Quality Assurance in PLAR Annotated Bibliography

Quality Assurance in PLAR
Volume III

November 2007

To obtain this document's companion reports, *Quality Assurance in PLAR: Issues and Strategies for Post-secondary Institutions – Volume I, and Quality Assurance in PLAR: A Guide for Institutions – Volume II,* go to the CIRL website at **www.cirl.org** or contact the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning at: **inquiries@cirl.org**

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PLAR
Annotated Bibliography

Prepared by:

Joy Van Kleef, Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning
Shirley Amichand, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Martha Ireland, The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University
Kim Orynik, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Judith Potter, College of Extended Learning, University of New Brunswick

November, 2007

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The Quality Assurance in PLAR project is an initiative led by the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning in partnership with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University, and the College of Extended Learning, University of New Brunswick.

The project has produced three publications designed to inform, train, and promote prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) in post-secondary institutions.

- *Quality Assurance in PLAR: Issues and Strategies for Post-secondary Institutions – Volume I* is a report that examines international and Canadian practice.
- *Quality Assurance in PLAR: A Guide for Institutions – Volume II* is a practical guide for implementing PLAR principles, policies, and assessment practices at an institutional level.
- *Quality Assurance in PLAR: Annotated Bibliography – Volume III* is this annotated bibliography constitutes the third and final publication of the project.

When we first embarked on this project, we did not expect to find many sources of literature on quality assurance in PLAR. However, our explorations have taken us around the world and we have uncovered many initiatives that explicitly and implicitly address the issue and offer useful strategies to improve quality in recognizing formal, non-formal and informal learning. Through this annotated bibliography, we hope to increase awareness of the valuable work that has been undertaken here in Canada and elsewhere, and thereby encourage quality practice, new research, and strategic policy development.

This annotated bibliography is divided into two sections. Section One presents literature on quality assurance in PLAR in ten countries as well as a number of multi-national initiatives. The books, articles, reports and websites were reviewed during the research phase of the Quality Assurance in PLAR project. They were selected for this bibliography based on the extent to which their content addressed the issue of quality assurance as well as the partners' assessment of their potential utility and interest to readers in the Canadian context.

Section Two presents literature on quality assurance in higher education and assessment in seven countries in addition to some multi-national initiatives. The literature in this section is only a small sampling of the many sources that exist in this field. They were selected for this bibliography as examples of mainstream literature on quality assurance in higher education that have direct relevance to the assessment of prior learning.

Section One: Quality Assurance in PLAR

The following 40 books, reports, articles and websites* present literature on quality assurance in PLAR. Citations are presented by country to assist readers in locating specific information.

Australia

1. Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board. (2004). *National principles and operational guidelines for recognition of prior learning (RPL).* Sydney: Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board.

In 1995, Australia established a national Qualifications Framework, a system in which all formal qualifications are linked. The Framework is used as a basis for recognizing prior learning (RPL). The AQFAB has established national RPL principles and operational guidelines for education and training providers across the country. The intention is to encourage national consistency while at the same time recognize the wide diversity of existing policies and practices. The document provides an administrative and qualitative framework for education and training organizations to use in establishing assessment processes, forms of credit, quality assurance mechanisms, support for learners, advice and information, fees and funding, and appeal mechanisms. It is useful for any organization interested in establishing quality-based structures for the delivery of prior learning assessment and can be accessed at: http://www.aqf.edu.au/rplnatprin.htm

2. Booth, R., Clayton, B., House, R., Roy, S. (2002). *Maximizing confidence in assessment decision-making: Resource kit for assessors.* Kensington Park: Australian National Training Authority.

A quality assurance system for assessment of RPL in the vocational education and training sector in Australia is the goal of this resource document. It provides an overview of how institutions can develop quality assurance moderation processes as well as eight detailed strategies for imbedding quality assurance in internal institutional practice and partnerships and networks with external organizations. The kit provides several templates and checklists for auditing current practice and reviewing the competence of assessors and concrete examples of how they have been used. It also provides some innovative tools for ensuring quality in simulated assessments, third party evidence, and on-the-job assessments. This is an excellent source of practical information on how to turn the rhetoric of quality assurance into practice and is available online at: http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/780.html#Availability

* All websites were functional at the time of publication – January, 2008).

Canada

3. Amichand, S., Ireland, M., Orynik, K., Potter, J., Van Kleef, J. (2007). *Quality assurance in PLAR: A guide for post-secondary institutions – Volume II.* Joint publication of Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, and the College of Extended Learning, University of New Brunswick.

This guide is the second of a three volume set of publications designed to inform, train, and promote quality assurance in PLAR in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Volume 2 can be used as a stand-alone tool or in conjunction with its companion documents. It is a practical guide designed to help institutions set up quality assurance processes and training. It includes helpful information on PLAR principles, policies and procedures, assessment standards and criteria, methodologies, and professional development for advisors, assessors, and administrators. This publication can be obtained from What's New at: http://www.cirl.org

4. Bèlanger, C. & Mount, J. (1998). Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) in Canadian universities. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 28, (2-3), 99-119.

The authors of this study report the results of a 1997 survey of Canadian universities and their involvement with PLAR. A 25-item questionnaire is used to determine the profile PLAR has within institutions, institutional perspectives on its appropriateness at the university level, and anticipated directions within the university. The results indicate an openness of the university community toward the PLAR concept but reluctance to implement it. The authors contend that broadly speaking, universities appear to prefer to not have PLAR as part of the landscape. Quality assurance is identified as a major source of concern. The authors liken the slow development of PLAR to the early days of continuing and distance education when institutional credibility was seen to be in jeopardy through "credit giveaway" concerns. They characterize PLAR however as a cogent response to changes in our learner population and caution that if universities do not accept PLAR as such, alternative educational providers will. The data in this article is somewhat dated but it is a revealing investigation of Canadian university perspectives on PLAR.

5. Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning. (2006). *PLAR report and recommendations: A PLAR model for nursing baccalaureate equivalency.* Toronto: College of Nurses of Ontario.

A need to do a better job at recognizing the knowledge and skills of immigrant nurses led the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) to develop the PLAR model presented in this report. Included are several components of a credential and prior learning recognition system including foundation principles to guide development, criteria for applicant eligibility, process quality assurance criteria, and a step-by-step assessment sequence.

The report outlines the collaborative development process used by the CNO to engage relevant stakeholders and potential assessing agencies. This report provides useful information to regulatory bodies interested in developing PLAR services with integrated quality assurance. Responsibility for implementing the model has been given to a university for development. This report can be accessed at: http://www.cno.org/docs/policy/46010_PLAR.pdf

6. Day, M., Zakos, P. (2000). *Developing benchmarks for prior learning assessment and recognition: Guidelines for the Canadian practitioner.* Belleville: Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment.

