

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND CREDIT (PLAC) – DIETETIC PRACTICUM PROGRAM (DPP)

Approval Authority: DPP Committee, Manager, Dietetics

Established On: 2013 05 09

Category: Health Sciences

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The prior learning assessment and credit (PLAC) process recognizes that dietetic learners accepted to the Dietetic Practicum Program (DPP) come with a variety of skills and knowledge acquired through many avenues. Prior learning assessment is the measurement of learning gained through experiences other than formal post-secondary courses. Such learning may have been acquired through avenues such as work experience, research, volunteering, and community involvement. It refers to learning gained under the sponsorship of business, industry, government, or human service agencies and may or may not be job specific. Experience obtained prior to practicum (e.g. through work experience as a dietetic technician, food service manager, weight loss counselor or research assistant) may contribute to the skill development in one or more of the activities outlined for the practicum.

2.0 SCOPE

All learner candidates who have been admitted into the DPP will have the opportunity to apply for PLAC where indicated. This policy establishes guidelines to assess dietetic learners' knowledge and skills and grant credit for the learning that has taken place. To describe the process for documenting work or volunteer activities completed prior to practicum, through which entry-level competencies were demonstrated. In addition, the appeal process is outlined for the dietetic learner should they disagree with the initial PLAC review process.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy:

Competency Development Profile (CDP) is a tool that can assist a learner candidate in the documentation and verification of their learning. The corresponding evaluation criterion provides the applicant the opportunity to detail that learning actually occurred. Learner candidates complete one CDP sheet for each *Performance Indicator* they wish to narrate. The profiles enable applicants and reviewers to make decisions regarding competency attainment. Sample CDP sheet appended.

Each CDP sheet will include the following three sections:

1. Practice Competency: a task that is performed in practice and which can be carried out to a specified level of proficiency. A practice statement reflects the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and judgments necessary for minimal level of practice for Dietitians

(Partnership for Dietetic Education and Practice (PDEP) - Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice).

2. Performance Indicators: indicators the applicant should demonstrate to support required competency development. In some instances *Performance Indicators* have been identified (see related DPP Performance Evaluation Reports). The practicum may identify additional behaviours specific to the area in which the applicant is documenting performance.
3. Activities/Relevant Experience: it is in this section that the learner candidate would document what they did that they feel would contribute to competency development i.e. chair a meeting, facilitate a workshop, manage or direct staff, perform job duties etc.

4.0 PROCEDURE

The DPP PLAC process will focus on a documentation approach. Credit for competencies achieved will be in one of the following areas:

- Population and Public Health
- Management
- Research

Program Responsibilities:

1. The learner candidate will be sent an practicum package 4 months prior to the practicum commencement that contains the PLAC policy and introduces the concept.
2. If the learner candidate is interested in pursuing the PLAC process, the Manager, Dietetics/Dietetic Practicum Lead (DPL) will discuss with the learner if they feel they may have the experiences required to demonstrate competency in a specific area.
3. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL will help direct the learner to select the most appropriate evaluation to help guide them in demonstrating competencies achieved in a specific area.
4. PLAC can take various forms such as:
 - Modifying the number or type of learning activities/projects given
 - Offer different or more advanced learning opportunities
 - Alter the length of the Dietetic Learner's program
5. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL supervises and provides feedback to the learner/applicant as he/she is completing the documentation process.
6. The MANAGER, DIETETICS/DPL pulls together a review committee and explains the process to the committee.
7. A successful review of the PLAC is expected to yield a minimum credit of 4 weeks of experience. If upon initial assessment the MANAGER, DIETETICS determines PL (Prior Learning) is not substantive or relevant a formal assessment is NOT recommended.
8. If PLAC is awarded, the MANAGER, DIETETICS will discuss with respective preceptors.

Learner Candidate Responsibilities:

1. If the learner wishes to proceed with the PLAC process they must submit a letter of intent to the Manager, Dietetics/DPL at least 2 months (60 days) prior to the scheduled start of the practicum program. To be considered for PLAC, documentation must be received by the Manager, Dietetics/DPL within the first four weeks of the program.
2. Learners must document specific activities that have been completed and demonstrate how these activities result in competency development. Applicants must have activities used for demonstrating prior learning, verified by someone who oversaw or supervised the activity and can attest to completion of the activity by the applicant and to their level of achievement (e.g. completed with guidance or utilization of the program performance evaluation rating system). These documents will be provided in a competency development portfolio (CDP).
3. The learner may be requested to participate in an interview, via teleconference or in person, to discuss with the Review Committee their portfolio and respond to any questions the Review Committee may have.

