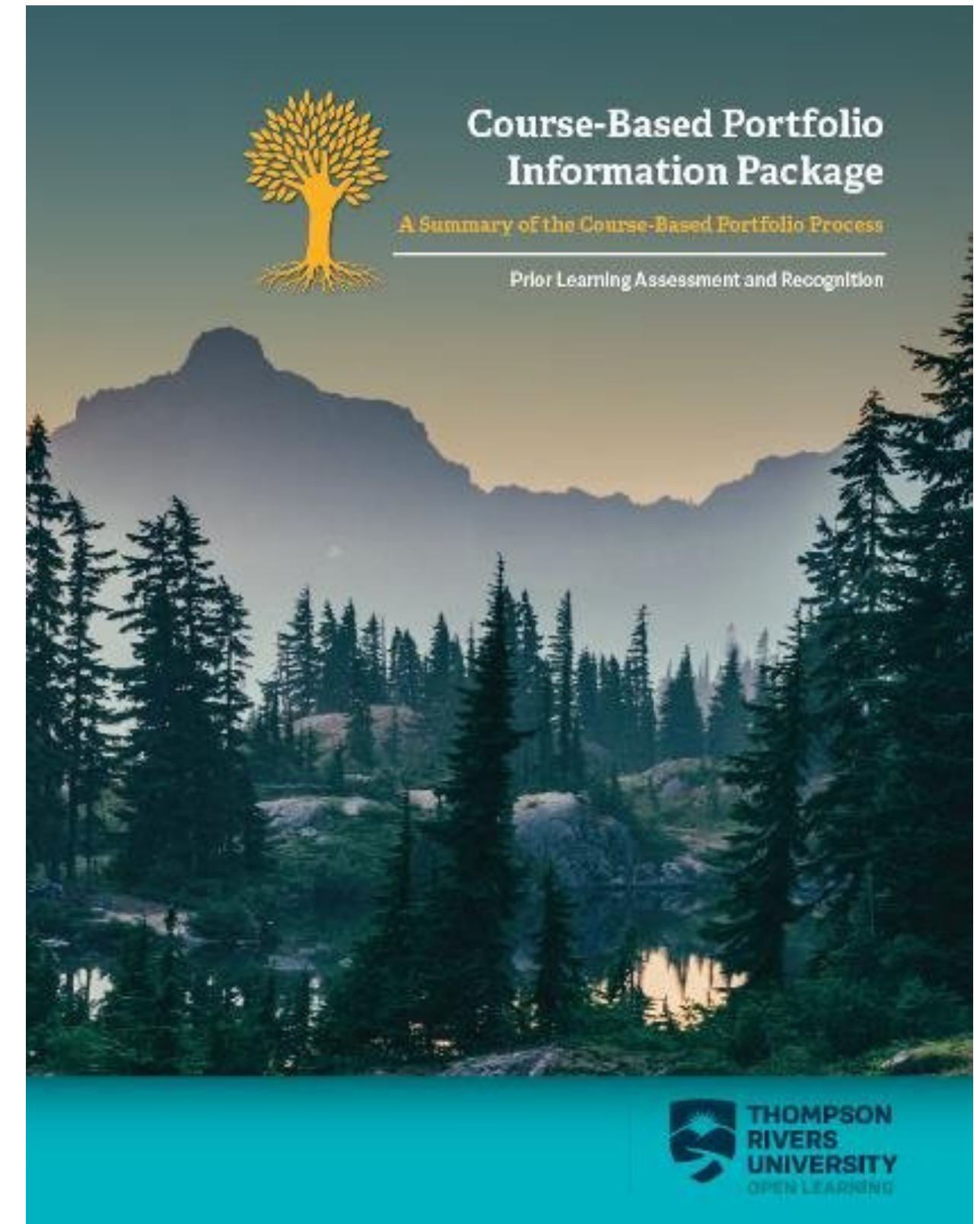


Competency-based PLAR

Assessing Student Learning at Thompson Rivers University

Prior Learning Assessment at TRU

- 4 PLAR Pathways
 - Competency-based
 - Course-based
 - Challenge Exams
 - Credit Bank