The result of a federal government-funded research project on PLAR, this report consists of five learning activities that enable PLAR practitioners to reflect on and improve their professional practice. The role of Canadian PLAR practitioners is described including advisors, assessors and coordinators. Tools such as self-assessment guides and sample forms are included. The guide is intended to help practitioners use assessment theory in the development of their profession. Its exercises may be useful to practitioners involved in introductory PLAR training.

7. Douglas College. (2000). *The learners' perspectives on prior learning assessment: results of a provincial survey of PLA students.* Victoria: Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, British Columbia.

Using the PLA quality assurance kit noted in annotation #8 below, thirteen colleges administered a questionnaire to students who had received credits through prior learning assessment over a two-year period. Responses on student demographics, credits sought, satisfaction, barriers encountered, and prior learning assessment practices are documented in this report. The study presents baseline data for determining effectiveness of PLA operations in British Columbia colleges and guiding further development. As one of the few studies in Canada that explore PLA from the adult learner's perspective, this is a valuable source of information and a useful tool for other institutions to adopt to collect their own data.

8. Dunlop, C., Ebner, C., Gomes, M., McRae, R., Promnitz, J. (1998). *Quality assurance kit for the practice of prior learning assessment in public post-secondary education in British Columbia.* Victoria, BC: Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

These authors present three tools that institutions can use or adapt to ensure quality assurance in PLAR. They are a PLAR checklist of procedures and indicators of the extent to which such procedures are in place, a candidate satisfaction survey, and a faculty/staff satisfaction survey. The authors contend that information obtained through regular use of these tools, within the context of institutions' overall monitoring and evaluation programs, will provide valuable data for improving PLAR practice. Additional quality assurance strategies are also suggested such as faculty and staff training in PLAR,

mentoring, the use of advisory committees, formal evaluation studies, individual interviews, focus group interviews, and transcript analyses. This is a handy resource for institutions in the early stages of developing PLAR and wishing to imbed quality assurance mechanisms. It can be obtained from: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/20_MN1704_PLA_QualityAssuranceKit.pdf

In 2000, the candidate satisfaction survey component of the Kit was tested and revised. The revised version can be found in the appendices in The Learners' Perspectives on Prior Learning Assessment at: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/welcome.htm

9. Lennox, J., & Philip, L. (2000). *A comparative analysis of the academic performance of graduate students admitted under the special-case provisions at York University.* Unpublished report. Toronto: York University, Faculty of Graduate Studies.

This study examines York University's 20-year history of admitting graduate students who do not meet the minimum academic entrance requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies but who had prior learning which appeared to be equivalent. These students did not meet the normal admission requirements for graduate school either because they had not completed a four-year undergraduate degree or did not have sufficient academic grades to meet minimum standards. They were admitted to their programs as special case students following prior learning assessment by a graduate school committee.

The study tracks the academic success of these students and briefly explores issues that arise from the University's practice to admit them. The specific purpose of the study is to see what if any differences there were in the academic performance of these students compared with students who had met the normal admission requirements.

The study concludes that in nearly all the programs in the study, both groups of students demonstrated relatively equal levels of performance. Overall, special case students had higher program completion rates than the provincial average. Of particular note is the study's finding that special case students also took slightly less time to earn their degrees. This research satisfied the Faculty of Graduate Studies that grades and test scores only reflect a certain type of student and that presumptions that special case students lower academic standards is fallacious.

This interesting research adds to growing information on PLA at Canadian universities. Additional information on the assessment process used by the university would have been helpful to other researchers as well as a description of whether PLA was also used to award credit within the students' programs.

10. Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board. (2006). *Handbook for public organizations.* Toronto: Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board.

This handbook provides organizations applying for approval from the Ontario Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) with the criteria that will be used by the Board in its consideration of initial or repeat applications for approval of degree program offerings. The criteria include a set of requirements for applicants who are proposing to award credit for prior learning. Applicants must submit their policies and procedures pertaining to PLAR to the Board and ensure that degree-level standards and program learning outcomes are met. The PEQAB has adapted the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) academic and administrative standards as the basis for its criteria for PLAR. This handbook represents an uncommon integration of quality assurance in PLAR with quality assurance of mainstream institutional activities. It can be found at: https://ozone.scholarsportal.info/bitstream/1873/2272/1/259828.pdf

11. Red River College of Applied Arts and Technology. (2005). *PLAR strategic and operational plan 2005-2010.* Winnipeg: Red River College of Applied Arts and Technology.

In 2005, Red River College established a PLAR strategic and operational plan that calls for the integration of PLAR into the mainstream programs and services. The plan establishes broad strategies and specific actions, assigns roles and responsibilities, creates direct linkages with the College's overall strategic plan, and sets timelines over a six-year period. Quality in PLAR is one of six major goals. This component of the plan includes developing PLAR in all College programs, providing learner-centred assessments through a variety of delivery options, and adopting principles of continuous quality improvement with monitoring and evaluation as key activities. This strategy for ensuring that PLAR is an integral part of College operations is almost unique in the postsecondary system in Canada and offers many useful ideas to institutions wishing to take a more coordinated approach to assessing prior learning.

12. Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology. (2005). *Guide to prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) at SIAST.* Prince Albert, Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology.

The first edition of this guide to PLAR was prepared in 1996 and it has been revised three times since. The content is anchored in a set of standards drawn from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and a set of principles (e.g. access, consistency, context, credibility) that provide a conceptual framework for PLAR services. Indicators of assessment reliability, validity, cost effectiveness, and competence are presented and sample documents such as PLAR application and results forms, and a methodology chart are provided to assist faculty and staff. This guide is a clear, concise example of how quality assurance can be imbedded in the written PLAR policies and administrative procedures of an institution. Only methods of long-term monitoring and evaluation are unaddressed. The guide can be obtained from: http://www.siast.sk.ca/pdf/plarguide.pdf

13. Van Kleef, J., Amichand, S., Ireland, M., Orynik, K., Potter, J. (2007). *Quality assurance in PLAR: Issues and strategies for post-secondary institutions – Volume I.* Joint publication of Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, and the College of Extended Learning, University of New Brunswick.

Quality Assurance in PLAR is a three volume set of publications designed to inform, train, and promote quality assurance in PLAR in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Volume I examines quality assurance in PLAR in several countries and from this analysis, presents a model for understanding current quality assurance processes and developing new ones in Canada. The report presents key quality assurance issues facing Canadian institutions and strategies for improving the quality of policies, procedures and assessment decision-making. The target audiences for this publication are post-secondary institutions and public policy makers. The report can be accessed from What's New at: http://www.cirl.org.

14. Wong, A. (1996). *Prior learning assessment: A guide for university faculty and administrators.* Saskatoon: University Extension Press, University of Saskatchewan.