Conditions

- Experiences used to demonstrate PLAC must have been completed within a previous 10 year timeframe.
- Learners who receive an unfavourable decision from the review for PLAC will have access to an appeal process.

Exceptions

- If the learner chooses to apply for the process and has completed a thesis based masters, they will be considered for automatic credit (competency) of the practice based project component of the DPP;
 - Learners who have completed a thesis based masters will not have to document competencies achieved, but will have to provide proof of successful completion of their Master's project (transcript and reference from advisor).

The typical Competency Development Portfolio will include but is not limited to:

- Resume
- Competency Development Profile that identifies the *Performance Indicators* that required competency development, the ICDEP Practice Competency, and the activities the applicant engaged in that would lead to competency development.
- Completed program evaluations that have been signed off by a Dietitian or other individual (applicants who have prior experience that is closely related to criteria used in the practicum evaluation may use those forms to record and verify learning)
- Work samples i.e. written work, presentation summaries, reports

Review Mechanism:

1. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL will assign a Review Committee or consult with other Registered Dietitians who have appropriate content expertise.

2. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL organizes a Review Committee and determines when the CDP is ready to be submitted.
3. The Review Committee evaluates the submission to determine if the documentation is sufficient to be given PLAC.
4. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL provides feedback to the learner following the RC review:
 - The CDP is accepted and credit is awarded
 - Clarification/further documentation/projects is required pending credit award
 - The CDP is rejected. The learner can appeal

If the submission is successful, the Manager, Dietetics/DPL will determine the amount of program time to be credited and convey to the learner the competencies credited and the impact of this on revising the program outline. This decision will be communicated in writing to the learner.

The retention of PLAC records will be kept in accordance with the Retention of Records for Learners Policy. The practicum is customized to meet learner's competency needs. The documentation of previous learning, and related correspondence, will be retained in the learner's permanent file.

Appeal of PLAC Procedure

Dietetic learners have the right to appeal a decision that results in no competencies being rewarded. The purpose of this policy is to rule on the fairness of the decision made by the RC and determine whether the decision was warranted.

Appeal Steps

1. The learner must submit to the Manager, Dietetics/DPL within 5 working days of receipt of written notice of the PLAC decision, in writing, an "Intent to Appeal Notice" which clearly states the reason(s) for which the PLAC decision is being appealed.
2. The Manager, Dietetics/DPL will meet with the learner within five working days of receipt of the learner's "Intent to Appeal Notice" to review and discuss the reasons for the decision.
3. At the completion of the discussion, the learner will be asked if he/she intends to exercise the option of proceeding to the next stage of the appeal and will be given one working day to notify the Manager, Dietetics/DPL in writing of that decision. If he/she does not appeal, the results of the PLAC will be kept on file and will be the final decision.
4. In the event that the learner proceeds with the Appeal, the Manager, Dietetics will activate a committee of a minimum of two external reviewers (including a minimum of one practicum coordinator(s) and/or professional leader (from another practicum program).
5. The External Appeal Committee will review the package and:
 - a. The learner attends the meeting (via teleconference) to give a short oral presentation of the portfolio and to address any questions that may have resulted from the review process.
 - i. Applicants will have the experiences verified, for example, by an oral or written examination, transcript, a mock counselling session, or some

other appropriate practical experience in order that the level of knowledge and ability is in fact demonstrated for the requirements of the program for which the applicant believes to have suitable prior experience.

- b. The External Review Committee provides feedback to the learner and:
 - i. The portfolio is accepted and credit is awarded or
 - ii. Clarification/further documentation is required pending credit award or
 - iii. The portfolio is rejected.

The decision of the External Appeal Committee is final.

5.0 INTERPRETATION

Questions of interpretation or application of this policy or its procedures will be referred to the Manager, Dietetics.

6.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice](#)

AUTHORITIES AND OFFICERS

The following is a list of authorities and officers for this policy:

- a. Approving Authority: DPP Committee
- b. Responsible Officer: Manager, Dietetics
- c. Procedural Authority: DPP Committee
- d. Procedural Officer: Manager, Dietetics

Review and Revision History

Review Period: 2 years or as required

Date for Next Review: 2026 08 01

Date	Action
2013 05 09	First Version
2016 08 22	Minor Edits
2018 08 01	New Template, Minor edits
2021 08 13	Health Sciences & Interprofessional Education Committee dissolved June 2021. DPP Committee now responsible.
2022 10 12	New template
2023 09 04	Minor edits including the addition of the DPL role and removal of a Dietitians of Canada representative on the External Review Committee (no longer applicable).
2024 08 06	Program and manager title changes throughout