Additional Initiatives

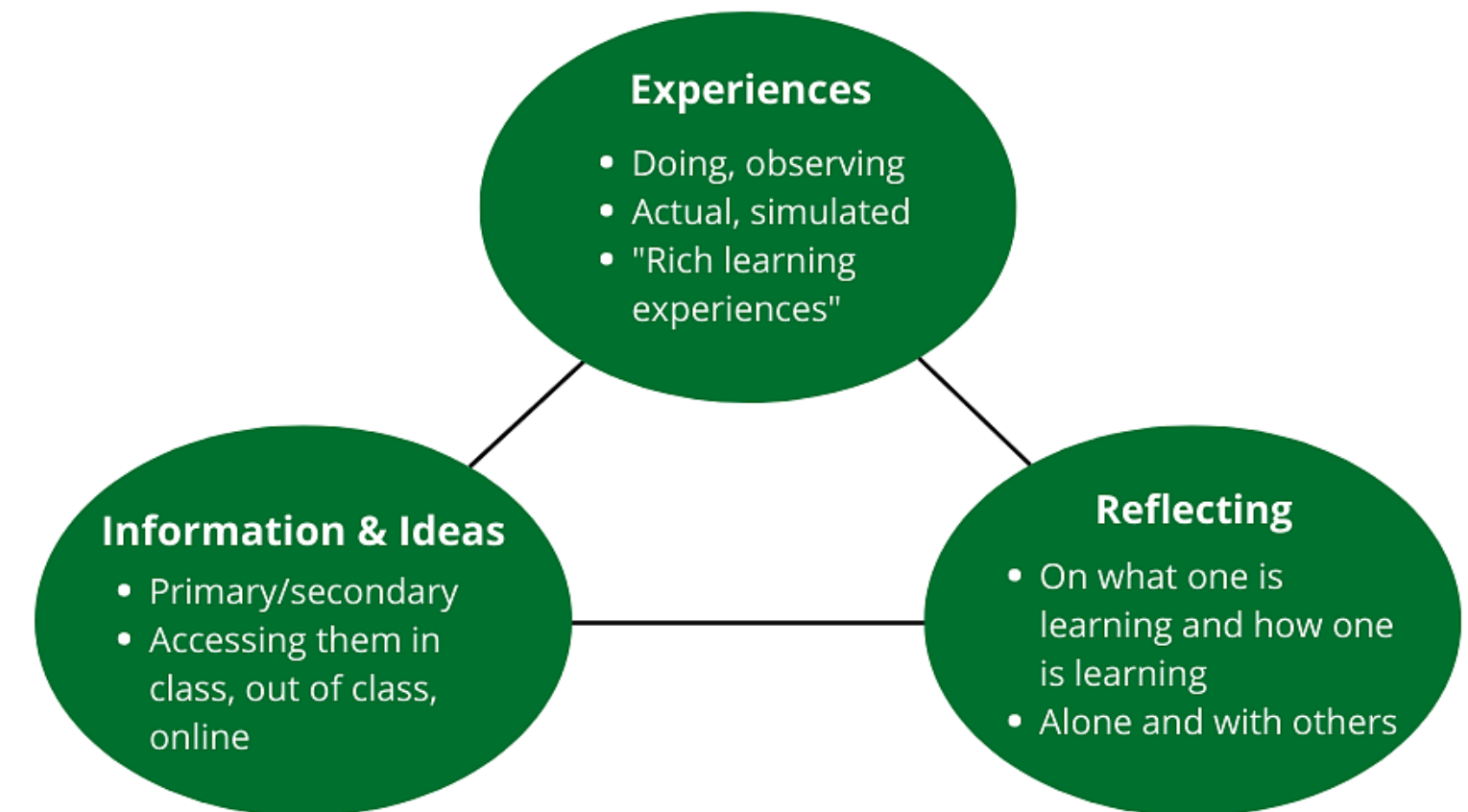
- Micro-credentials and Provincial Credit Bank
- Decolonization & Indigenization
- Course, PLAR 2001
- Open Education Resource
- PLAR Persistence Research



Theoretical Foundations: Reflection and Prompts

- Without reflection, the significance of an experience may remain buried in the unconscious or subconscious level, which may lead it to “be limited, distorted, or even destructive” (Fink, 2013)

Holistic View of Active Learning According to L. Dee Fink



(adapted from Fink, 2013, by the University of Oregon)

Theoretical Foundations: Reflection and Prompts

- Reflection involves several cognitive activities: retrieval, elaboration, and generation (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014)
- Reflection increases the number of connections learners can make between new learning and prior knowledge (Doyle, 2011, p. 145)
- But without appropriate prompts to aid reflection, learners don't have the capacity to assimilate new knowledge (Bain, 2004, p. 31)
- If we ask the right questions in the Discussion of Learning, students will be better able to realize and articulate their prior learning

Discussion of Learning Questions 1

- Objectives are to determine the why, when, and how of learning.
- Questions give applicant opportunity to reflect on their learning journey and illuminate any ambiguous areas in their portfolio.
- Aim for 3-4 minutes per answer (times 16 questions \approx 1 hour).
- Personalized questions reflect thorough portfolio review and affirm this with specific references to portfolio.
- Questions can be adapted from a scripted “question bank” or wholly original.
- Questions are designed to probe learning in areas identified as unclear in the portfolio and/or inconclusive competency criteria.

Discussion of Learning Questions 2

- Discussion of learning tone is affirmative, compassionate, and objective. Feedback to applicant after each answer reflects this.
- Probing follow-up questions provide further opportunities for applicant to demonstrate reflection on their learning. Can be a fine balance!
- Examples of Discussion of Learning questions:
 - In your portfolio, you discuss [specific example]. What did you learn about your communication abilities from this experience?
 - You mentioned that you developed an authoritative leadership style while at [specific job]. Can you elaborate on this? Have you adapted your leadership style since then?
 - You describe taking part in rituals and ceremonies from other cultures in your portfolio. How has contact with people from other cultural backgrounds impacted your worldview more broadly?

Assessing Against Criteria

- Initially, we assess the portfolio
- Then we have a Discussion of Learning with the student
- Differentiate between lower-level learning and upper-level learning
- **Communication Abilities**
- **Criteria for Lower-Level Credit**
- Writes at a basic or intermediate undergraduate university level.
- Expresses ideas clearly.
- Uses effective interpersonal communication skills.
- Possesses effective listening skills including an ability to understand, paraphrase, and clarify communications.
- Communicates with focus, intention and clarity.
- Follows established facilitation methods for realizing results and building trust.

Scan the QR code for our full set of criteria



References

- Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press.
- Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. Belknap Press.
- Doyle, T., & Zakrajsek, T. (2011). *Learner-centered teaching: Putting the research on learning into practice*. Stylus Publishing.
- Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. John Wiley & Sons.