Wong presents prior learning assessment as an innovative reform being proposed in postsecondary education to improve access and program placement, and provide greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of results at Canadian universities. Although it is an older document, it remains a valuable source of information and ideas for university administrators and faculty interested in implementing PLA services. An overview of PLA, its history, driving forces, and benefits are briefly presented as well as a review of several issues and implications that PLA presents to university faculty regarding quality, delivery, policy-making, and administrative support. In one of the few Canadian publications to do so, Wong briefly discusses the relation between adult learning theory and prior learning assessment.

England

15. Johnson, B. (2002). *Models of APEL and quality assurance.* Brentwood, England: Cravitz Printing Company Limited.

This report presents the results of a survey on the APEL policies and practices of 37 higher education institutions in England. As well as identifying quality assurance issues, Johnson uses the collected data to develop a detailed model for "seven stages" of APEL administration that imbed elements of quality assurance. Emphasis is placed on quality assured information systems and audit trails, and the knowledge, skills, and expertise required of APEL players in order to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This book presents an excellent administrative model for APEL that can be adapted to other jurisdictions. However, the survey is limited to APEL using portfolios. It does not address

quality assurance in the development and selection of other methods/tools of assessment, or in the judgments required in decision-making.

16. Johnson, B., Walsh, A. (2005). *SEEC companion to the QAA guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning.* London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

In this brief eleven-page booklet, the authors provide adult educators with highlights of the APEL guidelines on accreditation of prior learning published by Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2004). They explain the principles that underpin good practice in clear language with a view to guiding adult educators on practical ways to ensure that the APEL processes they develop meet with the guidelines. This is a useful introductory guide to institutions and practitioners interested in developing or reviewing their own APEL policies and practices.

17. Lahiff, A. (1998). APEL for post-compulsory education and training (PCET) practitioners. In D. Croker, D. Ellis, Y. Hill, J. Storan, & I. Turner (Eds.), *APEL: Beyond graduateness.* Norwich, England: Page Bros. Ltd.

Lahiff examines an APEL process that uses portfolio development and reflective writing supported by evidence in a part-time Master's program in Post-compulsory Education and Training. She notes that the issue of quality is seen to be more problematic for APEL in that learning acquired through traditional means and adhering to established university quality assurance systems associated with assessment are commonly considered insufficient. Lahiff examines two strategies that support quality assurance in APEL: a) assessing prior learning against overarching program aims and b) using generic assessment criteria, both of which provide comparability to other parts of a program and with other programs. She also suggests that involving APEL tutor and assessment staff in teaching in other parts and levels of a program, also contributes to comparability within and across levels. A third strategy the project proposes is a system of external examinations and assessors who deliver the program at other institutions to give added perspective. This chapter presents some innovative APEL strategies to consider but greater detail is needed. This may be possible to obtain through direct contact with the authors or institution involved.

18. Learning from Experience Trust. (2000). *Mapping APEL: Accreditation of prior experiential learning in English higher education institutions.* London: Goldsmith College.

This large study of APEL in English higher education institutions involved a two-stage survey (107 and 42 institutions respectively) and several case studies of institutions that offered APEL. The research focused on the extent to which APEL occurred, and practices that allowed APEL to be cost-effective. Quality assurance arrangements were examined and resulted in noteworthy findings. For example, 2/3 of respondents with APEL reported no different quality assurance practices from their normal quality assurance,

and 1/3 reported concerns about APEL's reliability and validity. Reported quality assurance mechanisms included the use of committees, external examiners (from other institutions), monitoring the consistency of the application of APEL regulations, ongoing annual reviews of claims, appeals, second assessors, approval boards, and the use of "case law" or precedent. The report concludes that the "key to quality assurance in APEL is to find parallels within taught provision, and use them to define how APEL should be administered" (p.47).

An analysis of different institutional approaches to APEL and a presentation of effective practices, followed by recommendations for expanding APEL in England, round out this interesting report. The study's report is extensive.

19. Saxton, J. (undated). *Never mind the quality: Feel the credit*. Experiential Learning: An overview of practitioner approaches. Publisher unknown.

In response to concerns about the lack of consistent standards and quality in APEL, Saxton proposes a set of seven good practice principles that resulted from a project commissioned by the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery, and Health Visiting of Scotland. The principles take those developed by CAEL in the 1980's into account but offer some additions such as the need to base APEL systems on learning outcomes and the need for specific quality assurance procedures. Saxton then offers institutions fifteen desirable features of rigorous APEL systems that include procedures and structures in the areas of policy, roles and responsibilities, training, and communications. Like other European literature on APEL, Saxton's proposal calls for the integration of APEL quality assurance into institutions' existing quality assurance systems.

20. Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer. (2003). *Revised SEEC code of practice for the assessment of prior (experiential) learning*. London: Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

This code of practice was developed by the membership of the SEEC based on their direct experience with APEL, the need for an explicit expression of common principles, and the need for member institutions to reaffirm a commitment to the highest achievable APEL standards. The code contains eight institutional recommendations pertaining to the need for common definitions, and formal demonstrations of institutional commitment in curriculum development, APEL process integration, monitoring, staff training, and communications. The code also makes six operational recommendations regarding the assessment process itself, focusing on the importance of available information and learner support, the roles and responsibilities of candidates, the distinction between experience and learning, the need for valid assessments based on clear criteria and evidence, and quality assurance considerations. The code highlights some important features for APEL processes but the basis for the inclusion of these particular features is unclear, and the level of generality of the language used in the recommendations renders the code less practical than other publications.

21. University of Wolverhampton. (2003). *Guidelines for the accreditation of prior achievement.* Wolverhampton, England: University of Wolverhampton.

The university's guidelines for accreditation of prior achievement (APA) are intended to promote a consistent, high quality standard for APA (formal, non-formal, and informal learning). This handbook provides a framework for APA by identifying implementation issues and highlighting what schools must ensure with respect to transparency of the APA process, faculty and staff training, learner responsibility, and criteria for rewarding credit. Of particular interest, is an aide mémoire on the generation of records appropriate for each stage of the APA process to ensure adequate documentation, and a flow chart of the APA process used at the university.

This handbook is written at a level of generality that accommodates a range of models for APA while at the same time, is aligned with the Code of Practice issued by the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (also annotated in this bibliography). The Guideline is not as detailed as some publications but does identify many policy and administrative issues for institutions interested in implementing quality assurance in their APA practices. It can be obtained from:
http://www.wlv.ac.uk/PDF/aca_apa_guidance.pdf

Ireland

22. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. (2005). *Principles and operational guidelines for the recognition of prior learning in further and higher education and training.* Dublin: National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

This publication outlines the position of the NQAI on RPL and provides an exemplar of the arrangements that education and training institutions and awards councils should consider putting in place. Since awards councils in Ireland have the authority to grant entire degrees through RPL, their adoption of RPL represents an unusual opportunity for adult learners to obtain substantial academic credit for their prior learning.

