulsory**

For Grade 9 and 10 courses, enter the total number of compulsory credits granted as equivalent credits.

For Grade 11 or 12 credits granted through the PLAR process, enter an “X” in this column for each compulsory