The paper describes five principles that the NQAI recommends to all awarding bodies. One of these is explicitly identified as "quality assurance" but the other four principles also involve elements of quality. The document stipulates that all providers of higher education and training programs (except universities) must develop statements on RPL arrangements for each of their programs. Guidelines are provided to assist institutions and awards councils in the development of their own quality assured policies and procedures. Universities are also strongly encouraged to implement similar arrangements. The principles and guidelines can be accessed at:
http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/documents/NFQ-principles06brown.pdf

New Zealand

> 23. New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (1993). *The recognition of prior learning: Quality assurance in education and training.* Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

This publication was produced by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as a source of practical information on criteria and standards for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) within the framework of the country's National Qualifications Framework. Although details on arrangements are somewhat out of date, this document is instructive in its priority treatment of aboriginal learning and culture, and the guidance it provides regarding criteria for the accreditation of RPL providers, registration of assessors, the use of moderation procedures to ensure consistent assessment results, and its presentation of various elements of the RPL process including assessor qualifications and staff training. It also provides a simple, flexible, good practice model (candidate and provider flow chart) that would be helpful to any organization in the early stages of implementation.

Scotland

> 24. Scottish Qualifications Authority. (2005). *Guidelines for the recognition of prior informal learning (RPL).* Glasgow, Scotland: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has prepared RPL principles and guidelines for Scotland's education and training sectors in order to promote among users of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), a consistent approach to recognizing informal prior learning within a context of clearly defined quality assurance mechanisms. The document presents six core principles for the operation of RPL all of which relate to the accessibility, flexibility, clarity, and quality of the process. Of particular note are statements that RPL quality assurance mechanisms should be integrated within existing quality assurance processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and reliability, and that RPL processes should be subject to external scrutiny. This document is directed at the use of RPL within the context of a national qualifications framework, which Canada does not have. However, many elements of this document will assist Canadian adult educators to understand issues associated with the recognition of prior learning and to obtain practical guidance how to establish a stable and quality assured process.

The guidelines are the result of national debate and present key features of RPL processes for personal/career development and for academic credit. Assessment criteria for the review of evidence of prior learning and elements of an RPL monitoring process are presented. They can be viewed at:
http://www.scqf.org.uk/downloads/rpl/SCQF%20RPL%20Guidelines-final-030805.pdf

South Africa

25. South African Qualifications Authority. (2004). *Criteria and guidelines for the implementation of the recognition of prior learning.* Pretoria: South African Qualifications Authority.

This policy document presents the principles, underlying philosophy, and core criteria governing quality assurance in RPL in South Africa as well as the strategic framework adopted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to implement RPL. The framework reflects a national intention to use RPL as a tool to support a transformation of the educational system as a whole and a vehicle to obtain redress from the past injustices of apartheid by using assessment to promote access to and acceleration through educational programs, and aid in personal development and career advancement. Quality assurance criteria are formulated in seven areas of policy and practice, and self-assessment tools are provided in each area to help institutions determine quality gaps that may exist before, during or following assessments.

South Africa is one of several countries that have taken the position that the integrity and credibility of an assessment system requires a comprehensive system of quality assurance. This policy requires the establishment of quality management systems to maintain and monitor the quality of RPL offered by education and training quality assurance bodies. The policy is a cohesive, coherent document that offers several helpful ideas to institutions interested in implementing a broad-based recognition system.

26. University of Fort Hare. (2005). *Recognition of prior learning policy.* Alice, South Africa: University of Fort Hare.

The RPL policy of the University of Fort Hare is an explicit response to South Africa's national legislation on RPL and National Plan for Higher Education, which establish RPL as a critical component of South Africa's education and training system. The university's RPL service is focused on access to higher education, broadening the social base of higher education, and increasing the number of graduates. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that consistent practices and standards are applied.

The policy outlines guiding principles upon which RPL activities are anchored as well as essential features of prior learning that must be taken into account during assessments. The policy addresses the uses to which RPL can be put and the human resource practices that must be in place to ensure that academics, advisors, assessors, moderators, and administrators perform the appropriate functions. A section devoted to quality assurance presents a twelve-point list on the process and how it should be integrated into existing curriculum development, assessment policies, academic reviews, student support and academic planning, staff development, assessment validity, information systems, appeals, continuous reviews, and student tracking. Several types of assessment methods are suggested. This policy is designed in part to accelerate redress of past discrimination but its cohesive approach to RPL implementation is instructive for educators in other countries including Canada.

The Netherlands

> 27. Kenniscentrum EVC. (2007). *The covenant: A quality code for APL – Identifying and accrediting a lifetime of learning.* Utrecht: Kenniscentrum EVC.

The government-mandated Knowledge Centre for APL in The Netherlands was assigned the task of developing a quality framework for APL procedures in consultation with a range of social stakeholders (excluding public universities). The resulting covenant represents the voluntary commitment of all signatories to promote the use of APL in accordance with five principles and accompanying details of implementation. The Covenant is intended for use by all accredited APL providers, as determined by authorized evaluating organizations. It requires providers to produce an APL report that documents verified competencies relating to a job standard, educational standard (for admission, exemption, or academic credit) or professional standard. Accordingly, APL reports have standing beyond the educational system. This covenant is a good example of a formal collaborative approach to quality assurance in APL by organizations with diverse interests, despite the obvious absence of universities in its development.

United States

> 28. Ashbrook, R., Cox, M., Dyck, R., Ghavami, F., Kent, E., & Marteus, K. (1995). Innovations in the assessment of experiential learning. In *Celebrating excellence: learning and teaching in adult higher education. National conference on alternative and external degree programs for adults.* (pp. 50-59). (Columbus, Ohio, October 5-7, 1995).

The authors of this conference paper present an overview of the Experiential Learning Program at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. They also engage in an informative discussion of related assessment issues that have been addressed by the University's Competency Assessment Panel over its ten years of experience in assessing prior learning. The article raises fundamental questions about experiential learning, which are useful reminders for all adult educators. What is it? Who should assess it? What is college-level learning? What are appropriate methods of assessment? Should learning acquired through non-accredited instruction be eligible for assessment? The authors realistically restrict their discussion to Capital University's approach to these issues without prescribing single solutions.

> 29. Cohen, R. Whittaker, U. (1994). Assessing learning from experience. In M. Keeton (Ed.) *Perspectives on experiential learning: Prelude to a global conversation about learning.* Chicago: The 1994 International Experiential Learning Conference.

Cohen and Whittaker introduce Chapter 2 of this interesting collection of articles on experiential learning by examining the role of assessment, the uses of prior learning assessment and some of the barriers to its implementation in universities. They note that many of the barriers to fuller acceptance of the assessment of prior learning are culture-specific, but concerns about quality assurance seem to be global. In their view,

the quality barrier is more a problem of implementation than lack of practices and procedures for maintaining standards. The authors contend that serious attention to quality assurance is vital to the success of prior learning assessment programs. They also contend that the most vital element of quality assurance is the selection and training of assessors who can implement whatever standards have been set. Cohen and Whittaker refer to commentary by several researchers who support the need for more attention to be paid to quality assurance in assessments and administrative procedures.

30. Fiddler, M., Marienau, C., and Whitaker, U. (2006). *Assessing Learning: Standards, principles, & procedures*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

This revised version of Urban Whitaker's original book on standards and principles in assessing prior learning (1989) presents some contemporary innovations that expand and enhance the relevance of the original text. Assessment in venues such as the workplace and in non-credit courses are added to the discussion and an emphasis is placed on the links between self-assessment and educational and personal planning. The ultimate purpose of this book is to promote the efficient, quality-assured practice of assessing formal and experiential learning through the application of the proposed standards.

31. Fisher, V. (1991). *An institutional evaluation of perceptions and expectations of a portfolio assessment program.* Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College.

Following direction from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools to evaluate a perceived under-utilization of PLA at Columbia University Teachers College, Fisher conducts an institution-wide survey on perspectives of the portfolio assessment program. Senior administrators, staff, faculty and students are included in the project which consists of 51 personal interviews, document analysis, and 96 telephone interviews. Fisher finds that lack of information and credible policies on PLA, concerns about academic integrity, ambiguity around leadership, and incongruities between the College's mission and portfolio assessment, were important impediments to effective implementation. Several practical recommendations for further study are made on issues such as the incongruence between faculty philosophies about appropriate college learning and learning acquired through work and life experience. This study will be of interest to institutions wishing to implement or improve their PLA processes.

32. Harriger, C. (1991). *Barriers to the optimal use of prior learning assessment: an institutional evaluation of perceptions of credit for prior learning.* Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College.

Harriger identifies eight barriers to full acceptance of credit for prior learning at the State campus of Columbia University Teachers College by interviewing administrators, faculty, and students. Perceptions on the meaning of a college education, the status of

adult learners at the institution, the concept of prior learning assessment, and the State University's PLA program were evaluated. Extensive interviews reveal that PLA is not integral to the University and that although it is generally accepted among students and administrators, faculty are mixed in their views on the academic integrity of PLA and on the importance of the role of adult learners at the University. Harriger's report reveals deeply rooted sources of resistance to PLA and is an excellent resource for any institution wishing to examine its own attitudes and practices. Several interesting recommendations are made for improving the situation at the University and for further research. In particular, Harriger raises a need in the literature for a stronger philosophical and theoretical foundation for PLA.

33. Pearson, W. (2000). *Enhancing adult student persistence: The relationship between prior learning assessment and persistence toward the baccalaureate degree.* Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University at Ames.

This study investigates the possibility of an association between the portfolio form of prior learning assessment (PLA) and student persistence. Building on two earlier studies (Snyder, 1990, Freers, 1994), Pearson examines several hundred part-time students eligible to apply for PLA credits over a ten year period to determine if participation in the PLA portfolio process is predictive of persistence. Findings indicate a strong association between PLA and student persistence with completion of the portfolio process doubling the odds of persistence for an average student. This is a carefully constructed and well-written research study, which will be of interest to college and university administrators as well as practitioners and policy makers. Limitations recognized by the author include the fact that only one institution was involved and several situational and dispositional variables noted in the literature review are not included in the study.

34. Snyder, G. (1990). *Persistence of community college students receiving credit for prior learning.* Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

This study examines the relationship between receiving credit for prior learning and persistence by conducting a regression analysis of eight student characteristics. Snyder finds that three variables - grade point average, age, and receiving credit for prior learning after at least one year of college attendance are significant in predicting persistence. A major finding is that students who receive credit for prior learning after at least one year of college persist to a significantly greater degree than students who do not seek credit for prior learning. Snyder suggests that institutions should take action to develop and advertise PLA. He also suggests several related areas for future research to better understand changes that occur in the motivation, confidence and self-esteem of students whose prior learning is recognized. This study is an excellent resource for researchers interested in the efficacy of PLA.

35. Whittaker, U. (1989). *Assessing learning standards, principles, & procedures*. Philadelphia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

By presenting and discussing a series of ten academic and administrative principles to guide the assessment of prior learning by postsecondary institutions, Whittaker offers institutions a means of ensuring high quality prior learning assessments. He also addresses several misconceptions about prior learning assessment that have hampered its adoption by academic institutions in the United States. Whittaker's standards have become the benchmark for PLA implementation in North America rendering this book a "must read" for all adult educators involved in the design and delivery of prior learning assessment services. This text is a companion of an equally important handbook for faculty by S. Simosko (1988) also published by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Multi-national Literature

36. Davies, P. (2006). *REFINE: Recognizing formal, informal and non-formal education.* Paris: European Commission.

This report builds on earlier efforts of the European TRANSFINE project by testing a set of prior learning assessment tools that could be part of a European methodological framework for recognizing formal, informal, and non-formal learning. Seven different tools are tested in a range of institutions/organizations in 12 countries. The results are compared in evaluated and recommendations are made to create a Validpass as a portfolio of assessment tools to allow candidates to analyze their own learning. The international comparison addresses quality assurance arrangements in each country (Czech Republic, England, Wales, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Scotland). The report concludes that quality assurance is a neglected aspect of assessment and recognition practices, and that priority should be given to full transparency and the training of the personnel involved as the main elements to ensure quality. The report is available at:
http://www.eucen.org/REFINE/CountryFinalReports/PATRefineFinalFullReportandProposaltoEC.pdf

37. EuroguideVal Project Partnership. (2007). *Handbook for the professionalisation of APEL practitioners*. Leonardo Da Vinci thematic action SE/05/C/P/TH-82601 2005-2007 Retrieved on Jan. 6, 2008 from:
http://www.euroguideval.org/EN/index.html

The EuroguideVAL Handbook is a compilation of the work achieved by the EuroguideVAL project, a European Commission funded research project on the professionalization of APEL professionals. The handbook is intended to assist persons involved in training in APEL.

The second section of the handbook includes proposed common European standards for professionals involved in the different stages of any APEL process. They represent a

consensus on the minimum requirements in respect of the "Common Principles for the Validation of Non formal and Informal Learning" agreed on (but not necessarily implemented as yet) by all European member states. The standards are not prescriptive, but rather a suggested starting point, to be adapted according to the needs of the particular systems of each European country.

The handbook includes a section on each project partner country, which provides an overview on how the issues were dealt with in each of these contexts, illustrating that although there are many differences across countries and much work left to be done, the standards have the potential to facilitate the development of the ongoing recognition and validation of non formal and informal learning outcomes for all European citizens. A CD version of the handbook is available. Both can be accessed from the project web site www.euroguideval.org.

38. European Commission. (2004). *Common European principles for validation for non-formal and informal learning.* Brussels: European Commission.

In 2003, following agreement among 31 Ministers of Education and Training, the European social partners, and the European Commission, the Commission appointed an expert group to consult with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a set of common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning that could be supported by members of the European Union. Organized on the basis of six themes, a final set of principles was adopted by the EU in 2004. The themes address: the purpose of validation, individual entitlements, responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders, confidence and trust, impartiality, and credibility and legitimacy. They are intended to strengthen the comparability and compatibility of different approaches to recognition at a number of levels across contexts. The principles are to be used as a guide and common reference point for developing recognition systems and methods. Quality assurance issues are embedded throughout the principles, which are in turn intended to link with related initiatives such as the *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning*, and newly developed instruments and formats of the Europass initiative.

39. Otero, M., McCoshan, A., Junge, K. (Eds). (2005). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning.* Brussels: ECOTEC Research and Consulting.

Validation initiatives in the public, private and third sectors of 30 countries are the subjects of this large report. An initial overview describes the key findings of the study including common factors and key differences in the ways that non-formal and informal learning are validated. Several factors motivating countries to promote validation and implementation are described. Common traits in practice are in areas of use, transferability of results, and the validity, reliability and authenticity of methodologies.

The authors note wide variations in the degree of uptake and acceptance of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning and examine activity levels of countries based

on three criteria: existence of a national legal framework or strategy, the use of high quality methods, and participation in all three sectors (public, private, voluntary). More detailed descriptions on validation initiatives in the three sectors in the 30 countries are presented including information on how they address the issue of methodological quality. This inventory was updated in 2007 and can be accessed at: http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/2007.html.

40. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. (2004). *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning.* Gloucester, England: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

These guidelines were developed collectively by higher education providers in the United Kingdom. They contain five general principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in higher education (which, they contend, are equally applicable to the quality assurance of APEL), and sixteen principles and explanatory notes for guidance in developing and refining assessment of prior learning practices. The principles primarily relate to the provision of information – its clarity, transparency, and accountability, the use of policies and procedures, the role of institutional staff, and monitoring. They also speak to the nature of assessment decisions – ones of academic judgment on whether learning derived from experience is equivalent to that which might be achieved in a formal program of study.

Overall, the guidelines promote the establishment of quality assurance in APEL, recommending that it be set within institutions' general frameworks for quality assurance, management, and enhancement. Of particular value, are suggestions that institutions consider how judgments about claims are verified and whether decisions are shared in ways that promote consistency and equity. The guidelines suggest the use of feedback from APEL candidates and external examiners to obtain this verification, as well as mechanisms for tracking the progress and performance of applicants who have made successful APEL claims. These guidelines are available at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf

Quality Assurance in Higher Education Programing and Assessment

Our examination of PLAR literature led us to review related literature on quality assurance in higher education programming and assessment. The following resources present descriptions and commentary on quality assurance policy statements, principles, guidelines and processes used in university programming in different countries. They do not necessarily refer directly to PLAR but they help us to understand the quality assurance contexts in which PLAR is required to operate.

Australia

41. Booth, R., Berwyn, C, House, R., & Roy, S. (2002). *Maximizing confidence in assessment decision-making: Resource kit for assessors.* Leabrook, Australia: NCVER.

This resource document offers several rationales for establishing quality assurance systems in postsecondary institutions and contains a useful presentation of seven strategies to assure quality in assessing learning. Each strategy addresses a different aspect of assessment and provides real life examples of their implementation in Australia, and New Zealand. Forms, templates and tools are included. Although the strategies relate to the assessment of sponsored learning, many of them can be used to improve the quality of PLAR processes and assessment methods and tools.

42. Centre for Adult Education (1996). Principles of moderation. In J. Kindler's *Moderation: What it is and why we have it. A discussion paper.* Melbourne: Centre for Adult Education.

The Centre uses a "moderation" process to address quality assurance in the assessment of learning related to their Certificate in General Education of Adults, a credential awarded from a program taught by literacy teachers in Australia. This document describes moderation processes (quality control and quality assurance) used to improve the quality and fairness of assessment processes. It then analyzes the effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses of each type of moderation. The document draws heavily on the work of Harlen (1994) and concludes that for the purposes of the Centre for Adult Education, a combination of moderation procedures may provide the most consistent results. Extrapolation of the points made in this policy document to the context of PLAR in postsecondary education represents several interesting, new ideas on how quality assurance in PLAR in Canada might be enhanced.

Canada

43. Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. (2007). *Overview of provincial and regional quality assurance mechanisms in Canadian higher education.* Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

AUCC describes the basic quality assurance measures used by universities and colleges in each province and territory of Canada using a framework of three mechanisms: legislation, internal and external review, and accreditation of professional programs. Legislation governs the establishment of private institutions, establishes provincial quality assessment boards/councils and protects the title of "university". Internal and external reviews evaluate new program proposals and modifications to existing programs. Accreditation evaluates the quality of programs against expectations of regulatory bodies. AUCC explains that these measures provide effective quality assurance while still respecting institutional autonomy. They are used in combination in lieu of the institutional accreditation processes used by other countries.

44. Council of Ministers of Education Canada. (2007). *Ministerial statement on quality assurance of degree education in Canada.* Toronto: Council of Ministers of Education Canada.

This important policy statement by all Ministers of Education in Canada endorses the new Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework, Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment and in so doing expresses a Ministerial expectation that postsecondary institutions be committed to working with other organizations to develop, enhance and maintain quality assurance standards and procedures that reflect best practices in quality assurance. The Ministers also state their responsibility for assuring themselves and the public that appropriate forms of quality assurance are in place in all degree-granting institutions.

To this end the Ministers provide a guideline outlining standards for new degree program quality assessment including that institutions: have admission requirements that ensure appropriate forms of assessment of prior learning for admission to programs, sufficient and appropriately qualified academic human resources, and program learning outcomes and standards that are sufficiently clear and at a level that will facilitate recognition of credentials by other stakeholders.

45. Joint Advisory Committee Working Group. (1993). *Principles for fair student assessment practices for education in Canada.* Edmonton: Joint Advisory Committee.

This report on fair student assessment practices was developed almost 15 years ago by a group of Canadian education organizations. It represents a consensus on what constitute principles and guidelines for fair assessment of students at primary and secondary levels of schooling but also takes the position that the first section of the report in particular, Part A is applicable at the post-secondary level with some

modifications. It is organized around five inter-related themes: developing and choosing methods of classroom assessment, collecting assessment information, judging and scoring student performance, summarizing and interpreting results, and reporting assessment findings. Part B applies to the development and use of standardized assessment methods. In both parts of this report, the guidelines are similar to those found in the literature on the assessment of post-secondary level learning and are useful in considering appropriate procedures for assessing prior learning.

46. Plant, G. (2007). *Access and excellence: The campus 2020 plan for British Columbia's post-secondary education system.* Victoria: Ministry of Advanced Education.

The government of British Columbia has embarked on a comprehensive review and planning process for the province's higher education system. This report is the result of research, consultations and reflections on the impact the 21st century will have on education and the changes that will be necessary to keep BC globally competitive. A theme identified during the author's consultations, is a belief that the shape of credentials will change. "We will become more interested in the whole portfolio of learning experiences, going beyond formal courses and programs to include a wide range of life and work experiences" (http://www.campus2020.ca/EN/bc's_learning_landscape_in_2020:_renewing_our_mission/).

Quality assurance is a key element of Plant's review, highlighting Canada as the only Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country that does not have a formal system of accreditation in higher education. Plant calls Canada's quality assurance mechanisms a patchwork that is confusing and ultimately self-defeating. He makes a total of 54 recommendations many of which touch directly or indirectly on the need for structural changes to improve the quality of higher education in Canada. This is a thought-provoking resource for institutions and researchers interested in quality assurance in the context of educational reform.

Ireland

47. Heads of Irish Universities. (2003). *A framework for quality in Irish universities.* Dublin: Conference of Heads of Irish Universities.

The Heads of Irish Universities of Ireland prepared this document to provide a common set of operating principles and guidelines for quality assurance in teaching, learning, and other services for Irish universities. It describes quality assurance structures and processes that use the concepts of quality improvement and institutional autonomy in tandem. The quality assurance model is a continuous cycle of analysis, reflection, and action using such mechanisms as self-assessment, peer review, quality offices, stakeholder participation, reporting, and action to comply with national legislation on quality assurance passed in 1997. This document provides useful ideas on quality assurance mechanisms that might be used or modified for prior learning assessment and

recognition processes. It does not however, specifically address quality assurance in assessing learning.

Scotland

> 48. Harlen, W. (1994, April). *Concepts of quality in student assessment*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. New Orleans: Scottish Council for Research in Education.

In this presentation, Harlen presents an overview of measures to improve quality control and quality assurance in the assessment of student learning. She argues that teacher-based assessment is superior to externally set examinations, although its dependability (validity, reliability) requires support measures and further research. Harlen reminds readers that assessment of learning is inherently inexact and its usefulness depends on the knowledge and skills of teachers in combining the best means of obtaining information (methods) with the appropriate tasks (tools) to create opportunities for students to show that they have the knowledge and skills in question.

Harlen reviews several individual and group-based approaches to quality control and quality assurance including using samples of assessments to demonstrate good practice, inter-departmental group moderation, appeal mechanisms, increasing a shared understanding of assessment criteria and procedures, imbedding assessment quality assurance in accreditation processes, and observation during assessments. Harlen concludes that improving the quality of the assessment process will inevitably lead to an improved quality of the assessment product. This is an excellent source of information for educators and institutions searching for ways to improve the quality of their assessments of both classroom-based and prior learning. It can be obtained from: **http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED367712&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED367712**

The Netherlands

> 49. Baartman, L., Bastiaens, T., & Kirschner, P. (2004, June). *Requirements for competency assessment programmes.* Paper presented at Onderwijs Research Days. Utrecht: Open University of the Netherlands.

The authors of this paper address competency assessment. They contend that using a single method of assessment is not sufficient to determine a competency and therefore assessment of competencies can and should be part of a complete assessment program. From their research and synthesis of the works of several authors, Baartmen et al present ten criteria for competency assessment that move quality assurance beyond test validity and reliability. The authors compare their criteria to Messick's (1994) quality framework for construct validity and they propose that their criteria be part of a framework that establishes assessment programs that are directly aligned with learning and instruction. Practical implications of each criterion are also discussed. The

challenges involved in both competency assessment and PLAR, make this paper a valuable resource for educators interested in constructing criteria for PLAR assessment tool development. It can be found by searching the internet based on title and first author.

United States

50. El-Khawas, E. (1998). *Quality assurance in higher education: Recent progress; challenges ahead.* Los Angeles: University of California.

In examining the current status of national policies on quality assurance in post-secondary education, El-Khawas assesses recent trends and considers some unresolved issues that shape the policy debate. She observes that many governments have decided that traditional academic controls over quality in post-secondary education are inadequate and more explicit assurances about quality are needed. Existing systems vary in scope and methods but there are core elements that typify most quality assurance programs – most common is the fact that issues of policy and practice receive more attention than some of the educational or learning issues that undergird quality.

El-Khawas contends that educational institutions need to respond to the new learning paradigm in which learning often take place at a distance, or is driven by international mobility. She argues that quality assurance must go beyond peer review and focus on the central issue of education – the learning – and thus educational capacity based on learning outcomes rather than institutional capacity based on structures and processes. She acknowledges that this will require collective action and offers some suggestions on how the developmental process could begin.

51. Herman, J., Archbacher, P., Winters, L. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The authors of this useful text introduce the idea of finding alternative forms of student assessment in light of dissatisfaction with existing modes of assessment, most notably, standardized testing. The benefits of these relatively unfamiliar forms of assessment are cited while still recognizing that the development process is based on decades of measurement research. The authors contend that fitness for purpose is the key to quality assessment, with no single method being the right one; however they show a preference for performance assessment.

A set of standards for the assessment development process is suggested as well as clear, straightforward information with examples, to assist faculty to prepare for, develop, and evaluate effective assessment methods and tools. The Guide also provides helpful information on scoring criteria, rating scales, rating assessors, and strategies to maximize assessment validity and reliability.

52. Keeton, M. (1980). Defining and assuring quality: A framework of questions. In M. T. Keeton (Ed.) *Defining and assuring quality in experiential learning.* New Directions for Experiential Learning, No. 9, pp. 1-10. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Keeton presents two bases on which quality assurance in postsecondary education should be measured as a teaching and learning endeavor – achievement of minimum standards, and the extent to which new learning has been acquired. He points out that the quality of an educational institution is often judged by other measures such as institutional capacity (resources, research activity) reputation, achievements of graduates, and financial expenditures rather than educational outcomes. Keeton argues that quality assurance should start with clarity of institutional purpose, followed by the selection of appropriate, affordable measures to assess for that purpose. He recommends a systematic approach to quality assurance that generates awareness of the basic principles that should govern the educational process, and a collaborative effort among many persons in different roles (including learners) to achieve a balance of input and outcome considerations.

53. Kurtz, E. (1980). A key to quality assurance: Clarifying learning outcomes*. In M. Keeton (Ed.) *Defining and assuring quality in experiential learning.* New Directions for Experiential Learning. No. 9. pp. 29-39. Columbia: Jossey-Bass.

Kurtz adopts a conversational style to present the steps faculty need to take to develop performance-based learning outcomes. He touches on the benefits of using learning outcomes and three myths from which faculty resistance arise. Kurtz also presents a few examples of subjects which have traditionally been seen as difficult to express in terms of learning outcomes. He provides several references for further reading most of which were published in the 1970s, illustrating that learning outcomes are not as new as many educators might believe. This is an older publication but its ideas continue to apply in today's formal education context.

54. Maryland Online. (2005). *Quality matters: Peer course review rubric.* Baltimore: Maryland Online.

Quality Matters is a series of tools prepared by a consortium of colleges and universities in Maryland that focus on quality assurance in all aspects of their online educational programming. Online programs, including their use of assessment. are evaluated for their quality using a combination of peer review and self-assessment practices (e.g. rubrics) developed from research in the literature on on-line learning. The authors emphasize that their rubrics are not intended to provide a simple behavioural checklist but rather a launching pad for constructivist peer discussions in which faculty are at the center of the process. The value of these documents for PLAR is both practical (e.g. tools that be modified for PLAR, the use of inter-institutional reviews) and conceptual (the principles upon which the tools are based). They can be obtained at: http://www.mdfaconline.net/documents/rubric_3-30-04.pdf

55. Mueller, J. (2005). *Authentic assessment toolbox.* [On-line]. Retrieved on October 1, 2007 from http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/index.htm .

The authentic assessment toolbox is an online how-to text that helps faculty create authentic instruments for student assessment. Mueller define authentic assessment and compares it with traditional forms of assessment. He explains authentic assessment's strengths, limitations, and standards, and outlines a practical, four-step process for developing effective authentic assessment tools. He explains how rubrics can be used to measure learning achievements. Mueller argues that we are all different in how we can best demonstrate what we have learned; authentic assessment tasks tend to give students more freedom in how they may demonstrate their learning. Mueller's overall online presentation is a rich source of ideas on how to use outcomes/standards and authentic assessment to assess prior learning.

56. Sachs, M. (1980). The task of administrators in assuring sound assessment practices. In M. T. Keeton (Ed.) *Defining and assuring quality in experiential learning.* New Directions for Experiential Learning, No. 9, pp. 53-66. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sachs presents several steps institutional administrators can take to ensure quality assurance in the assessment of experiential learning. Beginning with the Chief Academic Officer's direct responsibility for developing an institution's rationale and policies to design and guide appropriate procedures, Sachs suggests key features of quality assurance including a central office for coordination, interdisciplinary committees to monitor completed assessments, faculty agreement on expected learning outcomes and methodologies and standards that mark their achievement, and fees based on the number of assessments conducted. She also suggests that guidelines delineating the domains of learning in which credit may be awarded, a clear definition of college-level learning, clear understanding of experiential learning, and summaries of known assessment techniques, assist faculty in their efforts to understand the differences between experiential and classroom learning. Administrator involvement in ensuring standardized record-keeping including transcripts and student records, assessment material storage, and statistics also contribute to an effective quality assurance program.

This article reflects Sachs' perspective that an effective quality assurance program for the assessment of learning is a co-operative effort involving both administrators and academics and that the assessment of prior learning is no exception.

57. Wolff, R. (1980). Alterative models of self-study – New approaches to systematic quality assurance. In M. T. Keeton (Ed.) *Defining and assuring quality in experiential learning.* New Directions for Experiential Learning, No. 9, pp. 67-77. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Using self-study models in accreditation as a basis, Wolff explores the use of self-study to establish internal systems of quality assurance that minimize intrusion and disruption

and are geared toward program improvement. He presents several strategies that incorporate: confirming institutional goals and objectives, developing criteria for measuring their achievement, collecting and assessing relevant data, using results to formulate strategies for improvement, and training faculty and staff on issues related to quality and effectiveness.

Wolff argues that participant satisfaction is key to the success of quality assurance strategies and that three critical factors are directly correlated with satisfaction levels: 1) commitment of top leaders to change and improvement, 2) participant motivation to improve, and 3) the choice of self-study form. Activities such as establishing a product library as an aid to evaluators, piloting new strategies, using accreditation information as a resource for internal action, and the establishment of ongoing quality assurance committees with rotating membership, can contribute to a greater interest in, commitment to, and ability to deliver quality assured programs and services.

Several of Wolff's ideas are applicable to PLAR. Of particular interest is a proposed policy statement for accreditation agencies, which states that the recognition of experiential (prior) learning is a proper function for an accredited institution of postsecondary education.

Multi-national Literature

> 58. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. (2005). *Standards and guidelines quality assurance in the European higher education area.* Helsinki: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Following the Berlin Communiqué in 2003, which was part of the Bologna Process, the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education collaborated with other networks and associations to develop a set of standards, procedures and guidelines for quality assurance for the European Higher Education Area. This document is the result of that effort and is considered a first step to achieving a quality assurance dimension for the region. In addition to a joint decision that there will be European standards for internal and external quality assurance in higher education, the document outlines expectations for external quality assurance agencies. Recognition of prior learning is not addressed directly in this document, but student assessment is identified as one of the most important elements of higher education and a set of guidelines present characteristics of good quality assessment procedures. Given that much of the literature argues that quality assurance in PLAR should be addressed by existing quality assurance mechanisms used for mainstream assessment, these guidelines will be of interest to researchers interested in integrating the two processes.

> 59. Woodhouse, D. (1999). Quality and quality assurance. In H. de Wit & J. Knight [Eds.] *Quality and internationalisation in higher education.* Paris: OECD.

This is one of twelve chapters in an OECD report on quality assurance in higher education. Woodhouse defines quality as fitness for purpose – the extent to which

institutions achieve their own stated purpose. He discusses several different mechanisms for assessing and improving the quality of education programs including audits, assessments, and accreditation. He positions these processes within the context of international trends in quality assurance and the role of external quality review agencies are highlighted in particular. Woodhouse does not address quality assurance in PLAR but his discussion does present the potential for extrapolations from his review of mainstream quality assurance processes. A particularly striking point is that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are often confused, and both can become excuses for institutional failure to listen to what the world is saying about the need to be publicly accountable. This publication can be accessed at:
http://www.aqa.ac.at/download.php?id=4

60. Quality Assurance Agency. (2006). *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 Assessment of students.* London: Quality Assurance Agency.

This Code of Practice is intended to help higher education institutions to meet their responsibilities for the assurance of academic standards and quality. It is a statement of good practice that has been endorsed by the higher education community in the United Kingdom.

Section 6 of the Code presents fifteen precepts that collectively support student learning through the development and maintenance of criterion-referenced assessment standards in the form of learning outcomes. Transparency with students, staff and examiners is a priority, reflected in explanations of good practice throughout the document. The variety of educational systems (e.g. modular) in the United Kingdom are accommodated through acknowledgement of multiple purposes of assessment and the reality of institutional autonomy, and the presentation of a range of assessment practices. The importance of competent assessors and meaningful student feedback are also highlighted. To assist institutions, explanatory notes follow each statement of principle to explain how to convert principle into action. This document is cross-referenced with the Quality Assurance Agency's Guidelines for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (2004).